

Travel story: CITO takes a closer look at IT and e-learning in Malaysia

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Last week we went to Kuala Lumpur to visit Swedish companies working with Information Technology and take a closer look at how Malaysia is using e-learning to give more people an opportunity to take university degrees and gain skills the job-market requires.

On the first day of our trip we took express train out of central Kuala Lumpur to the fittingly named area Cyberjaya which is a zone with favorable conditions for foreign investors with many international IT-giants present. Our first visit was to the relatively young Swedish company *Paracell* who work with providing consulting, project management and staffing for IT/Telecom projects. *Paracell* was started in Stockholm 2005 and now has established offices in Brazil, South Africa and Malaysia to serve their clients in emerging markets. Afterwards we went to visit *Ericsson*, one of Sweden's most famous multinationals who work with manufacturing and servicing telecommunications network equipment and just like *Paracell* have their Malaysian office in Cyberjaya. There we learned about how *Ericsson* does business in Malaysia and about the economics of running telecom networks which now are merging more and more with the internet. It was enlightening to get some insight about how important a domestic internet industry is to developing countries in order to bring down the costs of peering with popular sites in Europe and America. This may be part of the rationale for the policies of the Chinese government who block many foreign sites such as facebook and YouTube which has the effect of helping domestic sites such as social network Renren and video sharing site Youku gain traffic.

On the second day we went to visit *Free2Move*, a Swedish company who make innovative products for consumers and industrial applications using wireless technologies such as Bluetooth and RFID. The division in Malaysia focuses on developing RFID systems for traditional applications like tracking goods and using the technology in new areas, such as long term logging of temperature and humidity conditions, for example inside walls of a building. The last Swedish company we visited was *Digital Route* who make software to make it possible for telecommunication service providers to make equipment and software from many different manufacturers work together to provide better service to customers and save costs. Their customers include telephone companies such as Tre, Tele2, China Mobile and many others. They view Malaysia as good place for having access to skilled people who can support customers who need deliverer increasingly sophisticated services to more and more demanding Asian users. Thus we concluded our company visits, happy to have learned a lot and found several opportunities for Chalmers students to do thesis work or other projects in Malaysia, don't hesitate to send us an email if interested.

The last visit we did on our trip was to Asia e University (AeU) to learn about their approach to leverage the internet provide university education in a more efficient manner to working people in Asia who wish to gain new skills. Asia e University is part of ACD (Asia Cooperation Dialogue) which is an organization with 31 member countries in Asia who promote joint projects and facilitate dialogue on how to improve competitiveness of their economies. They use a flexible approach where students can chose to study a 100% of their Bachelor or Master degree at home, watching recordings of the best lecturers in their subject and then use wikis and other interactive tools to review and test their understanding. But it is also possible to get face to face interaction and use the materials they university has compiled to do more traditional courses if that is more suitable to the students and partners of AeU. Using English as the primary language of instruction the university wants to be able to collect the best materials, use

them in many different member countries and give students an opportunity to improve their skills in using English in their work. They believe that this of form of e-learning is a winning concept which will not only be cheaper than traditional education but also more efficient and sooner or later replace traditional instruction.

Johan Annell and Linus Hallberg