Seeking to upgrade

MBA student wants skills to be relevant in fast-changing world

His journey to a master's degree is anything but conventional.

Mr Justin Lim (below), an alumnus of St Joseph's Institution, enrolled in a maritime diploma course at Singapore Polytechnic in 1996 following his O-level exams.

But he stopped studies after a year after losing interest.

He then joined McDonald's Singapore, where he spent more than 15 years working his way up to be an account manager.

He learnt valuable lessons including leadership skills.

The fast-food giant also paid for him to take a diploma in hospitality management at a private educational institution.

When Mr Lim left McDonald's in August last year to join a large chain of hotels in Singapore as an assistant manager, he decided it was time to pursue higher education. He is a deputy leader of a team of 20 people.

He then joined East Asia Institute of Management (EASB) to pursue a Master of Business Administration in Hospitality Management programme.

Mr Lim, now 34, said: "I was seeking to upgrade myself, to ensure that my skills are relevant in the fast-changing world."

WORK EXPERIENCE

Mr Lim began the 12-month programme, awarded by Queen Margaret University, UK, on a part-time basis in January. According to EASB, students of the programme "will be provided with leading-edge theory and practice concerning the role of the Internet in tourism and supplement this with an introduction to other key management disciplines.

Students have to complete assignments and examinations in modules such as International Marketing and Business Impact and Practice.

Mr Lim said: "My favourite module is Business Impact and Practice as it is relevant to my job.

"It teaches me how to be an effective leader and I learn effective approaches to guide my team through projects."

Mr Lim said he benefits from having classmates from different cultures at EASB.

For example, in one project, he is working with students from Germany, China and Malaysia.

As the oldest student, Mr Lim said he takes the lead but learns from his foreign counterparts.

WORKING STYLES

He said: "People from different cultures have different working styles, and we can learn from each other."

Mr Lim, who is married with no children, said finding time for his full-time job, part-time studies and family activities is his biggest challenge.

He praised his employers for accommodating his commitments outside of work and ensures that his wife - who is also working full-time - has his full attention when they spend time together.

"My wife is my biggest supporter," he said.

"She knows that I am working hard and going through my master's programme to give our family a better life."

But Mr Lim said his educational pursuit at EASB should not be summed up by a certificate.

He said: "At the end of the day, I will receive a certificate indicating that I have completed a master's degree programme from a good university.

"But learning goes beyond any paper qualification.

"The knowledge I acquire from my course will help me grow as a person and in my career."

Mr Lim hopes that others who are looking for suitable degree programmes will not take the view that education is a paper chase for qualifications as he fears that might lead to a waste of time and money.

He said: "It is a mistake to think that a certificate is the end goal of education.

"It is the knowledge we gain, not a piece of paper, that will improve us."

The programme is an industry relevant and inter-disciplinary experiential learning journey. The holistic curriculum balances analytical business management skills with specialism in hospitality management. Not only do candidates learn about the relevant theoretical knowledge, but will also acquire transferable skills through hands-on learning experience in our interactive tutorials.

Mr Willard Emmanuel Tan, adjunct senior lecturer, dissertation supervisor and honours module leader at East Asia Institute of Management