

aspire

MAGAZINE



PRINCIPAL MATTERS

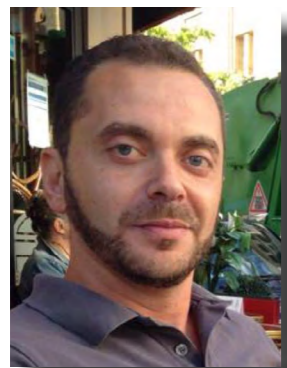
by MR. CHARLES THEUMA

It gives me great pleasure to write this short introduction just as we received formal news of the Institute's re-affirmation as an Affiliate of the University of London International Programme.

Saint Martin's Institute of Higher Education is a pioneer in quality private tertiary education and though the mountain hasn't been climbed yet, we have achieved a lot in these past fifteen years. It is appropriate to be able to celebrate our thirtieth anniversary in such a grand way. It is a huge stride for us, and now we look forward to continue developing the Institute to be even better and always at the forefront for 2020.



“Wish you all a very happy Easter!”



A Word from the Editor

by JOE CAMILLERI

Another issue, and nearly another academic year over, but definitely not without the salient events being once again brought to you, my dear readers on Aspire Magazine.

While the students at St. Martin's are finishing off their mock exams, we can find some time to reminisce over what has happened in the first three months of 2015, and as you will see in this issue, quite a lot indeed.

From the cover storying, detailing the great success of yet another Careers Seminar, attended by over 30 companies and growing bigger year by year, to the graduation at the renowned Barbican Centre in London and so much more in between.

In this issue we have created a new section which will show you who our students are and what makes the lecturers and administration continue sallying out every day in their daily *lust* ... dare I say, for the academic and more. In this section, titled - 'Up Close and Personal', you will read about personal stories of men and women like you, all joined, my dear reader by one common motive - Aspiration!

Wish you all a Happy Easter!



Once again, a myriad of happy and excited faces decked many social network pages, as students who have spent the last 3 or more years heads down in books and hands raised at lectures, attended the crowning event of their personal and collective achievement. The graduation ceremony at the Barbican Centre in London is a celebration which St. Martin's students await with excited trepidation - the journey is long and hard yet the fruit is sweet and satisfying beyond simple words.

The Editor of Aspire eZine and all the staff of St. Martin's Institute, joins the Principal and Heads of Departments of St. Martin's Institute in wishing even more success in the journey of life to the graduates.

Aspire is regaling you today with some memories of the occasion.

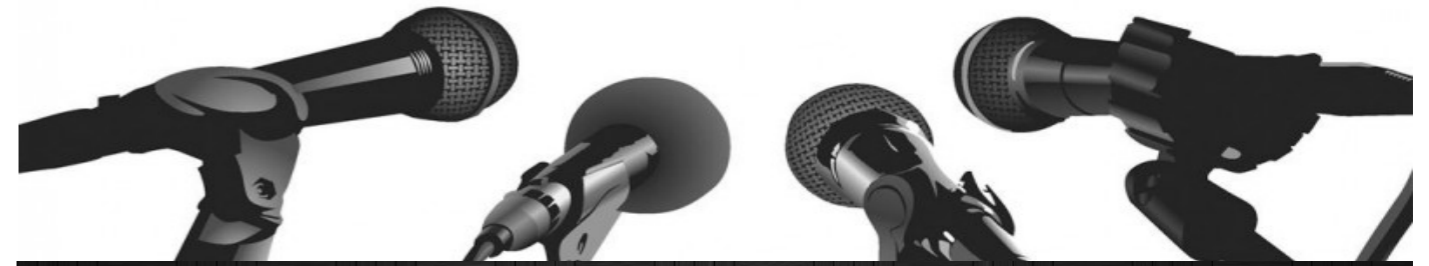




« Celebration time after the conferment of Degrees at the Barbican in London.

Group photo with the Departemental Heads at St. Martin's and leading lecturers at Royal Holloway; one of the leading colleges of the Univeristy of London. »

The Barbican is Europe's largest multi-arts and conference venue presenting a diverse range of art, music, theatre, dance, film and creative learning events. »



Public Lectures



Dr. Aquilina started his presentation by citing the Robert Gordon University in Aberdeen, as the research institute he graduated from. He thanked his supervisors and acknowledged the wholesome support of SMI, especially that of the principal, Charles Theuma.

Dr. Aquilina described himself as a software developer who had been working in this particular field for 33years, analysing systems in medium and large organisations. Seeing himself as a 'catalyst for change', it was through his role of lecturer at SMI that he decided to join his work experience with academia to research further into fields of improvement in Maltese and other small island societies, hence his studies into how Information Technology is affecting and could affect further success in Businesses. »

Business – I.T. Alignment Patterns of Small Firms in Malta

Dr. Ronald Aquilina was introduced by the Principal of St. Martin's Institute of Higher Education (SMI) as a friend for over 20 years and a colleague for 11 of those years. He continued to say that Dr. Aquilina was not a person who was content in simply raising his personal academic level, but insisted on being a mentor for many and ascertaining the academic success of those round him.

Mr. Theuma, the Principal, spoke about the scepticism that had dogged St. Martin's for years and today we are not simply seeing it thrive, but in its 30th year and expanding its horizons. Dr. Aquilina, one of the first to join St. Martin's as a lecturer in 2003, and one of the first two Doctorate graduates at SMI.




Business-IT Alignment Patterns of Small Firms in Malta

by Dr. Ronald Aquilina

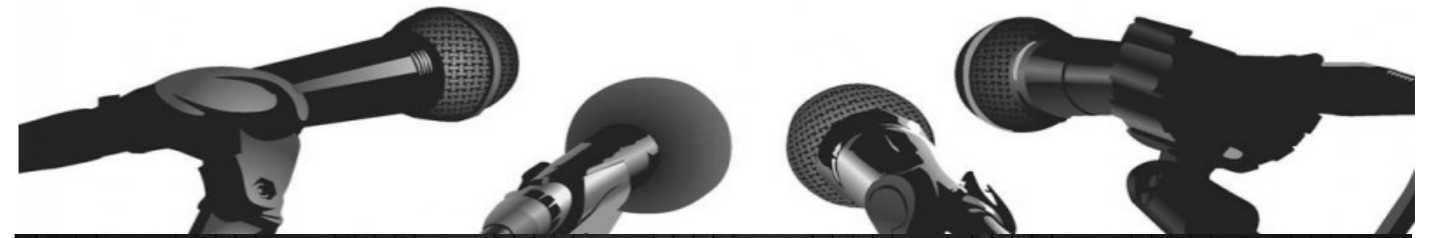


A substantive model, which identifies four distinct IT alignment patterns, denotes each common path that a group of firms took in their movement from one alignment equilibrium state to another, throughout their life-cycle stages.

This study has substantive application and comprises several implications for the development of IT adoption behaviour when small firms endeavour to strategically align business with IT. It provides policy-makers, academic researchers and small firms' owner-managers with a theoretical framework that can provide them with factors that can predict the kind of alignment patterns that are likely to occur. Findings indicate that the quality of IT related technological solutions that are taken up by each small firm are reliant on the owner-manager's characteristics that focus mainly on the knowledge of internal IT expertise and the project management capabilities to manage IT outsourcers. Given that few studies have been conducted to study and establish patterns of IT alignment in small firms, this research provides an important contribution to knowledge and to the existing academic literature. 

The contribution of small firms towards the creation of economic value in a country's Gross Domestic Product, employment and innovation is widely acknowledged. Relatively little is known on how small firms are adopting IT strategically to achieve business-IT alignment and how alignment changes over time. This study examines from a dynamic perspective IT adoption actions undertaken by owner-managers, in relation to business-IT alignment in small firms in the island state of Malta.

To attain its research objectives, the methodological stance adopted in this research study is that of grounded theory. Moving away from a deductive approach, this study embraces a constructivist approach using a combination of inductive and abductive thought. No fewer than thirty-one in-depth interviews are conducted with owner-managers to observe alignment patterns of IT adoption behaviour in their respective small firms operating in Malta and employing up to 49 employees. Four business-IT alignment equilibrium states are identified, serving as markers to map out the common IT alignment paths that each firm pursued, not necessarily in linear form, during their operational years.



Public Lectures



Dr. Roberta Fenech

Charles Theuma, the Principal of St. Martin's Institute of Higher Education, introduced Dr. Roberta Fenech as an ex student from his past. He spoke of her as being a motivating factor for all to follow – a mother, a wife and a teacher, continuing her studies and graduating her PhD. Today, she was presenting her research to the general public. Mr. Theuma said that Malta requires people like Dr. Fenech, who researched subjects very much pertinent to our island state. He continued to say that the change in business environment needed people like her to facilitate the way forward of the myriad of small businesses present on the island.

Dr. Fenech started her presentation by describing her journey to carry out her study and how changing it was for her personally. Meeting various family business leaders has made her grow within herself. In Dr. Fenech's own words, "... a journey of discovery, at every stage thinking it was a complete study ... but each stage took me to another ..." Only time limitations brought her to a stop in her studies.


The presentation delved into the analogy used with a team race – passing the baton in the title of the presentation refers to the joint effort needed by all members of a team in a typical relay race. Dr. Fenech described her use of both quantitative and qualitative research methods so as not to miss on anything in her studies.

Attention to detail was the rule of the day. After presenting her research questions to her audience, Dr. Fenech embarked on the listing of 9 factors discovered through her literature review.

1. Succession Planning
2. Strategic Management
3. Knowledge Transfer
4. Next Generation Self-Efficacy
5. Trust
6. Justice
7. Relational Competence
8. Leadership Development
9. Shared and Distribute Leadership

From these 9 factors, Dr. Fenech developed an 11-factor model. Most of the previous factors were still retained. The new factors were –

10. Stumbling Blocks
11. Facilitators
12. Next Generation Characteristics

Dr. Fenech spoke about discovering that she had been faced only with the tip of the proverbial iceberg, but in doing so discovered so much more in her quench to provide a solution to what was 'below the surface'. Amongst other issues discussed, were a list of positive and negative factors effecting family businesses in Malta; namely if tertiary education is killing family businesses or giving them a breath of fresh air and the separation between ownership and management. 



Generational Transitions in Family Business.

by Dr. Roberta Fenech



Preparing to pass the business to the next generation is the toughest, most critical and long-term challenge for a family business. Generational transitions bring about change at an individual, family and business level. The natural progression of a family business is that ownership becomes more diverse with every generation.

It is never too early to plan for succession as this issue needs to be addressed before it becomes personal and emotional, and can therefore be addressed comfortably and rationally. Families approach succession in different ways - the strategically oriented family develops new behaviour and anticipates change, whilst the adaptive family acts as soon as change is signalled, on the other hand the reactive family is forced to change by events that have occurred.

Transition planning needs to take into account business issues as well as the multiple roles and complex relationships within families. The application of justice in generational transitions is more complex in family than in non-family businesses due to the family component. Lack of fairness in transitions is a source of conflict. Fairness improves performance while also increasing commitments and the satisfaction of family members.

There are a number of positive contributors to generational transitions such as- good relationships between the current leaders and successors; a strong and involved board of directors; the wholehearted commitment of the current leaders and willingness for succession on the part of the next generation. The engagement and involvement of all stakeholders in discussions, the ability to manage conflicts, the way stakeholders learn and work together, and the willingness to unlearn current behaviour to embrace the new, also have positive effects on change. The work of the next generation both within and outside the family business is another important factor that contributes to effective succession.

The communication between generations supports the clarity about the process of transition and increases the awareness amongst the current leaders in the family about the next generation's perceptions and interests. As the family gets larger, the need for higher shared goals, the appreciation of the validity of different realities and communication all gain in importance. Professional help may be needed for deep-seated issues in the family.



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Up close... and PERSONAL

Ali Toshani and Mohamed 'Mu' Toshani are students currently studying at St. Martin's Institute of Higher Education (SMI). They have been living in Malta for the past 5 years. They wear jeans and t-shirts and sit side-by-side with Maltese students and other students from various other nationalities. They share notes on their Macbooks and browse through Facebook commenting on the posts of their friends. Their friends include diverse nationalities -all students, eager to further their studies and embark on the great adventure which is - Life.

But Ali and Muhammed (Mu) are at times considered as 'aliens' ... their crime is their nationality. Both are scared of going back to their native country, where they were born and raised, where they played and laughed and grew into the young men they are today. Young men, full of dreams, like the young men of their age from across the world.

Ali and Mu are cousins; Ali's mother and Mu's father are siblings. Everyone back in Libya considered them more like brothers than cousins. They were born a few months from each other and have spent their entire lives together. They grew up together in the same area and played daily together, building a bond which was to endure for years.

In 2009, Ali and Mu moved to Malta. Ali's father wanted him to study abroad and improve himself holistically. There was no doubt that wherever Ali would go, Mu would follow and thus the two cousins travelled to a tiny island north of Libya and they started their education in the Libyan school at Ta' Giorni. Wanting to continue on a business perspective, both enrolled in a Business and Entrepreneurship course at St. Martin's Institute of Higher Education, where they are currently finishing off their second year.

Every Summer, Christmas and Easter recess the boys were eager to join their family back in Libya and spend a few weeks of fun with their much missed parents and friends. These were days that both looked forward to eagerly, both as a break from their rigorous studies, but most of all as a chance to see their loved ones again after months of simple and long-distance phone calls. Libyans have very strong family ties and Ali and Mu weren't special in this regard.



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Generational Transitions in Family Business.

Continued from page 7

Setting up a task force to specifically address succession may be a way forward for family businesses who commit themselves to planning for succession. The succession planning system needs to be tailored to the family business culture, strategic plan, the skills required by leaders and the operating environment. Within the family system, the family council, family meetings and family constitution all contribute to laying out the ground rules that include succession and therefore minimise the threat of the family business being damaged by conflicts within it.

Transitions are a long process that require policies stating when and how family members become eligible for employment as well as the level of required commitment that must be made. Without freedom to choose the successors are less likely to make a strong commitment.

A personal development plan for successors is recommendable. This is a road map that describes the skills and attributes the successors already have, the skills and attributes they need to develop and the programme for acquiring such skills, together with a means for measuring progress.

As the successors take the role of managers they must demonstrate an ability to assume responsibility as well as supervise others. Strategic planning in this stage of the transition process is a key developmental tool. When the senior generation retires, the task of transforming the entrepreneurial vision into a shared mission that can inspire others is in the hands of the successive generation.

Family businesses reap the benefits of succession planning ensuring its continuity with minimal disruptions. The next generation have time to adjust whilst current leaders make retirement plans.

The role of the senior generation is crucial. Top executives always remember how much work has gone into building an organisation, but they often forget that the same amount of effort is necessary to ensure organisational survival when it comes to pass the baton to a new group of leaders.



Recommendations to the senior generation could be to define one's goal for the family business; recognise and openly praise the accomplishments of the next generation; encourage learning; increase responsibility of the next generation; make an early announcement and plan for one's retirement. The latter is feared by a number of leaders who have a negative attitude towards retirement. Retirement is a taboo subject in some family businesses.

On the other hand the next generation is encouraged to foster change whilst preserving the past; take responsibility for their own education and development; set aside parent-child relationships in relating to the senior generation; and feel empowered to build skills, credibility and cohesiveness.



The 2015 SMI Careers Symposium at Phoenicia Ballroom.

Ever since its inception in 2014, the Career's Symposium, organised by St. Martin's Institute of Higher Education, was an immediate success.



The hard work put into this effort by Academic and Marketing Staff of SMI paid off once again as this year's symposium on the 26th of February, was even larger than last year. With nearly 40 companies participating, covering 6 job sectors, all students who applied for this symposium were at a loss when it came to booking for their meetings. There were many students who had multiple interviews booked and crammed the 3 hours of the symposium with as many companies as possible.

The main aim of the symposium was to give SMI students a chance to interview for internships with major local and foreign companies. The secondary aim, though still of major importance, was to give the students involved as much practice as possible when it comes to meetings and experience of interviewing techniques used by HR sectors.

The main ballroom at the Phoenicia hotel in Valletta was effectively turned into a centre of opportunity for past, present and future students of St. Martin's Institute. Very few, if any, teaching institutions, can boast that they go out of their way in such an organised manner to present their students with representatives of major companies; eager to employ. This eagerness stems from the knowledge that St. Martin's students 'Go Further'. Some might think that this is a simple marketing boast, but a quick look at statistics and one can see that students from SMI have been employed regularly in paid internships, even during their 1st year of their course, due to a holistic knowledge ingrained in them during the early months of their academic life at SMI. In many cases these students go on to finish their respective courses and take on full-time employment at the company of their internship. There are also those who graduated and moved on, happy with the experience gained. Indeed it was interesting to see two past students of SMI, who had graduated with honours, and were now seated comfortably in the role of employers at prominent companies in the international business community.





Hear it from the STUDENTS

CAREERS SYMPOSIUM 2015



Wilbert Tabone – Computing 3rd Year

The Careers Symposium offered me a great opportunity to meet up with potential employers in a relaxed environment. Being able to chat with fourteen different entities in the span of a few hours is rarely heard of. Hence, once again, I thank St. Martin's for organising such an event.



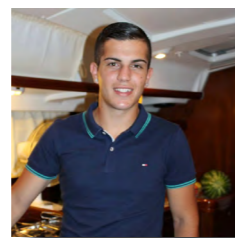
Valentina Zhang – Business 3rd Year

Hi, I'm Valentina, I am reading for a Degree in International Business. Thanks to St. Martins for providing this great opportunity. There were over thirty companies participated in the career event, making it a great experience for me and I had the great honour to be invited for a second interview!



Ali H. Alost - Business 1st Year

There are quite a few stressful moments in a student's life and most of which I am sure I have experienced. However, my most stressful yet exciting moment that was meant to be a glimpse at how my future job interviews may be, finally arrived on the 26th of February, thanks to St. Martin's. Ultimately the lesson that is meant to be learnt is that reality is never easy, yet a definite chance for defining yourself.



Andre Debono – Business 1st Year

I am thrilled to say that I am part of Grant Thornton, a major multinational organisation. This opportunity was presented to me by St. Martin's Institute during the careers day event. During the careers event many companies were present and this allowed us students to get exposure and experience of interviews. Being in my first year at St. Martin's I am pleased to say that my potential career is already shaping up, even though I am only 17 years old.



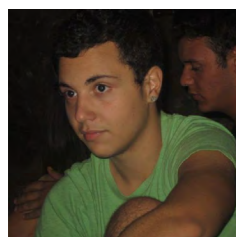
Salima Mehdawi – Academic English 1st Year

The Careers event was something totally new for me, I have never been to a job interview before so I didn't know how things would be. At first I was very nervous, I didn't know what to do and how they would respond to me, but with some encouraging words from the people around me I handled it well ... and it was amazing! This pushed me to work harder and to make my goals go further.



Brenda Xuereb – Computing 1st Year

My initial thoughts with regards to the Careers event was intimidating as so many prestigious companies were involved, however I summoned up enough courage and applied for 10 interviews in all. Though currently employed I still want to focus entirely on a job that would be based on what I study in my degree. The Careers event hosted by St Martins is an eye opener to every student, as it provides you with possibilities one may want to embark on in their career path. I personally recommend that other students give it a try, as it is a rewarding experience which will boost your confidence and broaden your horizons



Jacques Camilleri – Computing 1st Year

As the hour struck, I put on my game face and attempted to sell myself better than ever, I wanted to learn from such an amazing experience as best to my abilities, and oh how I learnt. Being a freshman I didn't expect much in return, but the experience I have gathered is invaluable, and as I am promoted from one year to another I have these experiences under my belt for the following year.

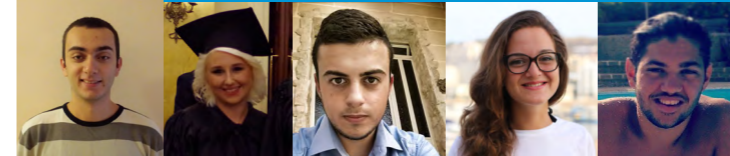


Franks Guo – Business 2nd Year

It was my pleasure to participate in this year's Careers Symposium at the Phoenixia hotel. For me it was a very good opportunity to gain some interview experience. The interviewers were very friendly and professional. I really enjoy talking to them and gaining so much experience.

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Council says



st. martin's institute student council



Celebrating Diversity

Celebrating Chinese New Year at the Valletta Waterfront. SMISC wish to thank all those who attended and wish all Chinese students at SMI a fantastic new year!

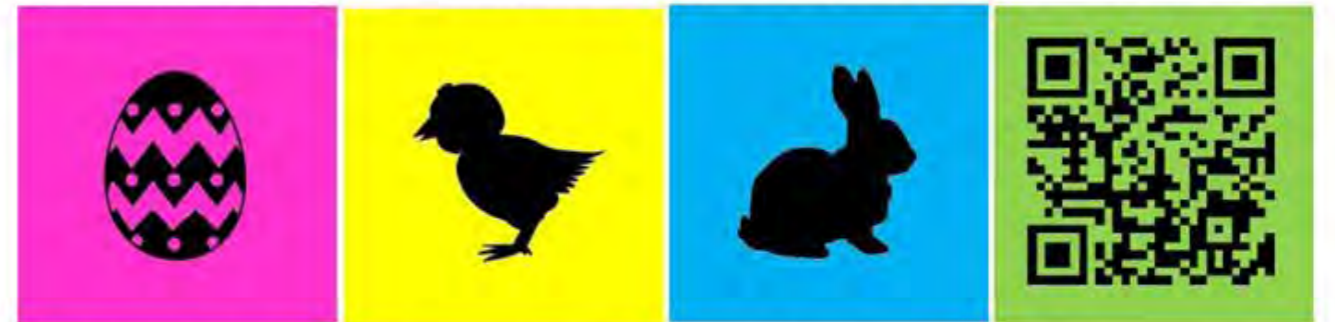


St. Martin's Student Council

in collaboration with St. Martin's Institute ...

PRESENTS

st' martin's institute student council



e a s t e r c e l e b r a t i o n s


... In Malta, Ali and Mu are constantly waiting for that phone call, telling them that it was their father, mother, sister or brother who had been taken or killed in the fighting...



SMI Student Visit to Malta Communications Authority

It is not uncommon for St. Martin's students to gather on a Friday for hands-on experience at places of interest around the islands, where and when depending entirely on the Degree being read for by the students involved. In fact several major companies are involved directly or indirectly in the continuous academic development of both St. Martin's students and lecturers.

With several field trips down memory lane and many more up his sleeve, Mr. Joe Borg, lecturer of Statistics at SMI tries to expose his students to as much reality as possible, knowing that a sizeable amount of experience and visual knowledge in the real world would definitely prepare students better and ensure a sense of holistic readiness once the students graduate and launch their careers.

The students who attended this particular trip, on Friday, 13th March, were immediately struck by the avant-garde surroundings of the offices of the Malta Communication Authority. After gathering in the MCA boardroom, the students were treated to an in-depth presentation from three MCA operatives, hailing from 3 different sectors that MCA specialised in. Mr. Roderick Gusman presided the presentation and was helped in demonstrating the detailed operations of this office by Mr. Ivan Bugeja and Mr. Kevin Caruana. The presentation delved mainly into statistics and analysis, and the problems faced by MCA to monitor and control the communication companies on the islands of Malta; acting as a regulator and applying European Union policies and measures. 




On the 17th of February, 2011, everything changed. Shortly after the world was celebrating the feast dedicating to love – Valentine's Day, a revolution started in Libya, sparked by the long years of unrest and fear. Ali and Mu's families, like many thousands of other Libyan families were excited about this new page in Libyan history, but were nonetheless scared of the implications.

Back in Tripoli, Mu's father suffered a heart attack. The reason - a massive explosion, just a street away. Mu could not travel to his native city to be at his side. He knew that there was a big possibility that he would not be allowed back to Malta to continue his studies. His father was adamant: he did not want his son and nephew to leave the island, knowing that they would be going into such a troubled state.

Their uncle was taken by Muammar Gaddafi's forces, but thankfully returned to his family after a day. Even for a military person, this experience was very daunting – he was the only survivor from the group of soldiers taken on the same day – the rest had been brutally murdered. In Malta, Ali and Mu are constantly waiting for that phone call, telling them that it was their father, mother, sister or brother who had been taken or killed in the fighting.

Both families are well-established families in Tripoli and the fall of Colonel Gaddafi was not the end of their sorrows. After the revolution, a time of instability reigned – a time when both Ali's and Mu's families were still scared of the possibility of losing family members, as gun-toting gangsters, a residue of the revolution, were still rampant in the streets, and safety and order looked uncertain.

As Libya is taking calculated baby-steps into democracy, another threat approaches, a threat very much at our own doorstep. 'Daash', known the world-over as ISIS (Islamic State in Iraq and Syria) entered first Benghazi and more recently Tripoli; the cousins' birthplace and residence of both their families and closest of friends. Ali and Mu's families have been living in terror since that fated day in 2011 and today, nearly 4 years later, the situation does not look like it has improved.

Ali and Mu – studying, playing, keeping up face while their families are living in constant terror, aware that leaving Libya will mean living in destitution. It is a choice between living in terror, or leaving everything behind to travel abroad for safer environments. Meanwhile Ali and Mu continue their studies, knowing well that graduating is a must for both of them, but knowing also very well that when done with their studies, they have very little to go back to, except a war-torn country. 

BEHIND THE SCENES

CAREERS SYMPOSIUM 2015



>> Discussing final details at the Phoenicia.



>> Monitoring the floor - ensuring a smooth event.



>> Student interview with the Principal.



>> Students waiting, excited for their interviews.



>> The interviewing - A common scene during the eve.

Discussing procedures over a coffee during break. >>

Filming of event- Studying the next shot. >>

