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Undergraduates Need to Develop Leadership Values - Be A Leader Who Can Criticize and Be Criticized

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Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim, the Prime Minister of Malaysia, recently gave undergraduates the "go-ahead" to criticize the Kerajaan Perpaduan Malaysia unity government and express their opinions without resorting to derogatory language, racist slurs, or extreme religious convictions. He believes that this circumstance is crucial for producing undergraduates who can think critically. This circumstance is also thought to have the possibility of making educational institutions the ideal forum for the dissemination of ideas and the exchange of perspectives for societal well-being.

Undergraduates are a very important national asset, as is well acknowledged. They are the layer of future national leadership that will guide the nation. As they enroll in higher education institutions, they are appropriately given the chance to express their ideas and opinions, particularly with reference to leadership and community management.



The role of undergraduates as partners in government leadership could no longer be disputed when young people aged 18 were given the qualification to vote and become candidates in the past 15th General Election (GE-15). They have been granted significant power in selecting Malaysia's leaders.

However, the question is whether students are prepared to be the government's eyes and ears who are honest, trustworthy, and accountable in tossing ideas or simply hurling emotions of displeasure when their demands need to be properly fulfilled. Are they emotionally stable enough to provide constructive criticism grounded in accurate and clear arguments and facts?

The quality of the young generation that leads the nation's leadership determines the growth of a nation's civilisation. If the leadership is led by people who strongly adhere to the principles of integrity in leadership, then society will be honest, trustworthy, responsible, and have other noble values. Yet, the nation's identity is altered if the situation is reversed. Youth is the hope of the nation, and youth is the pillar of religion, as the Malay proverb goes.

We are all aware that the endeavour to polish the leadership qualities of the young generation as the heirs to the nation and country's leadership is the obligation of all parties. This young generation is a valuable asset that will meet the needs of the country's leadership in the future for ongoing development. Today's society is also becoming increasingly aware of the need to have a leader who is willing to accept responsibility as a leader. Schools and educational institutions are regarded to play a significant impact in the development of leadership skills in individuals.

Therefore, the essential issue that should be addressed is the undergraduates' knowledge of the need to polish their leadership skills so that they can understand the genuine concept of leadership.

Dewan Bahasa Dictionary defines leadership as the ability to lead. The nature of leadership can also be concluded as the process of directing the behaviour of others towards the completion of an objective. The directing process can be interpreted as an individual acting in a certain way or according to something, such as policy or policy, organization, procedure, and job description. Leadership is the ability to direct individuals in a group to implement something or achieve an objective that has been set.



Thus, when we talk about ability, we are talking about intelligence, which God has given to mankind. This intelligence must be developed to create the leadership character in oneself. And every student must be aware of the intelligence that already resides within each of them.

Dr Howard Gardner introduced Multiple Intelligence Theory in 1983, presenting eight separate bits of intelligence as a mechanism to gauge the intellect potential of individuals regardless of whether they are still children or adults.

The following intelligences have been identified:

1. Linguistic Intelligence (Word Smart)
2. Logical-mathematical Intelligence (Numbering/Reasoning Smart)
3. Spatial Intelligence (Picture Smart)
4. Bodily-Kinesthetic Intelligence (Body Smart)
5. Musical Intelligence (Music Smart)
6. Interpersonal Intelligence (People Smart)
7. Intrapersonal Intelligence (Self Smart)
8. Naturalist Intelligence (Nature Smart)



According to this theory, every human being born has a unique intellect that allows them to develop their potential to become exceptional people while meeting obstacles for future survival as the best leader. Undergraduates must be aware of this and strive hard to build this intelligence in each of them because it is extremely beneficial in developing exceptional leadership characteristics. Their involvement in club and association activities is beneficial in activating this intellect. Undergraduates who volunteer at their institution can not only improve their talents but can also contribute their enthusiasm and expertise to the programs that are conducted.

In addition to the eight intelligences that can help undergraduates become the best leaders, another intelligence that needs to be strengthened in undergraduates, especially now, is emotional intelligence. The theory of emotional intelligence was first introduced by Daniel Goleman, which refers to the ability of a person to know and control the symptoms and information of an emotional nature.

As a leader, high emotional intelligence is very important so that they can make a decision in a rational and sane state of mind. Their own emotions cannot carry them away, and must constantly think about the interests of the organization and the surrounding community. This high emotional intelligence is also capable of producing many positive leadership qualities such as self-confidence, mental and physical strength and endurance, enthusiasm, a sense of responsibility and most importantly empathy and good relationships with other human beings.

Now that the opportunity to be government critics is offered to undergraduates, do they already have indicators of all these intelligence as a preparation to deliver constructive critique for the benefit of the country's bright future?

Although some argue that leadership is a trait that must be validated, the truth is that it is an intellect that has been entrusted to every human being. It is critical for an individual to realize that they are all caliphs whom God has created to manage the administration on earth for the good of all creatures. Every student must be aware of good and effective leadership principles. The qualities of a leader and cultivating those qualities to grow fresh in oneself are important because leadership is not a gamble nor a content on social media.