

Crafting Leaders of Tomorrow for IEM Young Engineers Section (YES) in Malaysia



by Engr. Wong Yoke Mei

An interview with IEM Young Engineers Section leaders in Malaysia was conducted by Engr. Wong Yoke Mei of IEM-YES. Below are the excerpts.

HOW HAS IEM-YES PLAYED A ROLE IN DEVELOPING LEADERS IN MALAYSIA?

A1- Engr. Shuhairy: At IEM YES, we have prepared a platform for new volunteers to develop their leadership skills progressively. There are a few steps for volunteers to become general and co-opted in the committee main Committee. For new volunteers, you will be invited by the portfolio director to serve in their respective portfolio. IEM YES is divided into six portfolios, namely, Professional Development, Graduate Affairs, Students Affairs, External Affairs, Publicity and Social and Community. Usually the volunteers will help out at any events of the portfolio.

As time goes by, the volunteers are welcome to head one of the activities in the portfolio. Once they have proven that they can handle it, we will usually appoint them as co-opted members. The opportunity to become general members arises when the co-opted is ready and shows an understanding about IEM YES. Usually we appoint a general member during the Annual Grand Meeting. As general members, they are most welcome to serve on the main committee. This is an opportunity to meet senior engineers as well as learn how the standing committee is organised.

I gained a tremendous amount of experience when I attended meetings with the standing committee. Dealing with and listening to the response of senior engineers at these meetings gave me ideas and clues on how to handle difficult issues in a proper manner. As the chairman of YES, I was also invited to join council meetings. It was a good experience and exposure to me as a young academician engineer. It is the best place to polish your leadership skills.

A2- Engr. Ron Aldrino: At IEM-YES Sarawak Branch, we try to provide a platform for new volunteers or members to develop their leadership progressively. We also encourage students to be volunteers as we believe this is the best time to recruit future YES leaders. For this term, our committee has been divided into seven portfolios, namely, Training and Development, External Affairs, Community Services, Technical and Logistics, Publicity, Social and Student. In terms of developing leadership within our branch, we have started to organise activities that are tailored towards young engineers and students.

Consequently, these events have led to an increased number in membership, especially students as they will be the backbone of YES in the future. Our target is to further increase the number of graduate members as well as conduct talk at places such as Sibul, Bintulu, Mukah, Kapit and other districts. Another potential benefit of being in YES is that you will have the chance to meet senior engineers from the branch's main committee as we are invited to seat with them during their meetings. This is where we can learn from them and be the voice of young engineers.

A3- Engr. Lesly Ajeng: YES provides the platform for young engineers to develop their potential by working hands on in organising events such as workshops, talks, seminars and technical visits. Thus, it trains us to work effectively with people from different backgrounds and different layers of society. Besides that, we have the opportunity to learn and develop non-technical skills such as finance, public speaking, business management and time management. All these skills will indirectly boost our confidence and competence to be creative and innovative engineers.



Engr. Shuhairy Norhisham
Chairman
Graduate and Students –
Young Engineers Section



Engr. Ron Aldrino Chan @ Ron Buking
Chairman
Graduate and Students –
Young Engineers Section
(Sarawak Branch)



Engr. Lesly Ajeng
Chairman
Graduate and Students –
Young Engineers Section
(Miri Branch)



Engr. Muhammad Ikhwan Ilias
Chairman
Graduate and Students –
Young Engineers Section
(Terengganu Branch)



Engr. Tang Wai Keong
Chairman
Graduate and Students –
Young Engineers Section
(Penang Branch)



Engr. Ng Pui Ling
Chairperson
Graduate and Students –
Young Engineers Section
(Southern Branch)

A4- Engr. Muhammad Ikhwan: IEM YES provides a good platform for young engineers to gain more exposure and experience in their fields mainly by encouraging them to be a professional engineer and by building an excellent network with other engineers. Being a professional engineer is the first step in developing leadership skills as good leaders need to be well-versed in their field. Besides, networking helps young engineers to append their knowledge from other people's working experiences as well as polishing up their social skills which are essential in their daily working life particularly when they work in a team.

A5- Engr. Tang: IEM YES Penang Branch has always collaborated closely with the Penang Branch main committee to promote and open the minds of graduates and students to the world of engineering in order to delineate and clarify different career fields in order for them to explore their interest.

A6- Engr. Ng: Since its establishment, the IEM-YES Southern Branch has been serving as a platform for the interaction between graduates and students with senior members of the IEM Southern Branch as well as IEM-YES headquarters. YES has also been playing its role to foster friendship among young engineers in the southern region, where engineers can share about their work and life experiences at gatherings organised by the IEM-YES Southern Branch.

HOW HAS THE MAIN BRANCH COMMITTEE SUPPORTED YOUR ACTIVITIES AND RECOGNISED YOUR LEADERSHIP?

A1- Engr. Shuhairy: Support from the IEM main committee and senior engineers have always been there. Since we also help out in other standing committees, most of us get the full support from the senior engineers. The encouragement and full support from IEM President Dato' Ir. Prof. Dr Chuah Hean Teik himself has created a sense of appreciation for IEM YES. Being responsible for 9,187 graduate members and 8,132 student members (as of December 2010), the main IEM Committee has always been understanding and helpful towards YES. The only issue is how we approach them.

A2- Engr. Ron Aldrino: First and foremost, I would like to extend my appreciation to the G&S-YES Sarawak committee members as they have been working really hard this year to organise the National Summit and Engineering Week Closing Dinner as well as past activities. Not forgetting also our Sarawak

Branch main committee particularly Ir. Dr John Panil, the current IEM Sarawak Branch Chairman, for his support, motivation and encouragement. With the support and advice from our seniors in the main committee, we managed to organise talks, engineering games as well as the G&S annual dinner last year. The success of the activities conducted last year has further increased the awareness of young engineers and students around Kuching.

Unlike other branches, we had to cover many places, which is a logistical nightmare in terms of promoting our activities and membership drive outside of Kuching. Being the largest Branch in terms of land coverage, it has to be noted that reaching out to other young engineers outside of Kuching will require a lot of financial resources and time. Even though most of them can be reached via technology such as email, Facebook, etc, a face-to-face meeting is still the best for promotion and networking purposes. Fortunately, in Kuching, we have the support of universities such as Universiti Malaysia Sarawak (UNIMAS) and Swinburne University of Technology via the student members, graduate members and the usage of their facilities for our activities.

A3- Engr. Lesly Ajeng: I am inspired by the dedication and commitment that the committee members have shown. In fact, it makes the journey more exciting and meaningful when you have a team to share the fruits of labour together.

A4- Engr. Muhammad Ikhwan: In Terengganu, both the IEM Terengganu and IEM Branch/Committee provide support to IEM-YES. They also provide guidance to IEM-YES, generally on how to manage IEM-YES and specifically on IEM's regulations and structure. We are also invited to attend monthly meetings with them, which I think is a superb opportunity for us, as young engineers, to build our confidence and be aware of the overall events that are going on in IEM. As for how these committees recognise our leadership, we are honoured that we have been given the opportunity to conduct some of IEM'S events and trainings.

A5- Engr. Tang: The main committee has guided and provided opportunities and support to IEM YES to organise activities to enhance and improve the knowledge and skills of the graduates and students. Funding is provided for YES activities to improve the development of the IEM YES chapter and its members. With great support from the main branch and USM HEP, we have successfully established the IEM Student Chapter in USM Penang in 2010.



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A6- Engr. Ng: The IEM Southern Branch has provided guidance and encouragement to IEM-YES to organise activities for the engineering society and the public. Meanwhile, the IEM-YES Southern Branch is supporting the main committee as a co-organiser.

HOW DO YOU FORESEE THE FUTURE OF IEM-YES IN THE NEXT 10 YEARS, ESPECIALLY IN THE GROOMING OF LEADERS AMONG THE YOUNGER GENERATION?

A1- Engr. Shuhairy: As the population of IEM is estimated to grow at a rate of 10% every year, the total number of members will be huge. That is the first challenge for YES. However, this could also mean more potential leaders in YES. In 10 years time, the development of future leaders should continue with the full support of IEM. The focus should be on preparing the engineers to get ready to think global and how to market themselves internationally.

A2- Engr. Ron Aldrino: When we look at what is in store for IEM-YES in the next 10 years, I believe there will be more challenges ahead for the future leaders of YES. Among the many challenges that YES leaders will have is the growing number of young engineers in the country, the exponential growth of the country in terms of engineering related development and the advancement of engineering technology. These challenges require approaches that will test the creativity, critical thinking and PR skills of YES. The most important objective for any YES branch and its leader is to serve others because IEM is not a

profit making society and the main purpose of IEM is to serve and contribute.

We have heard many young engineers ask these questions: What is the purpose for joining IEM? What are the benefits of being a member of IEM? In my humble opinion, we should not look purely at the monetary value of being a member of any learned society. We should always look at it as a form of personal development and how we can contribute and serve others without expecting any reward. As humans, we work better as a group, and in the engineering field, it is all about working together as a team as well as learning how to manage people and accepting each other. The same goes with IEM and YES, we are all part of a bigger team where we work together to organise activities that contribute towards our society as a whole.

In addition, being part of a learned society such as IEM and YES will provide us with a greater chance of learning from the experience of others and also the chance to help and serve others with our knowledge. We engineers are, after all, in the business of solving problems. The simple truth is that, the better you are at solving problems, the richer you will become. Our success in life may very well depend on how good we are in serving others and, by doing that, we may come to realise that solving other people's problems actually helps solve your own as well. The same goes for IEM and YES; if we choose to be an inactive member, then we will not be able to learn anything much less contribute.

A3- Engr. Lesly Ajeng: I hope the leadership skills that they gain from IEM YES can make a difference to themselves as well as their families, communities and nation.

A4- Engr. Muhammad Ikhwan: IEM-YES will be an excellent platform for mentoring and sharing which will help boost young engineers' leadership skills. IEM YES will be a reliable organisation where young engineers can come and seek help on all engineering related matters. This will ensure that our young engineers will have the right guidance and support so that they can be on par with engineers from other countries.

A5- Engr. Tang: To craft new leaders of tomorrow, the development of our engineering students and young engineers is important to us. Young engineers should be given challenging assignments after graduating from the institution, so that they will grow technically and develop their sense of responsibility and confidence. So, IEM YES has a great responsibility to provide a platform for new thinking, approaches and knowledge exchange. IEM YES will organise more activities of this kind so that young engineers will be able to effectively drive projects and meet challenges to create value for the client.

A6- Engr. Ng: The growth of globalisation has accelerated exponentially thanks to technological advancements, especially the inspiring breakthrough in information technology in recent years. There will be great challenges for young generations of the future, and those who choose to deal with it will see their leadership skills develop by leaps and bounds.

HOW HAS YOUR POSITION AS THE CHAIRPERSON INFLUENCED YOUR PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT?

A1- Engr. Shuhairy: As of February 2011, it has only been eight months since I was appointed to this position. It has had a tremendous influence on my personal development. I have



learned a lot about the art of dealing with people. I am also frequently involved in presentations about IEM. As the Chairman of YES, I frequently meet students from various universities and also represent IEM YES in various activities.

A2- Engr. Ron Aldrino: As the current Chairman of IEM Sarawak Branch G&S-YES and the Organising Chairman for Engineering Week 2011 Closing Dinner as well as the YES National Summit 2011, which was held in Kuching in March, it has given me a lot to think about especially on how to balance my own work and volunteer for IEM-YES at the same time. As the Chairman, I have to handle many responsibilities and this has greatly helped me in terms of my communication skills, management of fellow young graduates in the committee and also be the voice for young engineers.

For the past two years, YES Sarawak Branch has been working very hard to rebrand and rebuild ourselves as the G&S Section has been dormant for years since the last chairman and committee moved up to become the main committee members of IEM. Dealing with these challenges has made me a better person and I hope to keep improving as well as create a good portfolio for myself.

A3- Engr. Lesly Ajeng: It has helped me to look at things from a bigger perspective. In short, it has expanded my horizon and opened up my mind, thus making me a more well balanced person. The chairmanship has also helped me to develop my leadership skills to bring a team together and achieve shared goals together.

A4- Engr. Muhammad Ikhwan: Being the Chairperson of IEM-YES Terengganu gives me the opportunity to improve my leadership and communication skills. I am responsible for leading the team and I feel the need to ensure that all young engineers become high-quality engineers and leaders in their own organisations.

A5- Engr. Tang: Being the chairman for IEM-YES Penang Branch has not only improved my leadership skills but also my interpersonal skills. Through IEM activities, I have also widened my social network and public relation skills. Furthermore, I have gained knowledge and ideas, which would be useful for my current career development.

A6- Engr. Ng: I really appreciate the opportunities given to me as the chairperson of IEM-YES Southern Branch and to contribute my tiny bit of effort to the engineering society in the south-

ern region. The chance to lead a group of enthusiastic young engineers and students greatly enhanced my leadership skill.

WHAT IS YOUR HOPE FOR THE IEM YES LEADERSHIP?

A1- Engr. Shuhairy: We hope that young engineers out there will come forward to volunteer themselves with YES and contribute at least 5% of their time in serving others through YES so that it can be the avenue for the development of future leaders in IEM and the country.

A2- Engr. Ron Aldrino: First and foremost, I would like to extend my appreciation to my G&S-YES committee members as they have been working really hard this year to organise the National Summit and Engineering Week Closing Dinner as well as past activities. Not forgetting also our Sarawak Branch main committee particularly Ir. Dr John Panil, the current IEM Sarawak Branch Chairman, for his support, motivation and encouragement. With the support and advice from our seniors in the main committee, we managed to organise talks, engineering games as well as the G&S annual dinner last year. The success of the activities conducted last year has further increased the awareness of young engineers and students around Kuching.

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A3- Engr. Lesly Ajeng: I hope that IEM-YES will be more visible within the community. The next generation of leaders should keep up with the good work and keep planting seeds for the future.

A4- Engr. Muhammad Ikhwan: I look forward for IEM-YES to be more efficient and resourceful in delivering its objective in supporting young engineers to become professional engineers and future leaders. Furthermore, as an important platform for young engineers, I really hope IEM-YES will be given more opportunities to collaborate with other professional and government organisations to enhance our capability to breed more good leader-engineers in the future.

A5- Engr. Tang: I hope that IEM-YES Penang branch can grow its network with other professionals or the public. Through its network, I hope to influence not only the engineering undergraduates, but also other professionals and the general public to be more active or proactive, which will help in their career and personal development.

A6- Engr. Ng: I wish that future IEM-YES leaders will achieve even more success in upholding the social standing image of young engineers while, at the same time, enjoy the friendship from IEM-YES leaders and members throughout the country. ■