

Brunei Educators Take Internships in Canada



Discussing institutional planning documents. From left: NAIT President Fred Williamson, Principal-Designate Mahmud, International Education Director Ken Ohashi, and Principal-Designate Omar

Since the beginning of January 1989, two "principals-designate" from Brunei Darussalam have been learning how things are done in the Alberta system of Advanced Education.

Mr Mohd Daud Haji Mahmud and Mr Abdul Ghani Haji Omar, both senior administrators from post-secondary institutions in Brunei, are half-way through a comprehensive internship in Edmonton, the capital of Alberta. Their visit is concentrating upon the Alberta Vocational Centre (AVC) and the Northern Alberta Institute of Technology (NAIT). These internships were arranged at the request of the Brunei Ministry of Education.

Messrs Mahmud and Omar are experienced administrators with previous senior postings. But since they are to head new vocational schools in Brunei – Mr Mahmud will be assigned to a school at Lorong Tiga, Seria, while Mr Omar will go to Lambak Kanan, Berakas – it was thought a good thing for them to see first-hand the operations of well-established institutions in a setting where technical and vocational education are highly developed. At AVC and NAIT the principals-designate have been observing and participating in a range of institutional operations.

AVC Edmonton is a provincially-administered institution devoted to increasing the employability of disadvantaged adults. Specializing in academic upgrading, English-as-a-second-language training, and short-term occupational programs, AVC has earned a reputation for success over the past two decades of service in the Edmonton region.

NAIT, a large public, board-governed institution, offers over 60 full-time career programs – engineering technologies, business and computer systems, health and medical sciences, and applied arts – along with 22 apprenticeship trades and over 600 continuing education courses. NAIT's reputation for career education that

meets both industry needs and student aspirations extends to the international community.

Both institutions have considerable experience in international education. Besides enrolling hundreds of immigrants in English language courses over the years, AVC has had a presence for some time in Singapore in the training of teachers for basic-education programs there. NAIT has been involved since the mid-1960s in many international projects – from Africa to the Far East and to South America. Arrangements have included staff secondments, international students, program development, and administrative consultation.

Messrs Mahmud and Omar are no strangers to sojourns in foreign countries. They both hold degrees from universities in Great Britain and have travelled extensively. They are warm in praise of their experience in Alberta.

"Our internship has been very beneficial," says Mr Omar. "We have been exposed to many new concepts to consider employing in our new schools in Brunei."

Mr Mahmud adds, "The educators in Edmonton have made us feel most welcome. All have been extremely open and tried their best to give us a comprehensive picture of technical and vocational education in Alberta."

Conversely, the Bruneians have made constructive points about the organization of their host institutions, so the visit has clearly been of mutual benefit.

The Bruneians' internship also includes visits to several other Alberta institutions. Yet to come are attachments to the University of Alberta's Department of Technical and Vocational Education and to the central office of Alberta Advanced Education. Messrs Mahmud and Omar will complete their stay in Canada by attending the annual conference of the Association of Canadian Community Colleges in Regina, Saskatchewan, in early June.