

RSOG INSIGHT

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APEC VOICES OF THE FUTURE 2017

By Au Chong Yee and Faitz Aqira Nordin

Representing Malaysia as youth delegates in the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation Voices of the Future (APEC VOF) never crossed our minds and the opportunity given by Razak School of Government (RSOG) to be a part of this economic forum was a golden one. With the theme '*Creating New Dynamism, Fostering A Shared Future*', we brought with us a large scale of hope from Malaysia to the world. We realise that youths are the engine of the nations that will drive the future and that at this level, a good structure of preparation should be in place to make sure the youths are moving towards the same objectives by the same paths. APEC VOF is an annual programme that allows special teams of young people and educators from the 21 APEC Economies to attend the APEC Summit. By working and learning together, the APEC Voices teams can share their views on the APEC vision with APEC Leaders, Senior Officials, ABAC¹ Members and CEOs. By participating in the process, delegates are given the rare opportunity to engage in dialogues with top policymakers and foster cooperation and prosperity in the classrooms and communities of the Asia-Pacific Region. In

addition, youth awareness is needed as there should not be any differences and no one should be left behind in any situation at any time. In fact, after we spent a week in Da Nang, Viet Nam, everyone was able to work together.

All of these episodes started after we flew from Kuala Lumpur to Da Nang on November 5, 2017. We went full of passion and with fiery spirits, but Da Nang welcomed us with heavy rain and storm. Our flight was bumpy and rough; Typhoon *Damrey* was hitting Viet Nam badly. We heard about the typhoon from the weather forecast a few days before we left for Da Nang, but there were no changes on the tentative programme. From the airport, we were transported to our accommodation in Hoi An province, which took about 45 minutes' drive. Since the hotel was located on the beach and the storm was very bad, we spent our first day indoors before proceeding to the orientation and ice-breaking that very night. There, we met the economies from all APEC member countries. This year, 17 countries sent their youth delegates. We took the chance to get to know each

¹ APEC Business Advisory Council - the sole non-governmental entity that has an official role in the APEC Economic Leaders' Summit through a formal dialogue

other before being separated into four groups, particularly for group discussions on the second day and for the APEC CEO Summit rotation.

On the second day, we were brought to The University of Da Nang for the next agenda which was the youth forum. APEC VOF2017 was launched by His Excellency Mr. Le Quoc Phong, First Secretary of Ho Chi Minh Communist Youth Union, followed by a keynote address and dialogue with Dr. Noeleen Heyzer, the UN Under-Secretary-General Executive Secretary, The United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) and Member of UN Secretary-General's High-Level Advisory Board on Mediation. The topic was *Promoting Sustainable, Innovative and Inclusive Growth amongst the youth in the Asia Pacific Region*. In the keynote speech, she stressed the importance of VOF because it helps young Vietnamese understand many things. For example, the presence of a typhoon as they were preparing for the APEC meetings, highlighted the issue of climate change. She emphasised three main challenges facing APEC economies: climate change, a changing world economy (with one of the main concerns being technological disruption), and inequality. Later, we had a presentation session by one representative from each APEC Member Economies where in our capacity as representatives of Malaysia, took the opportunity to voice out our thoughts on the topic *"How to create new dynamism and foster a shared future*

amongst youth in the Asia Pacific Region." With the message "the more we share, the more we have", we were able to convince other delegates that togetherness is the main key point to create an inclusive economy. We were asked by the media about the preparedness of Malaysian youths in supporting APEC's goals and shared, "Before they make the steps forward, we should guide them right now, provide knowledge and information about APEC's economies so that they can make the best contributions to the development of the Asia-Pacific Region".

On the third day, we visited Quang Nam Peace Village and Tam Thanh Mural Village for a community engagement session. Quang Nam was one of Vietnam's two central provinces badly affected during the Vietnam War. The Quang Nam Peace Village was established with the objective of nursing and providing rehabilitation for the disabled veterans and their descendants who suffered from diseases associated with exposure to Agent Orange/Dioxin. Meanwhile, Tam Thanh Mural Village is a cultural exchange project between Vietnam and South Korea where under the hands of talented Korean artists, Tam Thanh Mural Village has more than 100 pictures highlighting the daily life of the fishing village people and its lively and colourful landscapes. Between the fourth and sixth day, we joined the most important agenda and the peak of this event, APEC CEO Summit held at Ariyana Convention Centre, Da Nang. There were numerous dialogues and sessions on a

variety of topics that connected to this year's theme. One of the topics that attracted us most was on *Resource Efficiency and Sustainable Growth*. One of the speakers in the panel, which included representatives from the oil and gas industry, was the 37-year-old New Zealand Prime Minister, Her Excellency Jacinda Ardern. She spoke about her government's role in managing the issue, highlighting that climate change is happening now, thus needing mass support to save the environment. It is not an easy task, but she insisted that it could happen if there is strong cooperation between government and businesses to provide the right set of incentives to drive change, including better and smarter use of regulation to encourage innovation and more efficient use of the resources to benefit all. It was also shared that she wants to stop subsidising fossil fuels as she believes that by keeping prices artificially low, fossil fuel subsidies encourage wasteful consumption, disadvantages renewable energy and decreases investment in energy efficiency. "We must phase them out", she stressed.

Another much awaited session was the keynote speech by the President of the Philippines, His Excellency Rodrigo Roa Duterte, who was invited to speak at the APEC CEO Summit in his capacity as Chair of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) for 2017. He quoted that globalisation should pave the way to equal distribution of wealth and that it should create an inclusive environment where

everyone can grow. On the relevance of APEC after 2020, he said that APEC will only be relevant if prosperity is shared by all. In addition, the Prime Minister of Papua New Guinea, His Excellency Peter O'Neill was also part of the panel discussion at the APEC CEO Summit as the country will be the APEC Chair next year. He talked about the forum's future and today's issue from his economy's unique perspective. He highlighted challenges like climate change and leftover infrastructure, which is hindering upliftment of living or growing their economies. Similarly to other leaders, he believes in inclusive growth. Despite globalisation bringing people and communities around the world together, he insisted to not leave people behind. He also suggested that APEC needs to build a bridge in ensuring that people in poverty be brought into the middle class and to have security in their families and their lives. Other notable leaders who spoke included the President of the United States, His Excellency Donald Trump, where he credited Malaysia's achievement in terms of economy and development and China's President Xi Jinping where he focused on international collaboration and economic inclusiveness, praising the result of an increasingly connected world. He also referred to China's massive plan to connect the world by stating "China will not slow its steps in opening up itself. We will work together with other countries to create new drivers of common development through the launching of the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI)."

Finally, APEC VOF 2017 was able to deliver our views on the theme, which was handed over to all the country leaders. We were given the opportunity to represent our country to draft a declaration together with youth from other countries. The sub-themes include youth contribution to APEC Vision 2020 and beyond; Economic, social, and financial inclusion; Human resources development in the digital age; Start-ups, Innovations and MSME² support policy.

Overall, youths as leaders of tomorrow are one of the keys to create new dynamism and foster a shared future. We were pleased to see that Malaysia acknowledged the importance of youth contribution towards nation building as one of the policies 'National Transformation 2050' is working towards that direction. We are also looking forward to being the host for APEC 2020 in Malaysia. See you again!

Article

WHAT TO LEARN IN 2018?

By Ismail Johari Othman

Much has been said about the volatility, uncertainty, complexity, and ambiguity of the world we are living in. Such challenges are anticipated to be around for a little longer until and unless mankind finds a fool-proof way to deal with it. This is the new normal, so one must get used to it. As 2017 ends, it is natural to reflect on the year that has been and to explore ways to do better in 2018. To become better, one must keep learning. This article identifies several potential learning areas for next year.

Firstly, one may want to learn to gain calmness. The meme-worthy "keep calm" logo can be seen practically everywhere, from t-shirts, posters, wallpapers, and even profile photos. Whilst there is little evidence

to conclude that one could be calm by simply associating with such images, being calm has always been the hallmark of many exemplary leaders. Calmness certainly helps in providing a sense of focus, which is crucial to leaders especially in terms of decision making. In popular culture, there are abundant examples where being calm helped in avoiding a nuclear war, ensuring a safe landing on the moon, bringing back runaway trains on track and scoring last minute goals to win a tournament. Famous lines such as "calm down", "bawa bertenang", and "take a deep breath" shows that being calm is a lesson common to everyone. Having acknowledged its importance, what could one do to gain

² Micro, Small, and Medium Size Enterprises

calmness? According to research¹, there are several practical ways that one could try. Having positive thinking and attitude is one of them, where obstacles are often seen as an opportunity rather than a stumbling block. It is no joke that making jokes helps to gain calmness; after all, laughter is the best medicine. Excessive intake of caffeine and lack of sleep may pose a challenge in gaining calmness. Probably the most important of all is to ask for help when one is feeling overwhelmed. Feeling like someone has your back is a great way to stay calm in the midst of a storm.

This brings us to the next area, which is to learn to express oneself. Expressing does not mean talking non-stop or a having a one-way conversation. It is effectively about communicating what one thinks and feels, which is not limited to talking. Some people prefer a more creative way such as singing, dancing, painting, playing musical instruments, and even home decorating. There are people who find sports as an avenue to express themselves – almost being synonymous with the game that they play. Of course, writing has always been among the preferred way to express oneself, which has included audio and visual features to further enhance the message offered by information

communication technology of late. Social media is fast becoming an open diary or journal, which was then confined within the private space of the author. Though the forms of expression have grown by leaps and bounds, the substance² still requires considerable hard work to ensure what is intended cuts across. Good grammar and varied vocabulary is of help in expressing oneself through writing. In addition, such an expression could be more meaningful if it comes with honesty and courage, as it is closely related to self-awareness and a sense of purpose that one has. There are a lot of cases where people get into difficulties due to the handicap in effectively expressing oneself.

The third potential learning area is to learn to be resourceful. With resources becoming scarce and costlier, as it was rightly pointed by a statesman years ago, *“do what you can, with what you have, where you are”*. Although the understanding on being resourceful is varied, most of them are pointing to the ability to get out of difficult situations. People who are resourceful often exhibit³ open-mindedness, self-assurance, a sense of imagination, proactiveness, persistence, and hopefulness. Apparently, past experience especially in the formative years, influences one’s inclination to resourcefulness. The more popular

¹ Kux. S. (n.d.). 10 Tricks Successful People Use to Stay Calm in Stressful Situations. *Lifehack*. Retrieved from <http://www.lifehack.org/articles/productivity/10-tricks-successful-people-use-stay-calm-stressful-situations.html> (Accessed Date: 6 December 2017)

² Hewitt. J. (2014, August 29). How to Express Yourself Through Writing. *Writer’s Resource Center*. Retrieved from

<http://www.poewar.com/learning-to-express-yourself/> (Accessed Date: 6 December 2017)

³ Campbell S. (2016, March 10). 6 Characteristics of Resourceful People That Bring Them Success. *Entrepreneur*. Retrieved from <https://www.entrepreneur.com/article/272171> (Accessed Date: 8 December 2017).

examples are Jeff Bezos⁴ (the founder of Amazon.com) and Tony Fernandes⁵ (the co-founder of AirAsia). According to the former, he learned to be resourceful from the age of four. He had to spend his summers at an isolated farm owned by his grandfather, where he had to rely on himself to overcome the challenges faced. As for the latter, the premature departure of his mother somewhat made him more resourceful since. Nonetheless, one may argue why some people, despite hardship in their formative years, did not emerge to be resourceful. Perhaps they were not resourceful from the beginning, or likely a case of "*kacang lupakan kulit*" (figuratively means that one has forgotten his or her roots).

To a large extent, the earlier three areas are dependent on the last which is learning to love one's health. The chances for one to gain calmness, expressing oneself more effectively, and to be resourceful is higher if one is healthy. For instance, the lack of health may limit one from doing things that others could conveniently do, which in turn could influence one's positivity as far as outlook is concerned. Evidence⁶ from developed countries shows that learning to love one's health has been identified as a key intervention in assisting the homeless

and juvenile; the stakeholders believe good health helps in getting out of socially related challenges. A famous poet once said, "*the first wealth is health*". Such proactive-like intervention is understandable, given the anticipation of the very first mass ageing in mankind. Interestingly, apart from eating healthily and exercising regularly, positive thinking and attitude, adequate sleep, and ability to express oneself seem to contribute positively to good health.

Based on the foregoing, the response to the ability to face volatility, uncertainty, complexity, and ambiguity is fairly basic and straightforward. Such inference is a challenge to those who are responsible for learning and development. How does one design and develop a learning programme that aims to address the basics, especially to a targeted senior group? It could become a challenge if the focus of learning is merely on information and knowledge dissemination. Such self-help resources are abundant and usually just a few clicks away. As such, the focus on wisdom, preferably through experiential⁷ learning, appears to be a more effective way. After all, wisdom⁸ is about the human ability to put what knowledge in which place, the lack of which will lead to confusion and injustice to one's self.

⁴ Constine J. (2017, November 5). Jeff Bezos' guide to life. *TechCrunch*. Retrieved from <https://techcrunch.com/2017/11/05/jeff-bezos-guide-to-life/> (Accessed Date: 8 December 2017).

⁵ Tony F. *Flying High My Story from AirAsia to QPR*: Portfolio Penguin, 2017. Print.

⁶ RSOG (2016, June). Joint Programme On Reinventing Public Service - A Reflection. *RSOG Newsletter Vol 7*. Retrieved from <http://www.rsoq.com.my/media/1730.pdf> (Accessed Date: 6 December 2017).

⁷ Experiential learning is any form of learning that helps learner to apply their knowledge and relates it to the real-world challenges.

⁸Shahran M. F. M. (2016, March 22). Wisdom Is Placed at The Apex in Islam. *The Star*. Retrieved from <https://www.thestar.com.my/opinion/columnists/ikim-views/2016/03/22/wisdom-is-placed-at-the-apex-in-islam-one-of-the-most-beautiful-names-of-god-is-alhakim-or-the-most/> (Accessed Date: 7 December 2017)

Given the psychological roots that these identified learning areas have, personalised learning such as coaching and mentoring should be encouraged to complement the experiential learning. The former could offer some secured space to open-up, particularly in the learners' embarrassing weaknesses. An overwhelming turnout at the recent national level Human Capital Psychology Conference somewhat suggests that people are looking for assistance to embrace this brave new world.

Personalised ways of learning also help to facilitate the different levels of ability that learners have with regards to gaining calmness, expressing themselves, being resourceful, and loving their health. Some may be good at expressing themselves but just can't make do with what they currently have. Lack of such masteries could potentially pose a contagious effect, which could be harmful to teamwork. Conversely, improvements gained from learning the four areas are expected to have spillover effects on others. No harm trying. Happy New Year 2018!

(The idea of writing this article largely comes from the author's observations on leadership related series of discourse held in his school in 2017)



Book Recommendation

By **Ismail Johari Othman**

Flying High, My Story: From AirAsia to QPR

By *Tony Fernandes*

If one is pressed for time, turn to the last chapter of this book for Tony Fernandes's recipe for success which is anchored around good product, effective marketing, right distribution, and excellent implementation. It may serve the purpose of knowing but not the wisdom behind such recipe which is equally important if not more. As rightly pointed by a prominent writer, *"short cuts make long delays"* – there are numerous examples in the earlier chapters that Tony Fernandes's success was generally built on hard work, passion, perseverance, and persistence. The rapid rise of AirAsia somewhat eclipsed his challenging formative years that provide a solid foundation to where he is today.

Tony Fernandes was born to an affluent family. His father was an expatriate from India who worked with the World Health Organisation (WHO) office in Kuala Lumpur as a medical doctor who never

left Malaysia after marrying a Malaccan-born lady named Ena (Tony Fernandes's mother). Both influenced Tony Fernandes in a big way. His love for sports, in particular football, came from his father. His mother who was good at music and making friends gave him the entrepreneurial and entertainment genes. It was not all rosy – his mother's business went into difficulties and at one point, his family had to move out of the house they loved. At around 11 years old, Tony Fernandes started to understand other emotionally related difficulties his mother faced that required her to be hospitalised from time to time. He would like to believe that could be the reason why his mother was determined for him to become a doctor one day.

Such determination was expressed when Tony Fernandes was 12 years old. His parents decided to send him to a boarding school in England called the

Epsom College that has the reputation of educating many medical doctors. Being thousands of miles away from home in a strange place tested his maturity and ability to be independent. The utmost test came when he was 15 years old when his father called him to inform that his mother had passed away. Not only could he not attend the funeral, but his last parting words with his mum months earlier in Kuala Lumpur was only a plain 'bye' without a hug or other signs of affection. He channelled his grieving energy into hockey and rugby. The college made him house captain, plausibly to keep him distracted, while exposing him to the idea of responsibilities in life.

The departure of his mother had a profound effect on him. He failed to get the required grades to further his study. All was not lost though, Epsom College provided him with a solid understanding on how to get the best out of people. Instead of heading home, he joined a friend to tour the United States. He took odd jobs along the way to finance his adventure. He was back in London briefly before he hit the road again to Australia. As much as his horizons were broadened from the trips, he realised how brutal jobs were at the lower end and the importance of academic qualification to social mobility. Eventually, Anthony Fernandes enrolled in an accountancy programme and passed.

His wage earner life started with a small accounting firm, followed by Virgin

Television, and finally Warner Music. He learned a great deal from these organisations especially Virgin Television where he understood how culture can make or break an organisation. He assumed a greater leadership role when he joined Warner Music. Perhaps, the greatest key takeaways from Warner Music was the network of people who helped him to fly high. Kamarudin Meranun and Pahamin Ab Rajab, were some of whom he got to know at the negotiation table and during the copyright piracy raids.

He knew his days in a conventional music company like Warner was numbered with the arrival of digital music in late 1990s. He decided to leave Warner Music to pursue his dreams to own a low-cost carrier *ala* easyJet in United Kingdom. Indeed, his AirAsia stories are quite well documented through interviews and business articles. Maybe the highlight of this book is the role of basic yet profound questions thrown by others to him in crafting his business proposition. If not for such questions from aviation experts like Conor McCarthy, he could have gone off tangent from the start. Epsom College's network opened doors of opportunities to him. Interestingly, he sent an email to the owner of easyJet for assistance but was turned down. Now he sees himself in a similar position, thus he makes it a point to read every email and feedback to avoid missing an opportunity like what the owner of easyJet did. His foray into the aviation business also

exposed him to the dynamics of business at the highest level.

Evidently, his success with AirAsia brought him other opportunities like his involvement with the Queens Park Rangers football club, Formula 1 racing, and even the Apprentice Asia television series. His involvement in such ventures helped to strengthen the AirAsia brand further.

In short, Tony Fernandes is a product developed over the years by his parents, school, organisations he grew with, and even the surroundings. Without a doubt, he has branded himself well. His

worldview on equity could have influenced the importance that he put on distribution and accessibility – “now everyone can fly”. Finally, his people skills are the X-factor that makes whatever he implements goes well.

This book is highly recommended for aspiring and evolving leaders who want to explore leadership related concepts in life such as influence, teamwork, and self-learning. It is also a potential source of inspiration to young parents on how they can make a difference to their family and life through basic approaches.

Flying High, My Story: From AirAsia to QPR is published by Portfolio Penguin and can be purchased from leading bookstores at RM86.95

RSOG INSIGHT aims to provide timely and, wherever possible, policy-relevant commentary on thoughts on RSOG Core themes – Federalism, Multiculturalism, and Development; and its research focus areas – Digital, Diversity, and Emotional Engagement.

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