

Perspectives on CPD from a Young Lawyer

Feature: Arina Ong Xin Yi

Arina Ong Xin Yi became a Member of the Malaysian Bar ("Member") on 15 May 2015. She wrote to the Continuing Professional Development ("CPD") Department in February 2016 to enquire about the number of CPD points she had obtained. Upon pulling up her records, we discovered that she had obtained a total of 75 CPD points since July 2014. Out of these CPD points, 36 were obtained during her pupillage and the remaining 39 were from the time she became a Member (this is based on data as at 31 January 2016).

We thought it might be useful to understand what drives this young lady to commit so enthusiastically to the CPD Scheme so we sent her a list of questions to answer. She graciously responded to the request, and this feature explores the views about the CPD Scheme from the perspective of a young lawyer.

On the question of why she chose to be an active participant of the CPD Scheme, Arina commented, "I dislike being buried in a nine-to-five job, although we do work late often. I am driven by the idiom, 'all work and no play makes Jack a dull boy'. I actively participated in the CPD scheme as a pupil, hoping to make my chambering life more meaningful and interesting, as this was a once in a lifetime opportunity. This has also meant that I have had the chance to make more friends who share the same interests".

Having read for her law degree at Multimedia University in Malacca, she said the three main things that motivate her participation in the CPD Scheme are her burning passion for the law, the opportunity to mingle with other Members and pupils, and her general eagerness to learn and try something new.

Arina recognises that there is some resistance to the CPD Scheme, and is aware of the proposal that will be implemented, in the first instance, on Members who are admitted to the Malaysian Bar from 1 July 2011, and pupils who commence their pupillage from 1 July 2016 onwards. She is, however, of the view that the CPD Scheme "is a good idea as it provides a platform for new lawyers to gather sufficient knowledge about daily legal practice".

She particularly emphasised that, "These training opportunities are subsidised by the Bar Council with the participants paying only a small token", and suggests that Members and pupils should take advantage of this.

However, Arina holds firmly to the view that the CPD Scheme should be implemented on all Members of the Bar ultimately so that everyone will be benefitted from participation.

Of the 19 CPD events that she has attended, (all organised either by Bar Council or the Kuala Lumpur Bar Committee, of which she is a Member), her favourite was the 1st Strategic Litigation Camp at Thistle



Hotel in Port Dickson from 7 to 10 Aug 2015.

She said, "It was an interactive 4-day-3-night workshop. I was exposed to the concept of upholding fundamental liberties in Malaysia and using international treaties such as the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women ("CEDAW"), the Convention on the Rights of the Child ("CRC") & the Convention on the Rights of the Persons with Disabilities ("CRPD") to apply and argue public interests cases. The presence of my two favourite lawyers - Edmund Bon and Honey Tan, spurred the levels of intensity amongst the participants to enjoy this camp".



Using this opportunity to gain an understanding about what factors young lawyers may take into account when deciding to participate on the CPD Scheme, we enquired with her about her key considerations when deciding to participate in the activities. According to Arina, they are likely to be, "whether the trainings are useful to legal practice, the registration fee, and whether the trainings are conducted during

working hours". Arina also went on to suggest that "more interactive events should be organised, so that it will not be dull or boring", and "those who have achieved a certain number of CPD points should be rewarded and their activities be reported in *Praxis* and others, if any."

Arina emphasised that she receives support to participate in CPD activities from the legal firm she works at. The areas of practice that she currently undertakes are family law and public interest litigation cases.

On what she had learnt by participating in the CPD Scheme, Arina shared some thoughts, "I learnt to mingle with other Members of the Bar who pursue the same passion and interests. For instance, I attended the Strategic Litigation Workshop and the Strategic Litigation Conference where I met like-minded participants, and that was very meaningful to me. I have also participated in the Advocacy Training Course, and there I found the trainers forthcoming in sharing their advocacy tips with the participants. They instantly clarified our shortcomings after our presentations, and these were discussed wholeheartedly with each and every participant. These tips have been useful to my daily legal practice. And finally, I believe that the wide range of training programmes that I have participated in since I commenced my pupillage have added value to me as a new lawyer."



Moving forward to a discussion about encouraging greater participation in the CPD Scheme, Arina had some candid suggestions, "Perhaps the organisers could consider providing speakers and trainers with good sense of humour, and ensure training is available on a variety of topics that are related to the Members' needs, and last but not least, I really think that the Advocacy Training Course should be made more affordable to Members of the Bar."

Written by Santhi Latha

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