

02/07/2009 - Leadership In Higher Education: Transforming The University In The Globalisation Era

Bismillahir rahmanir rahim

Assalamualaikum warahmatullahi wabarakatuh.

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Director, Centre for Professional Development

Deputy Rectors, Deans and Directors.

Ladies and gentlemen,

First of all, I would like to congratulate all those present today for being appointed IIUM academic Administrators. It is an honour to be here amongst you this afternoon.

2. Allow me to also congratulate the University, in particular, the Centre for Professional Development, or CPD, for initiating this special programme to share new ideas and insights into professional development. As the training centre for the University, the CPD has charted new avenues for continued professional development for the academic staff. It is my hope that you will be a premier centre of excellence for training.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

#### LEADERSHIP AND STYLES

3. With the turn of the new millennium, new challenges has risen that warrant close scrutiny and appropriate action in regards to higher learning institutions. Globalisation is just one of the many challenges that may impede, but can also spawn new ideas to progress and growth. Information and knowledge have developed and expanded so rapidly that today we live in a borderless and flat world.

4. In this wake, we are bound to face the corruption of knowledge and the liberalisation of studies. We now face new avenues to learning, new modes of teaching, fresh demands of knowledge with a varied gamut of audiences and recipients. In our Malaysian context, local universities face the overwhelming demand for more places in the universities from local and foreign students. The IIUM alone has 2,215 foreign students and 13,206 Malaysian students. We face demands in the quality of our teachings and courses offered. The demands are no less to making our higher institutions globally recognised.

5. In challenging times, great leadership skills are needed to emerge as winners. The topic of leadership has seen much scrutiny. Does nature or nurture influence leadership? This has been a long debated phenomenon, one even taught and probed at business school teachings with no real conclusions or prognosis reached.

6. The shelves of libraries and bookstores have documented the many styles of leadership. Each to his own and each to its purpose and needs for the times. But fundamentally, when analysed, leadership styles are a means to an end. We can read this over histories, made in leaders such as Winston Churchill to Nelson Mandela, Napoleon to Gandhi and to our very own Prime Ministers to name a few. We also know of the greatest of them all, our Prophet Muhammad (p.b.u.h).

7. Each of their styles you will find bridged a need for the times. Their approach and techniques was in response to the people they were leading. Their styles were dictated by the need to motivate a group of people toward a common goal. Their requisite was to congregate the people towards a goal they don't yet

see sometimes.

8. In Islam, the concept of leadership is inspired by the principles of Tawhid. Islam views leadership as a trust or Amanah from Allah SWT. Amanah requires of a leader to ensure his/her entrusted duties are discharged without seeking of balance and dues from its constituents. Islam demands that you, as a leader, heed to your peoples' needs. In a hadith reported in Sunan Abu Dawud by Abu Maryam al-Azdi, the Prophet (p.b.u.h) said: "If Allah puts anyone in the position of authority over the Muslims' affairs and he secludes himself (from them), not fulfilling their needs, wants, and poverty, Allah will keep Himself away from him, not fulfilling his need, want, and poverty".

Ladies and gentlemen,

#### HIGHER INSTITUTION LEADERSHIP

9. Managing institutions of higher learning requires effective management and leadership in the face of rising global competition. In such an instance, academic Administrators form the vital linkage between academic excellence and effective administration. You have a big role in defining whether an institution remains mediocre or becomes excellent.

10. The IIUM academic administrators must operate with very high standards of good governance. How you handle issues of governance, accountability and transparency will reflect if IIUM is being managed according to the requirements of its stakeholders. Your actions will manifest in how IIUM is graded and rated locally and globally. The global academic market expects Academic Administrators to grow as leaders while adapting to a constantly changing environment. Such a situation demands for quality and transformational leaders.

11. The story of Prophet Noah (p.b.u.h) and his Ark teaches us some lessons in transformational leadership and management of building from nothingness to greatness. Some of the lessons which we could learn and apply would be:

- i. don't miss the boat;
- ii. remember that we are all in the same boat;
- iii. it was not raining when Prophet Noah built the boat. So plan ahead;
- iv. Don't get distracted by your critics. Just get on with the job you are entrusted with;
- v. Build your future on high ground, always seeing the next wave of opportunity ahead of others;
- vi. Always plan for safety. Prophet Noah had on board all in pairs;
- vii. Speed isn't the only criteria to success. The cheetahs were on board with the snails on the boat. It was commitment to a vision that led him to the shore.
- viii. Don't be afraid of competition; The Ark was built by amateurs and the Titanic by professionals; and
- ix. No matter the storm if you operate and lead from the principles of iman and faith in God, you will reach the shores with rainbows waiting for you.

12. In short, as leaders we must be innovators and transformers of our organisations. We must be able to inspire others through our own actions. We must practise shuraah and effective communications with our peers and colleagues for sound decision making and joint ownership. We are responsible for transforming the attitudes of our staff and the organisation that we are entrusted with.

13. We must have the humility as leaders to continually learn to improve ourselves and the organisation we are entrusted with leading for nothing fails like success itself.

14. In conclusion, to lead we must invest in the capital of character. With good character and aqidah, we will deliver upon the Amanah entrusted upon us. IIUM must imbue aqidah and strength in character not only in the Administrators but also in its students.

15. With this as a precursor, I am sure IIUM will fulfill its vision and mission, Insha'Allah.

I wish you a successful and excellent workshop.

Thank you.

Wabillahittaufiq walhidayah wassalamualaikum warahmatullahi wabarakatuh.