

Prof. Dr. Karl Kohlhof

"Simply go on the way they started..."

Achtung! or perhaps the luxurious Benz and BMW cruising along Malaysia roads that make one feels envy to those who drive man made state-of-the-arts cars, play in my mind, when someone broke the news, "Hey! There is a German guy in our Kangar town!". That news alienated me, as to what a German gentleman will want to do in this small, but peaceful state. He came four months ago, as date, I reported my first ever service with a government's youngest technical university.

Later, my superior, Mustaffa Ismail told me that medium built, sharp and strong featured, well-dressed German with ginger shady hair is our academic consultant. Hmm! that just teased my curiosity, as to why we should appoint an expatriate to consult or monitor our own academic system. Do we lack local geniuses or scholars? Was it our government policy of bouncing from Japan to Germany, as way back in the 80's? None of the above answers lingered in my vacuum brain at that point.

'Fachhochschule' (one needs to pronounce it hundred times to perfection) was what brought Professor Karl Kohlhof to KUKUM. He visited KUKUM in short intervals of time (usually a few days), as he had busy schedules. I was keen to have an interview with him, but his tight schedules became the great wall between us. Grrrrr! missed the boat was something I really couldn't stand and from the journalistic point of view 'I missed the scoop pal!'

I couldn't bare the cost of losing an interview with him as my chaotic instinct would really wanted to do so. Then, I guess I have to back to square one...plays Sherlock Holmes. Somewhere and somehow I found his bios. Once more I had to pay millions of gratitude to Bill Gates' Einstein brains for the invention of internet and e-mails. Let's read below the set of questionnaires I threw at him. His humble and honest opinions and views about KUKUM will be of much important to KUKUM, as we are on a journey, seeking for excellence.

MyKukum: Can you tell us about yourself?

Prof. Dr. Karl Kohlhof: I am 47 year old, married with two kids. A doctorate physicist to be more specific and I have five years experience on public research in a national research centre and eight years experience of industrial research in automotive research under my belt and seven years as a Professor till present.

M: How does engineering refer to you personally?

K: Engineering is the practical commercialization of physical principles.

M: How important is engineering to mankind civilizations?

K: To withstand natural and evolutionary demands engineering is one if not the only discipline at all.

M: What seem to have become problems in the engineering world?

K: Acquisition of young students as future pioneers may be difficult.

M: How to over come these problems?

K: Conduct information sessions in schools, promote sciences to younger generations and kids by motivating them, by having exhibitions, talks or scientific games.

M: What does KUKUM needs in order to become the best university perhaps in Malaysia or maybe internationally?

K: Simply go on the way they started. I would like to congratulate the responsible persons in the university and the schools to perfect the application of the German concept of 'Fachhochschule'.

M: Being a scholar, you have seen different trends among engineering students? What are they?

K: One trend is the growing dislike of students of today to do practical engineering/ handcrafts work in favour of computational engineering/simulation/software application. The other trend may be interdisciplinary working across the traditional engineering field like mechanics, electric etc., or even including economics and ecologic.

M: Besides mastering the mathematic subject, what else engineering students need to do in order to become an excellent student?

K: Technical or practical physics, the spirit to experiment already, in their early youth.

M: What is 'Fachhochschule'? Can you elaborate in details and its concept?

K: It is a type of university orientating onto application of scientific knowledge or principles and finally leading to product development more than focusing onto basic principles or formulas. Parallel to the theoretical lectures and increased amount of practical course help to rapidly manifest the learned knowledge. Publication philosophy shall converts to patents instead of papers.

M: What are the advantages of this system compared to others?

K: Science more close to real product, close to economical benefits. Rapid 'time to market'. Money re-flow to universities by product development for small and medium enterprises.

M: As an academic consultant for KUKUM, what is your objective?

K: To assist the spreading of the applied oriented concept of the new type of universities whereby in my country is known as 'Fachhochschule'. On the other hand to experience a continuous improvement process by the copy of 30 years old German concept to the new and improved Malaysian concept followed by KUKUM.

M: Any wisdom words?

K: Be natural if you try to engineer product by orienting to the evolutionary experience of nature.

M: What will your hope be as an academic consultant?

K: That will be the start up process at KUKUM as successful as it started from the first two years.

