

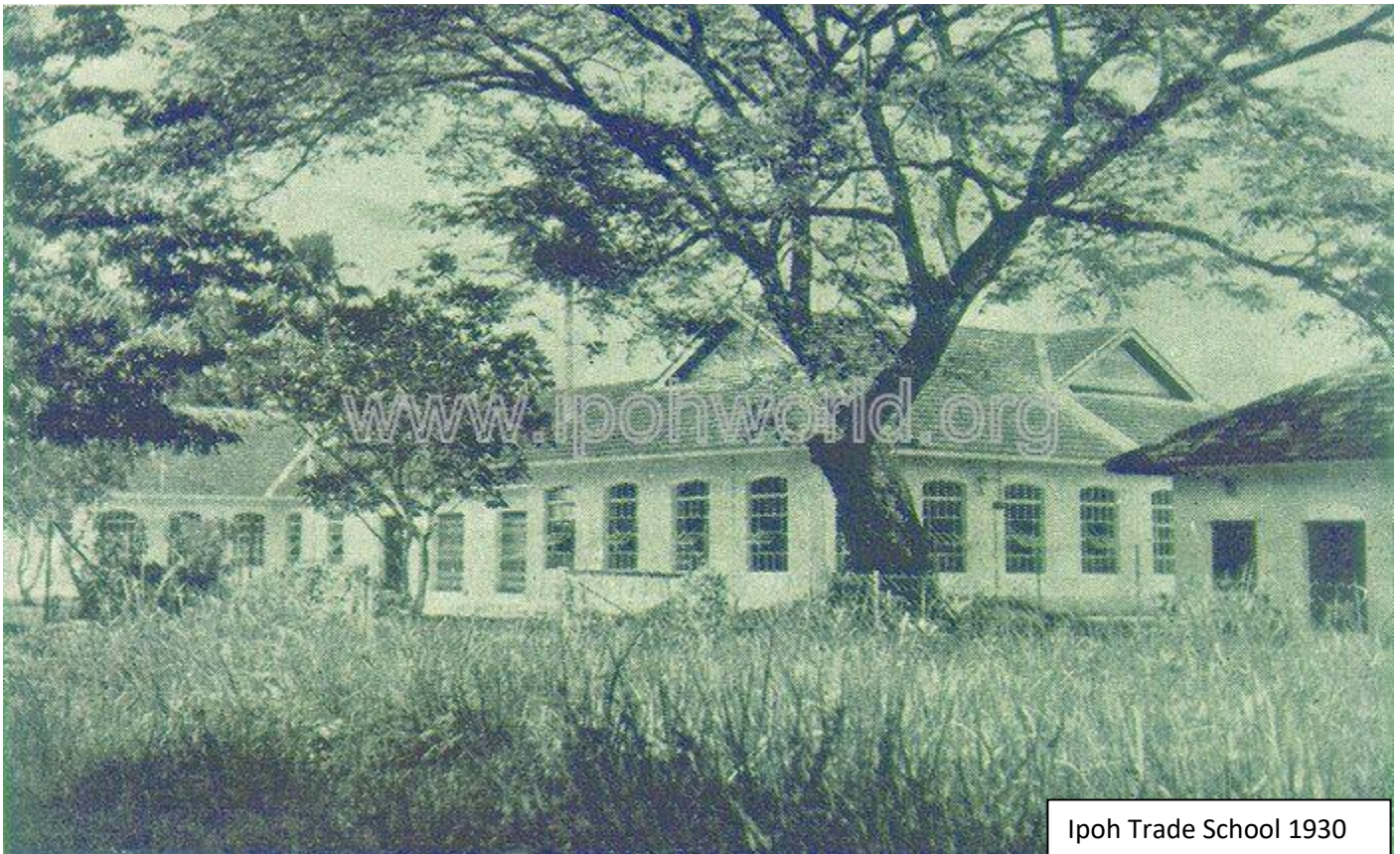
Nostalgia - "Schooling Doesn't Assure Employment, But Skill Does."

"Schooling Doesn't Assure Employment, but Skill Does," so said Amit Kalantri, author, magician and mentalist, recently, and just about 100 years ago the Ipoh Town Council had exactly the same thoughts when they applied for federal funding to build a trade school. Characteristically, the request was turned down due to lack of funds. It would have been the first such establishment in Malaya. Then, in 1923, KL pulled a fast one on Ipoh by releasing funds for their own trade school. Ipoh reapplied and was told to wait until the benefits of the KL school had been assessed. The editor of Ipoh's own newspaper, The Times of Malaya was not impressed and made that quite clear in his editorial.

Eventually, on June 2, 1930, The Singapore Free Press and Mercantile Advertiser reported,

"IPOH TRADE SCHOOL OPENED – Malay Students.

The article reported that the newly-built school had been ready for some time but could not open as there was a shortage of staff. It added that Mr H.A. Jeff, District Engineer FMS, had now been seconded to the Education Department as Principal.



The initial intake was 25 young men, of which 23 were Malays, with one Chinese and one Indian. The Chief Instructor was transferred from the Federated Malay States Railways Central Workshops and his assistant from the Kuala Lumpur Trade School. The new school was situated directly opposite Anderson School and close to the District Hospital.

The students' first task was to assist in the final construction of the school building and installing machinery. Practical training took place on heavy Lorries from "Albion Motors" from Scotland and England's "John Thornycroft and Company" operational vehicles from the Public Works Department, Ipoh.

Each student received \$10 per month as a scholarship. Tuition, overalls and shoes were provided free once per year. Initially, accommodation and food were provided in a nearby shophouse, by a contract, at \$8 per head per month.

Eventually, part of the first Anderson School Hostel, established in 1921, was allocated to the trade school, despite it already being quite crowded.



The Trade School Workshop 1949

Thereafter, 25 students enrolled each year, the school operating a three-year syllabus. Final year students gained experience by undertaking work for other government departments, such as repairing hospital ambulances. At first, this work was completed free of charge but when charges were brought in, the Education Department earned \$7500 per year from the boys' labour.

From 1939 to 1941, the school also supported the British Military vehicles in Perak, but in December 1941 the Japanese invasion reached Perak and the school was closed. Subsequently, all equipment being removed by the Japanese. The school was reopened after the Japanese surrender, renamed the "Junior Technical (Trade) School", and introduced extra training in electrical engineering, bricklaying and carpentry in addition to its previous syllabus.

Today, the school has gone, but the wheel has turned full circle and the authorities are once again keen on skill training. Why do we never learn from our past!