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UP CLOSE AND PERSONAL

with the Master himself

EMERITUS PROFESSOR DATO' DR HASSAN SAID
VICE CHANCELLOR OF UiTM

BY: SITI HALIJJAH SHARIFF & JS KESHMINDER, 19 JUN 2018

On how to Win PEOPLE and Lead UiTM to Greater Heights

Prior to his appointment as the Vice Chancellor of UiTM, Emeritus Professor Dato' Dr Hassan Said held several prominent positions both in the private and government sector. The vast experience that he has accumulated over the years, crafted his excellent leadership style. He is known to be a people centric person and a visionary leader. Since his appointment as the Vice Chancellor, UiTM is heading towards greater heights and he is being dearly loved by the staff and students. Completing his two years as the Vice Chancellor of UiTM, he talks about why people in UiTM are important and shares his input on Industrial Revolution 4.0.

Dato' you are a proactive leader and a go-getter, what is your success mantra?

For me personally, the recipe for success is PEOPLE. We can have excellent plans and strategies but to materialize them we need the right people. And for me, UiTM has a lot of good people who are hardworking and pure at heart. These are the kind of people that we need in order to make dreams happen. So as a Vice Chancellor, my mantra is to "smartly utilize the pool of talent that we have by making them believe in UiTM strategies and always wanting to deliver". Therefore, my priority is to keep my people happy so that they are always willing to play the game along with me to make UiTM a topnotch university.



Is that the reason why we have the happiness index coming in...

Exactly...when your biggest asset is people then you have to really make sure that they are happy. For me, happy people are the ones that develop excellent capabilities to perform their duties. Meaning we have to provide them superior infrastructure and engaging support system, which will enable them to deliver. For instance, lecturers need good research facilities and smart classrooms to excel both in publication and teaching. On the other hand, for non-academics they need latest technology to speed up their work and to effectively support the academics. To get anything done, the ecosystem has to be right. The anchor pillar of an ecosystem for an institution to be successful is HAPPINESS. Once this pillar is carefully sorted, if you want anything you will get it! This is what I am trying to achieve, an ecosystem that is built on the basis of happiness for long-term sustainable growth of UiTM. We are talking about winning mindset; a happy mind is a winning mind.

Have you ever wake up in the morning and felt scared. How did you overcome that fear?

I seldom have that kind of fear, because every day I have set something in my mind. My thoughts are frequently about how to make something better than before. The major part of my daily routine is meeting people. Therefore, I always need to figure out beforehand on how to convince the person I am meeting to get the job done or how can I make this person to deliver better. So before the meetings I preempt all the possible issues that can crop up during the meetings and try to find practical solutions to solve those issues. I think these actions that runs in my thought process erodes the fear and prepares me to face the daily challenges. Another factor that keeps me away from fear is that I do a lot of reflection after coming back from work. Which I often do while watching TV at night. These reflections allow me to evaluate my actions throughout the day, which later helps me to decide the dos and don'ts that I should practice to make my work better. Besides daily reflection, I do yearly reflection as well. What I usually do is I take a yearly break for about one or two weeks. Literally disappearing from the country. The place that I do my reflection is on the plane. That is the best place to sit and reflect, isolated and disturbance free. During the 13 hours flight I reflect a lot about myself. I personally feel these reflections have made me a better person. So technically preparing ahead of my day and doing a lot of reflections help me in keeping the fear away

Dato' based on our conversation so far, I realized that you are always wanting to bring out the best in others. Dealing with people can be tough, bringing the best out of them is even tougher. Can you share your experience?

The biggest challenge for me is basically changing the mindset. This is because people have different beliefs and everyone goes through a different process while growing up. For a big university like UiTM, people come from diverse backgrounds and learning experience. To bring them together, to have a common mindset is really a great challenge. When people are different we can't expect all of them to move at the same phase. To counter this problem, one thing that we are trying to push is mentorship. Through mentorship we are able to drive everyone towards similar goals and direction. Getting the right mindset and also the winning mindset is the greatest challenge thus far.

However, challenges are there to make us better and to push us beyond the boundaries. In the past, there were many things that seemed impossible, but we have made it possible. In June, we are launching our satellite, by early March, we are launching our very own travelers' car. Furthermore, our solar car managed to cross Australia, where more than half of the cars crashed including the one developed by Cambridge. Now I have a new dream, I call it 'Dream Tokyo'. 'Dream Tokyo' is seeing UiTM student winning at least one gold medal at the Olympics. Challenges are going to be there, face them and be strong!

If you could give 19-year-old Hassan some advice, what would it be?

There are three aspects that I would like to advise Hassan about. First, believe in quality and excellence, when it comes to education and the attainment of knowledge, one needs to get the best out of it. One should understand the subject matter clearly and go the extra mile to have deeper understanding of it. Only then you get quality knowledge and will excel in every task that you endeavor. Second, don't work in silos. You need to actively engage with others in the university. These will enrich your knowledge and allow you to make better decision in life later. Last, humanity, where you have to treat everyone with respect. Don't create a caste system; treat everyone equally. This attitude will keep you humble and grounded.

Dato' I am going to get a little technical here, Industrial Revolution 4.0 is being lauded in Malaysia currently. Do you think engineering and technology alone can solve the world issues?

When you talk about Industry 4.0, you are talking mainly about gadgets and systems like order, high technology, robots and so on. Depending solely on this gadgets and systems we will be heading nowhere if the humanity element is missing. You cannot just say that everything must be wireless, everything must be internet, everything must be robot. There has to be balance! The humanity part has to be there, which is currently lacking. Robots don't have real emotions, it is programmed. You can simulate the emotion in robot, it can cry but it is not real, all being programmed. That is the main reason why for UiTM I have been talking about humanity. With technology taking over and humanity ignored a nation can be decimated. For me, to solve world issues, humanity first technology second!

What kind of technology do you want to see in Malaysia in in the next 5 to 10 years?

The future is going to be all about digital technology, cyber connectivity and cloud computing. Technology in the future is going to be extremely accommodating to the humans. For example, a chip can be somewhere in your skin, with this chip you don't need hand phones any more, communication will be using your finger tips. With this chip airport security will be better, where the system just have to scan you and all your passport detail will be flashed onto the screen. You don't have to carry money anymore because using your fingertips will do every transaction; you want to buy something, press...press...press... and that's it! Interestingly, with digital technology the designing concept is also going to be different where the designing of the living area will embrace a more futuristic theme, totally minimalist and technology savvy.

With fast changing technology, the education landscape is also changing. Therefore, we need to allow people to empower themselves. For example, if a person wants to do engineering, he or she can dictate the subjects that they want to take. They should also be allowed to mix and match subjects from different fields within different universities, local or international. So the 4 universities and academics must be prepared for such changes. That is going to be the future learning style.

For UiTM, technology wise, I want to spend more money on the infrastructure such as smart classroom, big data labs and research facilities. I want to make sure the campus is fresh, the facilities are top-notch, lecturers are happy with the resources, and students happy with the classrooms. That is my priority for now!

Dato' we are coming to the end of the interview session. Thank you very much for allotting you precious time. Any last few words of encouragement for the UiTM community.

All of us have to remember that UiTM is an asset to the country. UiTM has a lot of good people so let us work as a team and avoid negativity. We are large and we are everywhere, which is a big challenge to us, so lets strategically collaborate and work towards the vision and mission of UiTM. Researchers need to aggressively go out there and grab every opportunity that is available to increase the quality of their research. We are big, so we can do wonders! Let's work together!