

# **RSOG SEMINAR:**

## **Transformational Leadership – The Dubai Model**

### **When**

11 June 2013

### **Where**

Razak School of Government

### **Who**

Professor Dr Bassem Younes

### **About The Seminar**

Dubai is seen to have debunked the resource curse by fast becoming a world leader in enterprise and modernisation instead of relying on its oil reserves. The international city also has an enviable track record in overcoming adversities such as oil price declines and the global financial crisis, all likely to be attributed to its dynamic and diversified market in business, trading and tourism. These achievements did not happen overnight, nor is it contributed solely on fluke.

A resolute and visionary leadership is a central to envisioning a high performing organisation and the same can be said on how it is impacting the growth and development of the city in United Arab Emirates. The lecture explored on how leadership, using the case of HH Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum, Vice President and Prime Minister of the United Arab Emirates and Ruler of Dubai, plays an important role in inspiring and driving a nation to achieve the desired outcomes and reach set goals.

### **Summary**

Transformational leadership is akin to a lion leading a pride of lions as compared to a lion leading a herd of submissive sheep. This is the allusion consistently used by the Director of Academic Affairs, Professor Dr Bassem Younes, to distinguish between ordinary and transformational leadership. It was James Burns, renowned historian and political scientist,

who first coined the term transformational leadership in 1978. He utilises the term to distinguish between transformational and transactional. Transactional approach hinges on “give and take” relationship whereas transformational leaders, conversely, are able to make change through example, articulation of vision and goals and inspire followers. It is argued that the current climate requires leadership that is authentic and empathetic in facing a myriad of challenges.

Former US Assistant Secretary for International Security Affairs, Joseph Nye, once stated that while good leadership in this century may or may not be transformational, the very foundation is to start with the Hippocratic oath: first, do no harm. This is the fundamental element that the speaker stressed on in regards of transformational leadership – for leaders to be grounded on moral foundations. Processes, influence and core elements of transformational leadership consist of emotions, values, ethics, standards and long term goals.

The transformational leadership according to the Dubai Model is illustrated with leadership of HH Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum, Vice President and Prime Minister of the United Arab Emirates and Ruler of Dubai. HH Sheikh Mohammed’s very vision is to ensure for the government to be smart and responding to people’s needs through courtesy and quality services. Citizens are invested heavily into, with basic provisions provided of the highest quality and efficiency, and citizens are also provided a sense of involvement and belonging through processes of engagement, formal and informal.

It is the vision of HH Sheikh Mohammed for the Dubai Model to be adapted to other neighbouring countries, as he sees positive upward trend in economy would benefit the region. However, adaptation requires having all the right elements in place vis-à-vis local context and peculiarities. This has been proven as a challenge to some of the neighbouring countries. Having all elements – the right vision, the right team, and the right leader, is essential in realising transformational change.

On the surface, the Dubai model may seem to be heavily tilted to the influence of a transformational leader. However, this influential style of leadership has permeated in the culture of Dubai as the basics originated from a simple foundation and it would be impossible not to follow through. Despite that, it was agreed that holistic, up-to-date and cutting edge training and development is needed for leaders of tomorrow, imparting the values of transformational leadership. This is vital to ensure that the continuum of transformational change endures.

## **Issues Raised**

1

The Dubai experience demonstrates that a strong leadership and political will is needed to realise vision and enhance commitment.

2

Emotional engagement is also identified as one of the crucial components as it is through this process that allows leader to know and understand what is needed from his/her followship

3

For transformation to occur, the leaders must remain resolute yet engaging with its demanding citizens. Citizens, in turn, must exhibit patience and provide support as change will only bear its fruit in the longer term.

4

Effective communication of ideas and translating them into concrete results and delivering effective and quality services is highlighted as key in ensuring that the followship remains resolute behind the leadership.

### **About the Speaker**

Prof. Bassem Younes is Director of Academic Affairs at the Dubai School of Government. He has a combined American and British educational background in Civil Engineering culminating with a PhD and DIC from the prestigious Imperial College of London awarded in 1990. Prof. Younes has acted as a consultant to several higher education institutions in the UAE in developing/implementing processes and plans for licensure, accreditation and institutional effectiveness as well as guiding those institutions through governance and administrative procedures used in publicly-supported higher education bodies to achieve institutional licensure and program accreditation. His current interest is to promote excellence and quality in civil service delivery through the setting of a model for exporting the Dubai experience to other Arab and regional countries in response to requests for the same.

### **Contact**

To get more information on this event, you can contact us via email at [programmes@rsog.com.my](mailto:programmes@rsog.com.my)