

**MOHD DAUD BAKAR**

Author of Shariah Minds in Islamic Finance



# MINDSET IS EVERYTHING



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# Mindset is Everything

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PUSTAKA PERDANA



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PERDANA  
LEADERSHIP  
FOUNDATION  
YAYASAN  
KEPIMPINAN  
PERDAMA

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# CONTENTS

## INTRODUCTION

---

**A CURIOUS MIND IN  
BUSINESS: A NECESSITY  
OR LUXURY**

**1**

---

**GLOBALISATION:  
DO WE HAVE ANY  
OTHER OPTIONS?**

**7**

---

**TRANSFORMING HIGHER  
LEARNING INSTITUTIONS**

**13**

---

**THE HARD TRUTH  
ABOUT SPORT**

**21**

---

**ENTREPRENEURSHIP:  
THE HEARTBEAT OF A  
LIVING COMMUNITY**

**27**

---

**HEALTHY BUSINESS  
IN HEALTH**

**35**

---

**RAISON D'ETRE OF  
GOVERNMENT BUDGET**

**41**

---

**DEVELOPING A NEW  
STANDARD OF HOSPITALITY  
FOR TOURISM**

**49**

---

**CALIBRATE OR DIE...  
TOWARDS DEVELOPING  
A GROWTH MINDSET**

**55**

---

**IT'S NOW OR NEVER  
EMBARKING ON A NEW  
YEAR AND THE ESSENTIALS  
OF HIGH PERFORMANCE**

**61**

---

**ATTAINING AND  
ALIGNING WITH THE  
RIGHT DIGITAL MINDSET**

**67**

---

**VALUE CREATION AND THE  
ROLE OF ENTREPRENEURS**

**73**

---

**WOMEN, EMPOWERMENT  
AND RESPONSIBILITIES**

**79**

---

**BUSINESS MANAGEMENT  
& MANAGING BUSINESS**

**87**

---

**HIGH HOPE FOR PAKATAN  
HARAPAN - THE RISE  
OF RAKYATNOMICS**

**93**

---

**GREAT PERFORMANCE IN  
CRITICAL MATTERS AND  
IMPACT MEASUREMENT**

**107**

---

**SELF-RESPECT IS THE NEW  
EQUITY IN BUSINESS**

**113**

---

**THE WORLD-CLASS  
MINDSET**

**119**

---

**PUSHING THE  
BOUNDARIES OF THE  
BUSINESS MINDSET**

**127**

---

**SUSTAINABILITY  
AT HEART**

**133**

---

**AGILITY  
IN BUSINESS**

**139**

---

**UNLOCKING THE VALUE  
OF BUSINESS**

**147**

---

**SCABILITY AND  
CONNECTIVITY:  
INTERLOCKING THE  
BUSINESS VALUE**

**153**

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# INTRODUCTION

I have always believed that mindset is everything. This becomes more apparent in this competitive world of ours. The business world is definitely high on the radar. I have started writing about mindset in my own column in the Malaysian Business magazine since 2016.

Now, I believe that these articles of various spectrums and themes deserve to be published as a book. As much as I would like to limit the scope and coverage of anything regarding mindset, this subject proves to be elastic and agile. I have discovered that mindset is a 'living organism' that lives within our brain and soul. Used wisely, achievements would keep on coming but if used imprudently, then we would stumble at every corner.

Being a living organism, it reacts in a manner which is beyond our imagination. If your mindset reacts effectively to changes in its environment, then you should be grateful. To be perfectly honest, our mindset should always be robust, flexible and agile. It has limitless potential and should not be confined within illusory walls. However, for whatever argument, once we decide, whether consciously or unconsciously to limit our mindset's growth and potential, then our mindset would not function in the best possible manner. Consequently, everything will fall back on emotions and expectations, which are the easiest things to do but not necessarily the most constructive thing to do.

In a nutshell, this collection of articles argues for the liberation and development of a strategic and structured mind to unlock the untapped value propositions and offerings in our business community. Given the competitive landscape of the business world, both at the domestic and international level, we really need personalities and policies that are smarter and more impactful. Everything boils down to the power of mindset. Just put your mind to it, and the seemingly impossible will become possible. The coherent, futurist, smart, intelligent, as well as impact-measured mindset, amongst others, are the new algorithm of excellence.

While the focus has been on business themes and issues, the ideas and messages presented in this book are also ideal for everyone from all walks of life. If an insight is good in increasing productivity and unleashing the values in a fabrication factory or in the tourism industry, then it is arguably good for an NGO or a public university. After all, a man's most valuable and powerful equity is his mind.



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# A CURIOUS MIND IN BUSINESS: A NECESSITY OR LUXURY?

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**Y**ou are fortunate if you happen to enjoy a curious mind. You are even luckier if you can sustain that intellect throughout the course of your career, as well as in your personal life.

How exactly is a curious mind related or correlated to business performance?

If you have started your own business from the ground-up, surely you would have gone through many phases of development from start-up all the way to enterprise and big business establishment. One thing that figures constantly within you as an entrepreneur, particularly in the early days of your business, was having your curious mind to innovate and create new opportunities. You rarely give up or give in. The word 'No' was never ever in your daily dictionary and most certainly do not linger in your mind. Not even close.

On the contrary, you always believed that there are plenty of opportunities out there in the imperfect markets. As a matter of fact, imperfect markets are the source of innovation. We would not innovate if everything is perfect, right? You would have pushed through to achieve your big dream in your business while relying on your curious mind.

What can a curious mind do? It innovates. It always strives to find ways and means to survive in business; reduce the cost of production and distribution, be ahead of other competitors as you can't avoid competition, increase your market share or if you are really a new kid on the block, to get your first sale or first deal closed.

The curious mind is always alert and active. It thinks differently almost all the time and sometimes un-organically just to help you survive the most difficult phase in your business venture, which most probably be during the start-up years. I'm not implying that subsequent phases are less difficult. It simply means that if you do breakdown at an early stage, you are undoubtedly going to have a short business life span.

What motivates the mind to be curious? I'm no psychology expert. However, based on a 'scientific research' derived from my own experience of being the founder of a few set-up companies, I understand what curiosity can do in motivating myself while I steer my business forward.

Curiosity may kill a cat but it maketh a successful entrepreneur. It is both a fresh air and blood circulation for a man. The strong desire, to unlock new potential and to avoid premature liquidation of a company, is the real engine that drives a curious mind. If you like, the fear and hope factor is the real DNA of curiosity.

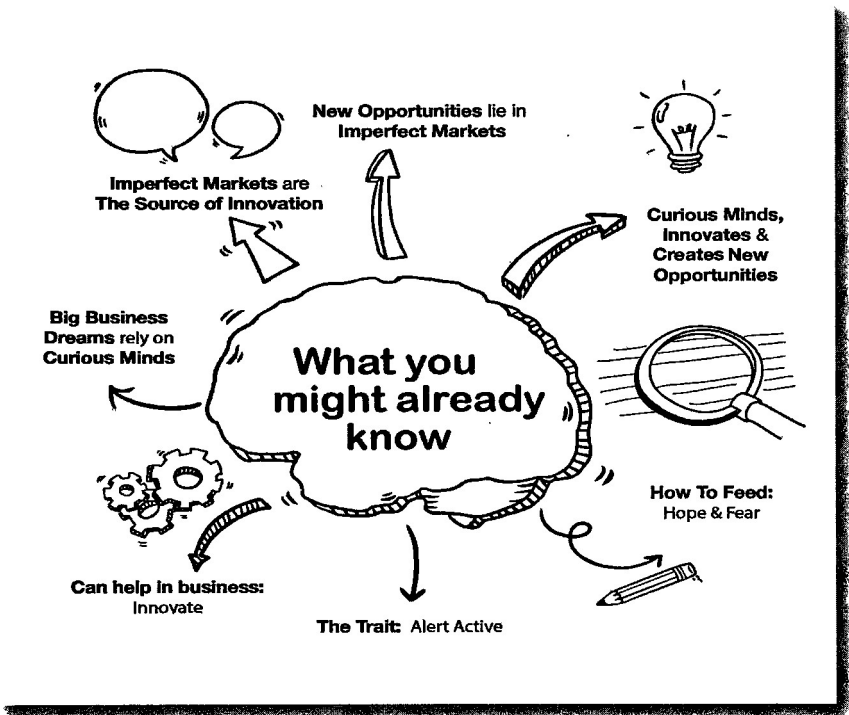
What is the setback of this kind of mind? Many established companies have forgotten the skills of being curious as they were before. They are no longer hungry and motivated to unlock new potential. If they were to expand their business, they would likely push for horizontal line of expansion. They have lost their sense and desire to expand vertically.

In the words of Peter Theil, the co-founder of PayPal and the author of bestselling book *Zero to One*, "Horizontal progress is easier to imagine because we already know what it looks like. Vertical progress is harder to imagine because it requires doing something nobody else has ever done. If you take one typewriter and build 100, you have made horizontal progress. If you have a typewriter and build a word processor, you have made vertical progress."

The fear factor has lapsed in the recesses of their minds. Likewise, the hope factor for more exponential revenue has evaporated from the hearts and minds of some of the management of the big and established companies. Why should they fear and aspire for better as they are already in command of the high ground in their respective

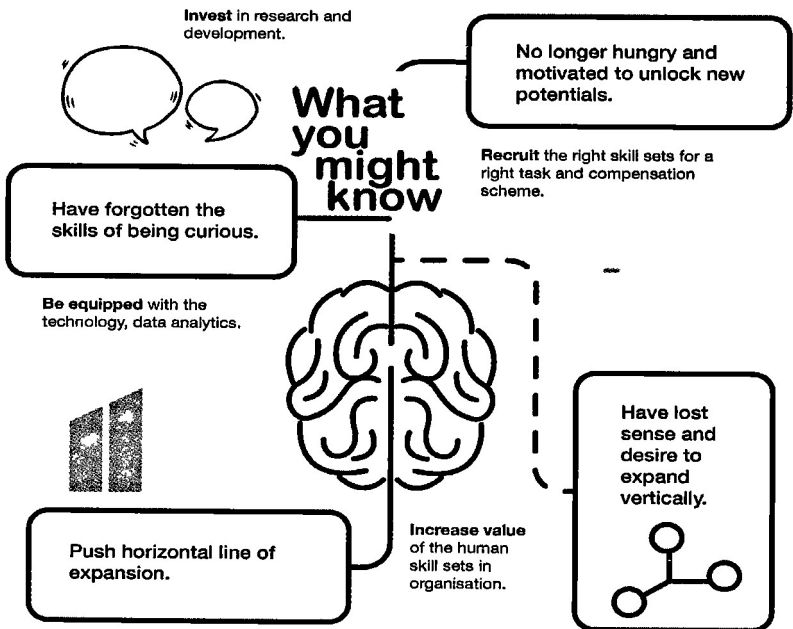
area of business? It seems sensible for them to believe and behave in that manner.

But, wait a second. This attitude, for me, is a common mistake in the world of big companies and conglomerates. If the big companies stop being curious in their business plan and execution, who is going to be the market maker then? On the contrary, I would like to argue that these big companies with their big balance sheets, can set the new trends in many aspects and dimensions for them to enjoy a better market share and revenue, as well as to influence the creation of new market's value proposition. Surely, this will benefit all the players in the market particularly the small and medium enterprises.



The need to bring back this skill set of curiosity to the business community is rather crucial than ever before. In this difficult times of the global economy, with most of the companies downsizing their employees and lowering their projected income, we need a few big

companies – just a few – to spark the innovation and to lead the business back to its helm. Every entrepreneur at the set-up stage was able to navigate the heavy storm. Why then can't the experienced business men, equipped with technology, data analytics and a bit of money for research and development, embark on this 'make or break' session – once again – to bring their companies to greater heights.



How difficult is it to bring back this skill set to these big corporations and companies? I'm hesitant to even intuitively speak my mind on this valid and interesting question. It depends on the value of the human skill set in any given organisation. This is another aspect that could make or break any company. If the management and the employees of any given do not have a curious mind whatsoever, then the whole desire to change the company into a trend-setter type of company will most likely not be happening.

The biggest question of all is how do we value the skill set of any

organisation in relation to curiosity and innovation? To be honest, this is the most difficult thing to do. If anyone can do this task – literally anyone - he will be THE master manager of the world. The skill set of any organisation could be an asset or a liability as the case may be. If it's an asset, how much is it worth in terms of monetary value?

The fact that we couldn't provide a clear-cut answer to this doesn't mean that we should give up on exploring this aspect. If we can unlock this matter correctly – or even be synthetically accurate – it will help a company to recruit the right skill set for a right task and compensation scheme. It wouldn't also be an embarrassment for a highly skilful person to ask for a special package of compensation to commensurate with the value that he can bring to this organisation.

As for the company, they can use this matrix to put the right personnel at the right value chain of a business from planning to production to distribution to management to after sale services and client management. Although the need for curious and innovative skill set is important in business, the level of this skill set may differ from one section or task to another. Again, placing the right person at the right task is something that we can't emphasise enough.





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# GLOBALISATION: DO WE HAVE ANY OTHER OPTIONS?

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People tend to believe that the word globalisation is new. They are not wrong. In the same vein, many would also believe that globalisation was made relevant only recently, due to the rapid development in the communication sector, be it through modern transportation or telecommunication technology. They are not wrong either.

As for me, I see it as both an old and new phenomenon. The fact that we – humans – are created in different races and are living in different geographies alludes to the secret of Creation, that is to be living together harmoniously and to be managing this blue planet – Earth – responsibly. Of course, jointly and severally.

Although we may have created our respective borders – luckily not with solid concrete and wall – we share the same atmosphere. This 700-kilometre thick of atmosphere is actually our common border to safeguard this world from the sun's radiation.

Essentially, we are created to be connected and not to be stratified. Globalisation is about making the connection and delineating the stratas. There are no two ways about it.

In the past, the world has witnessed many conflicts and wars because humans undermined the meaning of globalisation.

What am I trying to impress on here? When we tend to sideline the importance of living together under a fair and principle-based globalisation policy, we inadvertently allow the feeling of hostility and

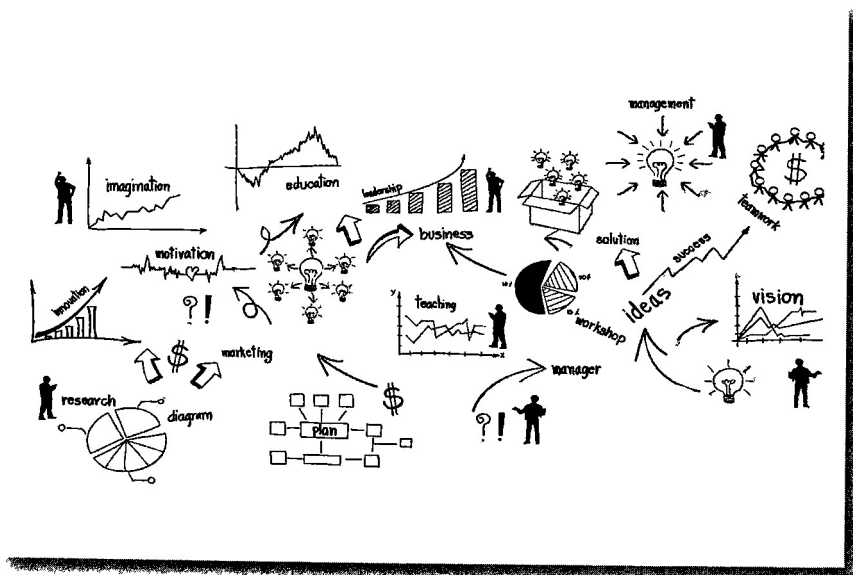
aggressiveness to rule over us.

It goes without saying that any isolationist approach would trigger the feeling of hatred, self-centric and worst, the desire to dominate and patronise others – big or small.

When someone starts talking about adopting the isolationist approach, then it's not a good sign. We could almost hear the warning siren wailing. It's the early signs of a hostile mindset.

Under the influence of this mindset, we are beginning to see the dark side of humans, as depicted and promoted by Sigmund Freud, unfortunately. According to him, men are individualistic and insecure. "Men are not gentle creatures", Freud wrote, but rather have an "inclination towards aggression".

Even babies, he argued, have a ruthless drive to seek their interest. Men are driven by libido and aggression. Thus, men need to be hostile to one another. It's an evil side of humans, to say the least.



I would submit that in order to progress, there is no need to be more local, hostile and isolationist, but to be more global, emphatic, and well connected and engaged. Remember, no one man is an island.

However, in the last few decades, we could have been self-contained, thus antagonistic, perhaps due to some imposing requirements of life at that time. Nowadays, there is no way you can go back to that colour of life. Now, we are well connected and co-related.

What do we call this state of affair? You may call this phenomenon “globalisation”, which is a trendy word. I prefer to call this as an reinforcement of good human nature, which is based on engagement and empathy, instead of disengagement and hostility. Luckily, the drive for empathy is getting traction around the world to reduce the impact of Freud’s misapprehension about human nature and what humans are good at.

A new dimension of globalisation must be seen to move away from Freud’s lens and doctrine. At the end of the day, we can’t afford to get distracted because surely we do not want to be ensnared by the dark side of human nature. Don’t be fooled by false signals.

As it is, humankind have fall victim to many wars. The future (world) wars, if any, will be unprecedented, as the effects and impacts this time will be very devastating; such that we have never seen (or would want to see) before.

The reason is that, this time, the machines of war are built equipped with nuclear power. I can’t emphasise further that no matter who wins or loses the war, the world will no longer be safe and conducive to live in. What is the meaning of life then if the nuclear radiation contaminates our God created common atmosphere?

While working in the era of globalisation, some may put across the motion that globalisation is nothing more but an increase in the cost of doing business. This is partly true.

The compliance cost to international standards of money laundering under the Anti-Money Laundering Act (AMLA), Know Your Customer policy, consumer protection, ESG (Environmental, Social and Governance), particularly the environmental issues as spelled out under United National Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) etc., is increasing significantly, not to mention the hefty penalties for any breach of these standards.

To some extent, this is bad news. The good news is that the world

has come together with a concerted voice - which is quite rare by any standard - to deal with issues that are engulfing the whole world at large and that may adversely affect everyone indiscriminately.

What is my take on this aspect? I think we can use the globalisation platform to reduce the cost for the benefit of everyone. As far as cost is concerned, rarely do people perceive globalisation positively. Perhaps it is time they look at the other side of the coin.

I am intrigued by the comments made by His Highness Sheikh Ahmad bin Saeed Al-Maktoum, the Chairman and Chief Executive of Emirates Airline and Group, when he was asked about globalisation.

The notion of globalisation is crystal clear in his mind. He was quoted as saying, “However, the concept (of globalisation) that will truly be a game changer is when aviation becomes a truly ‘global’ industry. This means deregulation, open skies, full collaboration on security and advances in air traffic technologies – which will help the industry benefit from more efficiencies. Air travel has a big future, but only if everyone involved in this sector – the industry, governments, regulators and local communities – works together in the interest of all stakeholders.”

He simply equated globalisation with efficiencies. This one word is why we need a globalisation agenda, as we can’t afford to work alone. We need more than one hand to push the apple cart, isn’t it?

Even if we can work alone, the operational cost on a standalone basis would be high, if not prohibitive and exorbitant. In the context of aviation, security and air traffic management pose the greatest challenges. Working together on this aspect will reduce the cost significantly.

The same is true in other sectors of business, I reckon. Surely, the cost of compliance, due diligence and risk management and perhaps research and development (R&D) would be significantly reduced if we were to work together as a global community. The same can be said about our efforts to fight deadly pathogens, such as Ebola and Zika.

The current template of globalisation focuses on things and matters which are commercial and tangible in nature. This is always expected. Well and fine. But humankind – being a carbon-based creature – need

more than commercial satisfaction. Setting expectations is very different than setting objectives.

The theme of humanity is getting much traction and getting more and more intense. Freedom is often lauded for its respect for humanity. Can we expand this to other aspects of life – the rights to vaccination, clean water, shelter and food? These are the core foundations of humanity, right?

The good thing that we have seen in this life thus far is that, whenever we have one problem, we have many solutions. It is only a question of whether we are able (or want) to see it or otherwise. So, why don't we focus more on solutions to bring the globalisation of good values back to humanity.

We need to transform globalisation from being purely motivated by commercial and security goals to being the platform for the advancement of humanity. After all, this world would be meaningless if its human population is vulnerable to many unfavourable and undesirable crises, namely mass destruction.

In addition to the other dimensions of globalisation, why can't we add another vertical for the narration of globalisation to include globalisation of good values? If we can dream it, we can do it!

Who is the benefactor of this new policy? The world at large. A few years back, my team and I were mandated to put all the relevant laws, guidelines and Standards Operating Procedures for Islamic banking in Kabul, Afghanistan. We accomplished the mission.

During our work in Kabul – where life threatening situations are always around the corner - we posed a direct question to the local project management office (PMO) in Kabul, asking about the funder of this work and their motivation.

Guess what was the answer? The fund was provided by a few families in Europe to bring stability and hope in Kabul. We were amazed and perplexed at the same time.

It became obvious later that the funders positively embraced the globalisation mindset. They simply believed that until and unless people regain their dignity, we cannot stop them from killing each

other indiscriminately. They need food, means of earning a living and security.

One of the pillars to transform the modern society is to bring to them a banking system. In the case of Afghanistan, this banking system must be a system which suits their religious teachings, thus the Islamic banking project.

The empathy portrayed by these few funders was so strong and inspiring. They have led the way to walk the talk of globalisation, what more as regards to humanity and good values. This is a 'good to great' story.

Many people talk about globalisation but they act local. What a waste. For some, their minds are void of the globalisation mindset. They are mindless creatures living in a globalised world.

Globalisation is no longer an abstract concept. It is now a blueprint and road map to chart the policies of the world. It's the way that we should manage our world together.

We need to learn hard to figure out how we can make globalisation a win-win scenario for everyone and more importantly, to push hard for the narration of humanity in the grand design of globalisation.

This has slipped the minds of so many people in the past, but it's never too late to demonstrate the caring side of humankind by incorporating this vertical in the globalisation storyline. It makes the story more human, real and worldly. We stand to benefit more when everyone has food on the table.



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# TRANSFORMING HIGHER LEARNING INSTITUTIONS

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Many public higher learning institutions have long been operating in the comfort zone, resting comfortably on their laurels. It's an open secret that the main reason behind this phenomenon is the big budget from the Government allocated to them year in and year out.

There has been no urgency for them to manage their balance sheet as a private entity, which depends heavily on Return on Equity (ROE) to move forward. If no profit is recorded, some employees will be made redundant, and any expansion plan will be postponed, if not scrapped.

Recently, the financial support from the Government has been reduced. Many have been taken aback by this decision. Suddenly, they woke up from their deep slumber, realising that the water from the tap is not coming out as much as it used to be.

Even more challenging is the fact that there is no new source of water. Everyone is now screaming to get the amount of water that they used to get. "How can we live without enough water?" many are lamenting. Whose fault is it? To be honest, I have no idea.

Personally speaking, the decision by the Government to cut the budget for public universities, for whatever reason, was apt and timely. I can almost hear the dissenters murmuring in the background. I know they have their own points of view, too. But time will tell, I guess, of the impact of this decision on our public universities. As we progress further, let's observe the impact of this decision more closely.

To get the edge that we need from our higher learning institutions, they need to do their own asset valuation, both software and hardware; the intellectual properties and their physical assets.

There must be an assessment of the universities' Net Asset Value (NAV) or Net Tangible Asset (NTA) on a regular basis. If the universities are not able to conduct a proper valuation of their own assets, then why do they bother to teach their students about valuation?

I was once the Deputy Vice Chancellor at one of the public universities (2002 - 2005), and I was invited to present a keynote address to a group of high performing researchers of that university. The speech took place in 2002. I needed to say something that many of the audience have not heard of before.

I eventually opted to speak on "Valuation of University". I started my speech by asking everyone a simple but hard-hitting question, "How much could we value our university in terms of assets?"

The audience was perplexed. I continued by asking them further, "How would we value our net worth then?"

No one seemed to have an immediate answer for this. Worse still, no one seemed to have thought about it that way. For many of us, we manage our universities in the mood of "business as usual". But remember, complacency kills innovation.

This is the first mismatch that I discovered towards the end of my academic career at the University – I left the University to set up my own business in 2005.

I had always thought that a university could have created a lot of value – which can be transformed into monetary assets – but no one has taken the liberty to unlock this potentially huge value.

The time has come for us – collectively amongst all the stakeholders - to create the NAV or NTA of a university. This could also be one of the key performance indicators for ranking purposes.

I have also observed some other anomalies in the management of public universities. I sincerely wish that I am wrong in my contention. But what are these anomalies? In brief, the grand design of a university and its ecosystem is not sustainable, to say the least.

The current design and landscape of many public universities could only be sustainable if (a big if) the Government's financial support continues as usual, without any reductions. But this may change or it is already over by now. It's time for public universities to look for a new source of water.

Even then, for an argument's sake, if the same level of financial support is maintained, this practice will not be in tandem with best practices, as applied in other industries.

Why should we exempt the education sector from adhering to the best practices of financial management, as well as output management? In fact, above everyone else, the education sector must walk the talk.

One ringgit of investment must produce compatible and comparable results, irrespective of whether it's in the public or private sector. Money is still money. Money can't take sides.

Above all, it is public money that we are talking about. It's not the money of the shareholders, as in the private sector.

So, what's wrong with the ecosystem of public universities? Strangely enough, it starts from the design and landscape of the university's building, infrastructure, and even the library and the lecture halls.

Funded by huge budgets from the Government, every square metre (sqm) of the university was not meticulously designed and planned.

The concept of value for money has slipped the minds of both the university management and developers. Many areas and space of these universities are not well utilised, ranging from big corridors to open areas, big offices to big halls, which are not functional, and many other aspects of inefficient design and architecture of the whole campus set-up.

Sometimes, even the main gate of the university does not reflect the university's philosophy. It is too exotic, iconic and of course, costly. How can we uncover this lack of inefficient planning? Easy. Compare the cost of each sqm between public universities and private universities, as well as the value for money in terms of its functionality.

The cost and functionality aspects must be compared to ascertain



whether there was proper planning and money was well spent.

The problem escalates when the promotion scheme for faculty members is skewed towards one dimension only. One needs to either publish extensively or perish, as the saying goes... or in short, publish or perish.

With due respect to those who established and support this promotion system, I must say that this should be revised as soon as possible. It is rather outdated. We need to make the promotion matrix more flexible and relevant, and in line with current times.

A lecturer who is great in his professional contribution as a consultant or as an industry expert or an active contributor to the society in many dimensions of life must be equally recognised and promoted, though his publications are not up to mark.

Everyone who has contributed to the nation at large, either in the form of new research and publication or new breakthrough development in the industry or new impact on the society must always be rewarded.



Every one of these high-flying credentials will bring much value to the university, either in cash or in kind. The management should not

feel intimidated or irritated by the various flying colours, so to speak, of their academics. Encourage them to flourish further, so that the university will also benefit in one form or another.

Indeed, one form of promotion scheme does not suit the many characters of great personalities in the university. In short, a one-size-fits-all promotion scheme is not suitable to ensure the development of high-flying academics.

I have also noticed that the risk and reward scheme is almost absent in universities, as if the faculty members are not humans or to put it bluntly, are perceived as robots.

There are many funds provided by the Government or even the private sector to embark on impactful research. This is good news. The bad news is that researchers are expected to use every single ringgit and sen of this grant to cover the cost of the research. No amount can be allocated as (additional) salary or fee to these great researchers for their hard work, vis-a-vis their other colleagues.

With due respect, I believe this is a wrong policy. Researchers are humans after all. Humans are always inspired and motivated by rewards – no matter how big or small the reward is. Why can't we allow a small portion of this grant, let's say 10% to be allocated as additional income to these researchers. This would surely motivate them to do conduct more research.

However, if you tend to think that this is not in line with your definition of excellent academic pursuit, I would rest my case. In any case, to grow exponentially, I have always believed in taking care of the humanistic aspect. Just look at how the founders of the start-up companies in Silicon Valley nurture the culture of good and inspiring environment for excellent output.

What I'm going to say next may be offensive to some. But I need to put across this remark to unlock the good values and virtues of our universities. Public universities are blessed with free land, and free buildings and equipment.

By any standard, these are good assets to begin with. On top of that, they have great professors and faculty members who are great in their own respective discipline. In some cases, they are the shining and

most-sought-after authorities in many fields, such as business, economics, engineering, medicine, legal, finance or even religion.

Given all these privileges, all public universities should be able to be self sustaining entities. Be mindful (and thankful) that all the fixed assets have been given for free. They just need to put the great minds and resources together to generate a lot of income.

At universities, they teach about asset allocation, branding and marketing, as well as corporate finance, not to mention strategic thinking. The time has come to put this great knowledge into practice.

Let's walk the talk. In other countries, public universities have been able to not only break even, but also generate huge profits. They generate an impressive Internal Rate of Return (IRR) every single year.

The only difference is that other universities outside Malaysia have started this sustainable journey a few decades ago. Now, they are harvesting the results of the hard labour they have put in many years ago. Initially, it was not easy for them either. But where there's a will, there's definitely a way.

Public universities, unlike private universities or a normal company, are funded initially for their capital expenditure. By now, they have the necessary and much needed foundation to leverage on these assets to sell their capabilities. If they package their expertise well, the clients could be both the Government and private sectors.

In some areas like hospital management, high technology development and management, engineering and plantation, these can also be marketed overseas. Surely, many universities and companies in many developing and frontier countries would look highly upon our universities' capacities.

There are many ways to commoditise and monetise the software of many public universities. The software of the universities – the minds and intellect of the faculty members – is great but its value has never been unlocked, and is still trapped in the lecture halls and academic journals.

Now, the time has come to unlock its value for the benefit of the

university. The university has contributed a lot to develop the skill set of these faculty members. Now is the time for faculty members to pay back their universities.

I have another observation which could be useful for the future design of our universities – both public and private universities. I would like to think that throughout the ages, education is humanity's most noble and essential profession. But wait a second. What is going on that causes the education sector to be very much affected during the economic slowdown?

I can see that instead of working together, many universities and colleges are competing against each other, thus pushing the cost of operations up. Ironically, faculty members, facilities, and even the books and journals in the libraries are not mobile enough across universities, even in the same area and location. This has been the taboo in the world of education.

There is a 'Great Wall of China' between one university and another. Surprisingly, the wall is even thicker than the one we find in the financial sector, or if you like, thicker than the real Great Wall of China. This is no exaggeration.

Every university is an island and (strongly guarded) fort by itself, and this is the reality for the professors and lecturers, as well as the students. I have always thought that education is a universal or nation-based, if not borderless agenda. Unfortunately, I discovered I was wrong, judging from the behaviour of most universities.

Everything is individualistic and in an 'ivory tower'; a 'tower' so 'high and mighty' that it puts the Pyramids of Giza to shame. Unfortunately, sharing a connection with humanity is not imbued in the curricula and syllabi of the master design and function of our modern universities. In the end, who will bear this additional cost, due to this lack of collaboration and working the smart way? Students!

The notion or rather self-proclaimed notion of 'ivory tower' is really the virus for sharing-based and borderless universities. On top of that, I would like to caution our universities from investing heavily in bricks and mortar. The bricks and mortar mentality and attitude were perhaps relevant in the past.

Nowadays, given the new variables and hard facts of life, this mindset is not only irrelevant, but alarmingly, is also a liability and excessively expensive. The only thing that needs the proper bricks and mortar is the laboratory and student accommodation. That's it.

It is not abnormal to find an organisation that can't sustain itself because it has no assets at all. It has to build up its own assets first. As an entrepreneur, I had to boldly face this problem when I set up my company in 2005 in Kuala Lumpur and when I had daringly expanded my business to Dubai in 2008. This is normal for start-ups.

However, it is rather sad to see universities, which are embodied and blessed with many great assets – both soft and hard assets – but are not in a position to sustain themselves. They need to unlock their inherent and intrinsic values – the sooner the better. But the first thing to do is to demolish the 'ivory tower' mindset, the bricks and mortar approach, as well as the self-imposing 'Great Wall of China'.

This is also part and parcel of unlocking the value of both public and private universities. A point to stress on is that our main client or stakeholder has always been, and will always be the students.

If our mindset can be tuned to serve the students better – student-centric mindset – then we can easily demolish the 'Great Wall of China' between our universities. This is the easiest thing to do right now. So, what are you waiting for?



# THE HARD TRUTH ABOUT SPORT

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**E**ver since the past few centuries, sport has been an integral part of our lives. Like many other activities, sport has had its ups and downs, but it never died. It managed – somehow – to find ways to be relevant and enjoyed by humans. After all, we are still carbon-based creatures.

Without going through all the scientific and psychological arguments behind this phenomenon, it's safe to conclude that sport is still essential to human development. Don't ask me how and why that is the case.

Sport has taken many forms, ranging from the Romans' style of inhumane sport of the Coliseum to playing hockey with our own self-crafted hockey sticks, which we used to do when we were young and 'poor'. Everyone likes to play sport. Sometimes, the only motivation to go to school was to play sport amongst friends. Those were the days.

For all intents and purposes, sport has been both a physical and cultural driven-based activity. To play sport, you need another guy to play with you. This is the beauty of sport, and no one can take this away from us. It is a social and engaging activity to say the least, unlike modern games installed in the phones and other gadgets.

What is happening now to our modern sport scene? Is sport doomed to disappear like the dinosaurs? Across the country, we can easily notice that areas and spaces to engage in sport-related activities are shrinking. As the population increases and goes north, sport facilities seem to go south. Some of these facilities are available but those, more often than

not, require us to pay some form of fees. Our children and teenagers are finding it difficult to enjoy playing sport like we used to do 30 - 40 years ago.



The grand design of new townships and neighbourhoods or even high density housing areas in cities is completely void of the sport mindset. Sport has not been appreciated as an integral part of human life. On the contrary, sport facilities need to compete with other requirements. Due to limited space and land area, sport has been prematurely terminated. In the process, we lost our humanity, too.

What has been the result? The truth is, our children and teenagers need to unload their high metabolism somewhere else. We tend to blame the younger generation for their bad lifestyle of time wasting (“mat rempit”, vandalism, etc) but we have done little to study the root cause of this destructive behaviour. If I may pose a valid question, what is the ratio of public sport facilities to our population? I don’t have the exact data, as yet. The data is however available if we are serious enough to search and research it. Where there’s a will, there’s a way.

But looking around us in the radius of 50 km, we hardly see any

sport facilities, which are open to the public. Can we expect our young population – particularly those from low income families to pay RM10 for one hour for their badminton session – irrespective of how much they are extremely motivated and inspired by their numero uno hero, Datuk Lee Chong Wei?

If land area was the reason, perhaps we need to redesign the whole landscape and architecture of our towns and cities. In many developed countries, schools do not have the luxury of operating their own sport facilities and grounds for certain sports, such as football, rugby, tennis, hockey, as these pitches require a big chunk of land. In the United Kingdom, schools rarely have their own field. Instead, in any small town, there is a dedicated sports centre, equipped with state-of-art facilities, which is open for everyone to use – both the school pupils and the public.

What would happen if all the fields and facilities for sports are located only within the school compound? Surely the public at large will be deprived from benefiting from it. Rightly so. This will be a waste of land area, as well as sport facilities.

In my previous chapter on higher learning institutions, I have urged the stakeholders to demolish the “Great Wall of China” amongst our higher learning institutions to maximise both the software and hardware of the great assets of these universities. I reckon we can do the same for sport facilities to democratise sport activities.

I suppose that if we can widen our reservoir or catchment area to identify new talents, we may create an equal opportunity for our young talent to excel in his or her sport of choice. Many more talents can be identified. Schools are not the perfect place to provide the coverage for all the potential talents under the radar. A public sport centre that is open to everyone has a better chance of attracting the wider and hidden talents. This is the spirit of democratising sport for everyone (only if we believe that sport is the fundamental right of everyone!).

Sport is also a source of pride for a nation. The more we can bring back home gold medals, and world and international championship, the more Malaysians will become patriotic. It is also a double edge sword, however. In the same vein, if our sportsmen and athletes keep





# MINDSET IS EVERYTHING

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Datuk Dr Mohd Daud Bakar is the Chairman of Amanie Group and is one of the leading global Shariah advisors of recent times. Currently, he is the Chairman of the Shariah Advisory Council at the Central Bank of Malaysia, the Securities Commission of Malaysia and the Shariah Supervisory Board of First Abu Dhabi Bank. He also sits on the board of directors for Sime Darby Property Berhad, and a member of Permodalan Nasional Berhad's Investment Committee. In addition, he is the owner and Editor in Chief of Malaysian Business Magazine, Malaysia's oldest business magazine.

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*Learn the important advice and strategies on building the right mind-set all in one compilation. Grow and think alongside Datuk Dr Mohd Daud Bakar in his mission to motivate and drive the inquisitive young business minds.*

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