

# CEBA -NIZWA Insights Newsletter



Welcome to the second edition of CEBA Insights Newsletter! Be connected, informed, and inspired within the College of Economics and Business Administration (CEBA). Here, we bring you the latest updates, success stories, academic highlights, and engaging features that reflect our vibrant learning community. CEBA Insights is more than just a newsletter—it's a platform that celebrates our students, faculty, and alumni, while sharing valuable knowledge and opportunities. We invite you to explore, contribute, and be part of this journey as we continue to grow together in excellence and innovation. Happy reading!

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# WELCOME MESSAGE



In today's dynamic academic landscape, students must be engaged through active, relevant, and purpose-driven learning experiences. Globally, leading universities integrate faculty research into teaching, encourage student-faculty research collaboration, and promote experiential learning beyond the classroom. I am proud to say that CEBA-Nizwa is embracing these global best practices. The department's strong commitment to student development is evident in its rich array of co-curricular initiatives. As we close the Academic Year 2025, I commend the dedicated faculty and the DEBA head and its Head of Units for their remarkable efforts. Your hard work is shaping future-ready graduates and upholding our university's vision for excellence.

Dr. Mohammed Al Mamari  
*AVC, UTAS-Nizwa*

Research and Teaching Nexus is vital in fostering a vibrant academic environment where inquiry and instruction go hand in hand. At CEBA-UTAS, Nizwa, we must challenge ourselves to integrate research more deeply into our teaching practices. The faculty play a crucial role—not only as educators, but also as mentors who guide students to explore, question, and innovate. Embedding research into the classroom cultivates critical thinking and empowers students to become knowledge creators. Let us actively engage our faculty in this endeavor and transform learning into a research-enriched journey that prepares our students for the demands of a knowledge-driven future.

Dr. Sara Al Bahlani  
DAVCA-, UTAS- Nizwa



Welcome to Volume 2 of CEBA Insights, the official newsletter of the College of Economics and Business Administration at UTAS Nizwa. This edition celebrates the vibrant academic spirit that defines our community—highlighting remarkable research pursuits, competition milestones, and the outstanding achievements of our students and faculty. Each feature reflects our shared commitment to excellence, innovation, and growth. As you explore these pages, may you find inspiration in the dedication and talent that continue to shape DEBA's legacy. Let us take pride in how far we've come—and look forward to the possibilities ahead. Happy reading!

Dr. Mohammed Ali Ahmed Obaid  
HOD, CEBA-UTAS, NIZWA



# Empowering Educators: CEBA's Commitment to Continuous Learning and Research

By Rajani James, Professional Development Committee Representative, CEBA

At the College of Economics and Business Administration (CEBA), University of Technology and Applied Sciences (UTAS) –Nizwa, professional development is not just a checkbox, it is a strategic imperative. Through a comprehensive, data-driven framework, UTAS–Nizwa is transforming how faculty and staff grow, learn, and lead. A Strategic Foundation for Growth

through the able guidance of DEBA–Nizwa HOD, Dr. Mohammed Ali Ahmed Obaid, and under the headship of Ms. Turkiya Al- Busaidi, the goal of continuous learning via Personnel Development programs are carried through by the PDC Committee of UTAS Nizwa. Through this committee, the university has established a robust and clearly documented framework for professional development, supported by a series of administrative decrees for academic years.

## Results That Speak Volumes

The outcomes have been significant. Over the past academic year and current academic year the CEBA alone has conducted more than 16 professional development initiatives in the form of long-term workshops, online sessions, and industry related programs. These cover a broad range—from teaching methodologies and quality assurance to research engagement and administrative operations.

Staff engagement has been notably high, with institutional surveys revealing strong satisfaction with both the relevance and the impact of the training sessions. This level of participation reflects the university's culture of learning and its focus on excellence at every level.



## Spotlight on Research : CEBA Hosts First Student Research Poster Competition



In a vibrant celebration of academic inquiry and student research, the College of Economics, Business, and Administration (DEBA) hosted its first-ever DEBA Student Research Poster Competition – Spring 2025 on Wednesday, April 23, 2025, at the Exhibition Hall, South Campus, UTAS-Nizwa. The research spectacle was even made memorable by the formal inaugural by Dr. Mohammed Al Mamari, UTAS-Nizwa, AVC and Dr. Sara Al Bahlani, DAVCA, who led the awarding ceremony.



Dr. Sangeetha Natarajan, Dr. Mohamed Rafiq, Dr. Hemavathy Nithyanandan and Dr. Sangeetha TR, brought together bright minds from across UTAS branches—20 teams in total, with participation from Nizwa (14 entries), Muscat (4 entries), and Ibra (2 entries). The competition provided a dynamic platform for students to showcase their research work, spanning a diverse array of business topics.



### Cheers to the winners!

Seven outstanding students were recognized for their exceptional research work. The winners represented various CEBA branches and specializations:

- Hafsa Rashid Said Al Falahi – Ibra Branch (Accounting)
- Hibat Alrahman Yahya Al Yahmadi – Ibra Branch (Accounting)
- Yaqqani Khamis Rashid Al Farsi – Ibra Branch (Accounting)
- Said Abdullah Said Alhawari – DEBA Nizwa (Marketing)
- Ruqaya Ali Al Shukaili – DEBA Nizwa (Marketing)
- Suha Alghammari – Muscat Branch (HRM)
- Taif Al Arimi – Muscat Branch (HRM)



### A day of exciting knowledge and skills showcase

Attendees were invited to join the inauguration ceremony and participate in a poster exhibition walkthrough, where student presenters shared insights into their research findings, methodologies, and real-world implications. The event highlighted the creativity and analytical skills of CEBA's budding researchers and underscored the college's commitment to fostering a culture of academic excellence and innovation.

The compilation of works showcased in the competition was notable, commented by the faculty who attended the event. From complex data processing treatment to analysis, each team passionately presented their work to a panel of highly-experienced professors who diligently assessed each research that were presented to them.





### CEBA- HOD welcomes delegates of external research evaluators

"To truly assess our students' research capabilities, this rigorous task should be entrusted to a panel of external evaluators," remarked Dr. Mohammed Ali Ahmed Obaid, Head of the CEBA Department at UTAS-Nizwa, referring to how graduation projects should be evaluated.

In alignment with this vision, the Student Research Committee extended invitations to a team of experienced faculty researchers from CEBA-UTAS Ibri to serve as lead evaluators for the Graduation Projects across various degree specializations at CEBA-UTAS Nizwa.

This collaborative initiative not only ensures objective and high-quality evaluation but also promotes knowledge exchange and academic synergy between faculty members of the participating campuses. The viva voce sessions were conducted on 20th May 2025, held in the classrooms of the F-Building at UTAS-Nizwa, South Campus.

Such inter-campus cooperation marks a meaningful step toward academic enrichment, benefiting both evaluators and graduating students alike.





## Gears in Motion: Students Discover Mwasalat's Industrial Pulse

Through the able guidance of Dr. Haidar Abbas and Dr. Balakrishnan Sumasundaram, an industry visit was made by several CEBA students to the Mwasalat headquarters in Muscat. Held on May 6, 2025, the enriching industrial visit to Mwasalat aimed at providing firsthand exposure to industrial practices of Oman's biggest and well-renowned public transportation company. The visit featured a presentation on Mwasalat's history and operations, a tour of various functional departments, and a short city ride on a Mwasalat bus. Key discussions included the company's journey, operational challenges, and future plans. This initiative enhanced students' understanding of industry standards while fostering communication, teamwork, and technical skills.







## Exploring Knowledge: A Visit to Hisn Al Shumookh Library

On February 25, 2025, three Supply Chain Management graduation project groups embarked on a highly informative visit to the Hisn Al Shumookh Library, located at the Oman Across Ages Museum. Organized by Dr. Hemavathy N. and Dr. Haidar Abbas, the visit aimed to enhance the students' familiarity with academic resources, both physical and electronic.

The key objective was to equip students with the skills to access credible and comprehensive research material independently. This aligns with the broader academic goals of fostering lifelong learning and independent inquiry among students. The students showed keen interest and actively participated in the session, asking questions and exploring features of the databases demonstrated.

This library visit not only achieved its objectives but also emphasized the importance of integrating resource-based learning into academic programs to empower students with essential research competencies.

# INDUSTRY VISIT



## *Accounting Meets Banking: UTAS-Nizwa Accounting Students Practical Banking Exposure at Bank Muscat- Firq Branch*



As part of their Banking and Insurance Accounting coursework, 30 students from the Accounting Specialization, Department of Economics and Business Administration, University of Technology and Applied Sciences (UTAS), Nizwa, under the supervision of faculty coordinator Mr. Balerao Shiva Kumar, conducted an educational visit to Bank Muscat- Firq Branch on 21st April 2025. This industrial visit aimed to provide accounting students with practical exposure, enabling them to apply classroom theories to real-world banking workflows. Additionally, it highlighted the technological integration in modern finance, showcasing innovations such as cybersecurity and paperless banking systems.

Mr. Mahmood Khalifa Al Yaaqubi, Branch Manager- Bank Muscat- Firq Branch, shared profound insights into current banking operations, innovative financial services, and anticipated future changes in the sector. The interactive session also highlighted essential career skills and emerging trends, making the visit both educational and inspiring.

The industrial visit significantly enhanced students' understanding of the banking industry's evolving landscape, with special emphasis on digital transformation and customer-centric services. Demonstrations of automated banking systems and a lively Q&A session provided practical knowledge about fintech advancements and cybersecurity measures.

Such collaborations reinforce the university's commitment to industry-academia partnerships, ensuring students are well-prepared to meet the challenges and opportunities of Oman's dynamic financial sector.





A blaze of brilliance swept through the University of Technology and Applied Sciences (UTAS), Nizwa, as the College of Economics and Business Administration (CEBA) proudly hosted “Ignite Accountants: 2025” – an inter-branch extravaganza that brought together the brightest minds in accounting from across the UTAS branches. The event was spearheaded by Dr. Mohammed Madhar and Dr. Valliappan Mutthiah Chettiar of the Accounting Section.

Under the insightful leadership of Mr. Talal Abdul Rasheed Al Bulushi, Head of the Accounting Unit, and Dr. Mohammed Ali Ahmed Obaid, Head of the Department, the event transpired as a vibrant showcase of talent, knowledge, and innovation.

The ceremony unfolded in the esteemed presence of Dr. Mohammed Rashid Hamdan Al Mamari, Assistant Vice-Chancellor of UTAS Nizwa; Mr. Saif Al Toobi, Director of Administration and Finance; Mr. Ahmed Al Abri, Head of Administration; and a strong contingent of academic and administrative staff and students.



The event's highlight was the presence of Mr. Ahmed Salim Saif Al Toobi, DG for Administrative and Financial Affairs at the Ministry of Interior Affairs, who graced the occasion as Chief Guest. Honored guests from Petroleum Development Oman (PDO) – Mr. Zahir S. Al Wahaibi, Operations Excellence Manager, and Mr. Sultan Saif Al Azri, Finance Controller – brought real-world insights into the accounting profession.

## IGNITE ACCOUNTANTS



## Winners!

At the “Ignite Accountants: 2025” event held on April 16, 2025, at UTAS Nizwa, student talent shone brightly across three exciting competitions. In the Quiz Competition, Manar Jamal Jaafar and Abdul Salam Ali Namani from UTAS Muscat clinched the Winner titles, while Hibat Al Rahman Yahya Mohammed Salim Al Yahmadi and Hafsa Rashid Said Al Falahi from UTAS Ibra earned the Runner-up positions. The Poster Making Contest saw a strong performance from Muscat as well, with Nourin Zahir Al Rawahi and Manal Harith Al Wardi declared Winners. Hagar Nasser Said Al Sawafi and Heba Saif Amir Al Aamri from UTAS Nizwa were named Runners-up, showcasing creative flair from the host campus. In the Smart Accountant Competition, Noof Mohammed Rashid Al Sawafi from UTAS Ibra emerged as the Winner, highlighting analytical acumen and accounting expertise. All winners and runners-up were honored with prizes, mementos, and certificates, in recognition of their outstanding performance among peers from across UTAS branches.

## UTAS NIZWA STUDENTS TRIUMPH AT NATIONAL HACKATHON



Muscat, May 14, 2025 — The University of Technology and Applied Sciences (UTAS), Muscat Branch, proudly hosted the Hackathon Competition from May 12 to 13, 2025. The maiden event spanned multiple UTAS branches and included participation from several private universities and colleges across the Sultanate of Oman. It brought together some of the brightest student minds in the country to collaborate and compete in a dynamic, innovation-driven environment.

UTAS, CEBA-Nizwa is especially proud to announce that a talented team from the Human Resources Department at UTAS Nizwa secured first place in this prestigious competition. The team's project stood out for its originality, practical application, and alignment with national development objectives. Their success is a testament to their hard work, creative thinking, and commitment to excellence.

The winning team was composed of Abdulrahman Abdullah Al-Shereiqli, Hisham Mohammed Al-Mahrouqi, Ahlam Yousef Al-Omairi, Al-Rayyan Nasser Al-Alawi, and Sara Saeed Al-Batashiya. The team was mentored by Mr. Ahmed Mohammed Al-Bandari, one of the lecturers in DEBA-Nizwa.

## *CEBA Student wins Art Competition in Sohar*

In a proud moment for the CEBA-Nizwa, Al Hussain Al Amri, a dedicated Bachelor's in Accounting student, brought home top honors during the 21st Student Forum: Identity, Omani and Citizenship, held at the UTAS-Sohar Campus from May 17–21, 2025.

This high-profile national forum, organized under the theme of celebrating Omani identity and citizenship, featured a diverse range of activities that encouraged creativity, cultural awareness, and student engagement. The event was inaugurated in the presence of Dr. Huda Al Shueili, Deputy Vice Chancellor for Electronic Systems and Student Services, UTAS, and attended by university officials, faculty, and students from multiple branches of UTAS across the Sultanate.



Al Hussain Al Amri distinguished himself among 164 individual participants who competed in various artistic categories, including photography, drawing, and chanting. His exceptional talent and expression earned him second prize overall and second place in the Art Competition, a category that demanded not only technical skill but also the ability to convey deep national pride and cultural values through visual art. The forum served as a platform for students to explore and express their Omani identity through creativity and dialogue, promoting a stronger sense of belonging, patriotism, and mutual respect.



Al Hussain's achievement highlights the holistic development encouraged at UTAS—balancing academic excellence with artistic and cultural engagement.

His win stands as a testament to the vibrant student life and support for talent nurtured at UTAS, and it inspires fellow students to participate actively in such enriching opportunities.



# PRIME 5.0 COLLABORATES WITH MINISTRY FOR AN AWARENESS CAMPAIGN DRIVE



## Mentoring and Monitoring

Since its first launch in October 2020, PRIME students were coached and mentored by the faculty of the Marketing Specialization through the leadership of its Head of Unit, Ms. Turkiya Al Busaidi. Since then, the PRIME Mentoring Team- Dr. Elbert Bryan Vidal, Dr. Premkumar Arul, Dr. Abdulkadir Shehu Abdulwahab, Mr. Sibi Abraham, Ms. Amina Abd Razak and Ms. Habiba Al Salti have given their commitment to train the students. PRIME 5.0 is even made better by the participation of the faculty from the Design Department, UTAS-Nizwa, by helping the students design their marketing collaterals such as event posters, and logos.

The Professional Innovative Marketing Executive (PRIME) 5.0, a co-curricular workshop for Marketing specialization, on its fifth iteration, initiated a partnership with the Ministry of Commerce, Industry, and Investment Promotion – Nizwa.

The partnership enabled PRIME Student trainees to plan, organize, and implement an awareness campaign about commerce-related causes promoted by the Ministry.

These causes relate to health and safety, trade practices, and reminders about purchasing cosmetics, toys, electrical equipment, and weighing scales.

This project is also conducted in collaboration with the Design students of UTAS-Nizwa. The tripartite enabled the design and business students to develop a cause-related campaign, which was exhibited on June 16, 2025, at the Nizwa Grand Mall.

Four talented and creative groups spent countless hours conceptualizing, developing marketing collaterals, and tying them all together in a cohesive campaign.



## SPIRIT OF GIVING IN RAMADAN



### A TIME TO GIVE



In the spirit of compassion and community, the Business Club of the College of Economics and Business Administration (CEBA) carried out a special community service initiative on March 18, 2025, during the Holy Month of Ramadan. The event, held at Madain Industrial City, was a heartfelt demonstration of generosity, where student representatives distributed Iftar food packages to the needy.

This initiative was not merely a distribution of food; it was an expression of empathy, cultural respect, and the values deeply embedded in the spirit of Ramadan. As the sun set and the time for Iftar approached, male student volunteers came together to share food packages containing dates, milk, water, bananas, and cake—traditional items that are both nourishing and symbolically significant during the fasting month.

With around 20 participants involved, the event successfully reached out to the external community, specifically targeting laborers who often face long working hours away from their families during Ramadan. By providing them with Iftar, the CEBA students not only helped alleviate a small part of their daily burden but also offered a moment of connection and care.

The primary objective of this activity was to instill in students the value of giving back to society. Ramadan, being a month that emphasizes charity, reflection, and solidarity, served as the perfect backdrop for this act of community service. It encouraged students to embody the spirit of the month—not just through personal piety, but through meaningful action.

What makes this initiative particularly significant is the way it beautifully blended education with social responsibility, and spirituality with service. It taught students that leadership is not only about achievement and innovation but also about humility, empathy, and social contribution.

Through the able supervision of Mr. Mudasir Rahim Shagoo, the event ran smoothly, with no notable challenges reported—an encouraging indicator of the students' preparedness and commitment. No immediate suggestions for improvement were raised, though future repetitions of this initiative may consider scaling up the number of food packages or involving female students in different aspects of the preparation and planning.





## Short Video Competition

The Business Society hosted an Interbranch Short Video Competition online via MS Teams on April 30, 2025. Aimed at promoting the department and enhancing student skills, the event featured creative video entries and fostered camaraderie across teams from Nizwa, Muscat and Ibra branch. Despite challenges, it successfully highlighted students' communication, creativity, and technical abilities, highlighting the students' resilience despite of adversity.



## **Stock Trading Seminar**

On February 26, 2025, DEBA's Business Club hosted a stock trading workshop, "Let's Trade," at UTAS-Nizwa. An expert guest speaker introduced 20 students to the basics of stock trading through lectures and interactive games. The session enhanced financial literacy and promoted key graduate attributes such as communication and critical thinking.

## Victory in Ibra



## CEBA STUDENTS EMERGE AS WINNERS IN INNOVATIA 2025

On April 14, 2025, UTAS Ibra hosted the highly anticipated Innovatia 2025 competition, bringing together creative minds to tackle real-world problems through innovation and technology. Organized as a student competition under the CEBA department, the event focused on emerging themes such as Artificial Intelligence and financial technology, promoting both teamwork and digital literacy.

Participants engaged in simultaneous challenges designed to test their communication, leadership, and problem-solving skills. Reem Said Abdallah Al Abdali and Reem Dhahir Sulaiman Al Amri secured the Second Prize for their impressive project under the AI in HR category. Meanwhile, the Third Prize in the TechPortfolio category went to the dynamic team of Mohammad Sarhan Al Busaidi, Issa Shaikhan Al Busaidi, and Aseel Hamed Al Kharusi.





## CEBA Specialization Day

The College of Economics and Business Administration (CEBA) – UTAS, Nizwa hosted a dynamic Specialization Exhibition and Mini Open Day on May 6, 2025. Graced by the presence of Dr. Mohammed Ali Ahmed Obaid, HoD, the event aimed to introduce first-year diploma students to the diverse specializations available within DEBA, including Tourism, Marketing, Human Resources, and Accounting. The exhibition featured interactive displays, engaging presentations, and games organized by senior students, providing attendees with firsthand insights into each specialization.

Supervised by the Business Club faculty advisers, Dr. Maria Vidal, Dr. Premkumar Arul and Mr. Mudasir Rahim Shagoo, this hands-on format not only helped junior students understand the essence of each field but also provided a collaborative space where they could ask questions and seek peer advice. The event was designed to foster several graduate attributes, including communication skills, teamwork and leadership, discipline knowledge, creativity and innovation, entrepreneurial thinking, critical analysis, and lifelong learning.







## EMPOWERING EDUCATION THROUGH THE RESEARCH-TEACHING NEXUS (RTN): A UTAS NIZWA PERSPECTIVE

Today's rapidly changing society requires universities to teach more than just facts – they need to empower and educate students on how to think, explore, and solve real-life problems. Achieving this goal depends on a strong connection between research and teaching, known as the Research-Teaching Nexus (RTN). In this model, research influences classroom instruction, and classroom learning and discussion can also lead to creative research ideas."

Academic excellence requires a dynamic yet complex synergy called the Research-Teaching Nexus (RTN). According to Wilhelm von Humboldt's 19th-century vision, research and teaching are intertwining threads in higher education, not just parallel functions. As Oman transitions into a knowledge-based economy aligned with Vision 2040, the integration of RTN into our university structure is not just timely- it is transformative.



Research enriches the learning experience. Students stay more engaged when they tackle real-world issues, debate case studies, or perform mini-research projects. For example, when students read and analyze recent research or administer a classroom survey, they apply theory to practice.

RTN also enriches teaching. The classroom takes on a more interactive and meaningful role when faculty integrate research into their teaching or lead students in open-ended, discovery-based activities. In response, students' questions and fresh perspectives can breathe new life into a research field. This generates innovation that, in turn, produces new discoveries and understandings.

Universities also benefit from a powerful RTN. Strong connections between research and teaching enhance education quality and the university's academic standing. It is consistent with UTAS's aim of developing work-ready, research-literate and life-long learners.

Linked to Healey's Model (2005), CEBA, UTAS Nizwa operationalizes RN in four distinctive ways:

- Research-Led: Passive learning about research.
- Research-Tutored: Faculty-guided research discussions.
- Research-Oriented: Structured research methodology and tasks.
- Research-Based: Independent research tasks.

By nurturing students to take on the mindsets of thinker, researcher, and leader, we are establishing a BRIDGES culture that promotes collaborative inquiry — where each classroom is a discovery lab, and each student is identified as an innovator.

### About the author



With a distinguished record of service at the University, Dr. Uma has made significant contributions to enhancing research excellence and elevating the teaching and learning experience within the Department of Economics and Business Administration (DEBA). She currently serves as the team leader of the department's Accreditation Committee, guiding efforts to maintain and exceed academic standards.

Dr. Uma holds a PhD in Business Administration from the University of Madras, Chennai, India. Her academic focus lies in Total Quality Management, a field in which she has demonstrated deep expertise. In 2024, she authored a book titled Total Quality Management, published by SJ Publications, India, further cementing her status as a thought leader in the discipline.

An accomplished researcher, Dr. Uma has been awarded multiple Internal Research Grants (IRG) and University Research Grants (URG) by the University of Technology and Applied Sciences (UTAS). Her unwavering passion for academic innovation has led to her most recent initiative—proposing the Research-Teaching Nexus protocol, a visionary approach aimed at integrating scholarly inquiry with pedagogical practice.

# Stress Management in the Workplace

By: Dr. Valliappan Muthiah Chettiar

Stress is a condition in which a person's physiological and psychological systems are disrupted. Stress is the body's reaction to any demands or changes in its internal and external environment, such as temperature, pollution, humidity, and working circumstances. It produces psychological tension in these days of competition when people want to outdo what others have accomplished, resulting in an imbalance between expectations and resources.

Workplace stress lowers productivity, increases managerial demands, and makes workers sick in a variety of ways. Workplace stress has an impact on brain performance, including work-related skills such as memory, focus, and learning.

Everyone reacts to stress differently, and only by comprehending the nature of individual responses can one begin to combat stress in oneself and others. Stress reduction or elimination is essential for an individual's psychological and physical well-being.

Instead of avoiding difficult events, effective stress management allows the individual to deal with or cope with them. Individuals can increase their physical and mental resources to deal with stress by using strategies like time management, mind-body relaxation exercises, and seeking social support. Providing employees with the services of a counsellor is also beneficial, in addition to helping them adopt particular coping skills to deal with stress.

Many solutions have been created to aid in the management of workplace stress. Some of the tactics are aimed at individuals, while others are aimed at businesses. Dealing with stress-related claims takes much time from management. Apart from the obvious humanitarian and ethical factors, there are clearly compelling economic and financial motivations for firms to manage and minimize stress at work. The need for stress management has never been greater

*“Everyone reacts to stress differently, and only by comprehending the nature of individual responses can one begin to combat stress in oneself and others.”*

## About the author:

Dr. Valliappan Muthiah Chettiar is an accomplished academician with 29 years of teaching experience in Accounting and Finance.



He holds a PhD (2012) and currently serves as an Assistant Professor at the University of Technology and Applied Sciences, Nizwa, Oman. A top-ranking graduate in both his Bachelor's and Master's in Business Administration, he has supervised two PhD scholars. Dr. Valliappan has published 30 research papers in esteemed journals and conferences, managed funded research projects, and organized over 25 academic events, including seminars and faculty development programs. His career reflects a strong commitment to research and education.



## BEYOND BUZZWORDS – STUDENT ENGAGEMENT MUST BE REIMAGINED IN THE DIGITAL AGE



In today's fast-evolving educational landscape, where digital platforms and online resources are increasingly replacing physical classrooms, one might assume that technology alone holds the key to improved student outcomes. Yet, recent research by Dr. Rafiq et al., published in the *International Journal of Innovation and Learning*, challenges that assumption. Their findings, rooted in data from Omani higher education, send a clear message: student engagement—not just access to tools—remains the bedrock of academic success.

Traditional classroom activities have the strongest influence on both engagement and performance. This idea seems surprising in an era obsessed with digital disruption, but in reality, this still holds water—meaningful interaction, structure, and presence—whether physical or virtual—still matter deeply.

The authors argue for more than blended learning or technological upgrades. They advocate a rethinking of pedagogy itself, placing students' active involvement at the heart of the learning process. The data supports it: self-regulation and digital tools alone fall short unless tied to strong instructional design and teacher-student interaction.

Educators and policymakers should heed this study's implications. Instead of chasing the next digital trend, institutions must re-center their strategies on cultivating deep engagement, interaction, and continuous improvement. Innovation in learning isn't about abandoning the classroom—it's about revitalizing it with purpose.

“meaningful (classroom) interaction, structure, and presence—whether physical or virtual—still matter deeply.”

This content is excerpted with permission from a research article entitled Exploring learning mechanisms and influences on student engagement and academic performance

by Dr. Mohamed Rafiq Nagoor Meeran, Dr. Shamsuddin Khuthbuddin, Ms. Asila Abdullah Saif Al-Hinai, Ms. Naseema Nazeer Ahmed and Mr. V., Muruga Prakash published by the *International Journal of Innovation and Learning (IJIL)*, Vol. 37, No. 4, 2025

## "ECO-LABELS, TRUST, AND VALUES: WHAT REALLY DRIVES TOURISTS TO GO GREEN?"

Through an award-winning paper presented at the 1st International Conference for Academics and Professionals on Tourism and Hospitality, held at the Sultan Qaboos Youth Complex for Culture and Entertainment, Salalah, Sultanate of Oman, Dr. Jeannette Ong Ee-Lyn investigated the critical factors that influence tourists' sustainable travel behaviors around the Sultanate. Grounded in the Value-Belief-Norm (VBN) theory as its theoretical foundation, the study examined how awareness of green certifications, perceived credibility of eco-labels, environmental values, and trust impact tourists' decisions to engage in eco-friendly behaviors.

Notably, Dr. Ong Ee-Lyn discovered that tourists who are more aware of green certifications are significantly more inclined to adopt sustainable travel practices. Furthermore, when eco-labels are perceived as credible and authentic, they positively influence behavioral choices underscoring the need for transparency and consistency in the issuance of these certifications.

Interestingly, the study found that the role of trust in eco-labels, while assumed to be influential, did not significantly moderate behavioral outcomes, suggesting that practical considerations such as cost or convenience may override trust in shaping decisions hence, highlighting the need for deeper investigation into the complexities of trust in environmental labeling.

This research offers timely implications for tourism stakeholders, policymakers, and sustainability advocates. It calls for enhanced communication strategies to raise awareness of green certifications and the need to strengthen the credibility and transparency of eco-labeling systems. By aligning sustainability initiatives with tourists' intrinsic environmental values, Oman can further position itself as a leader in responsible tourism in the region.



The article is excerpted from Green Certification and Sustainable Travel Behaviors: Impact of Eco-Labels on Sustainable Tourism in Oman, a paper that was written by Dr. Jeanette Ong Lyn and presented at the 1st International Conference for Academics and Professionals on Tourism and Hospitality



# PHOTO GALLERY

## *Spring at UTAS-Nizwa*

PHOTOS BY: SHIFA DAHIM SUWAID DAHIM AL RIYAMI





Photos by: Nasra Said Ahmed Al Abri

