

RSOG Seminar

“Social Media and Youth Engagement”

with

Mr. Aiman Azlan

When : 16 January 2015
Where : Razak School of Government
Speakers : Mr. Aiman Azlan

About The Seminar

Social media highly influences our awareness of current issues. As the largest group of social media users, and certainly the most active, youths are easily influenced – for better or worse – by social media contents. Thus, it is important to engage with the youth on issues through these social media platforms. It is also important to note the trend and mind-sets of youth nowadays in order to create a high performance culture within the society. The session is aimed at exploring the challenges and opportunities for youths to be more proactive in community and self-development issues through social media tools.

Summary

According to Mr Aiman Azlan, maturity is the essence of the concept of youth. He asserted that maturity is not clearly defined in our modern world. He quoted Robert Epstein's book *The Case against Adolescence*, who posits that such classification is unnecessary. Epstein argues the term adolescence only causes confusion and identity crisis for those in their teens. The speaker added that social conditions such as ideology, culture, religion, and education has created a somewhat traditionalist view of adolescents as merely being immature kids. In his opinion, maturity composed of biological, emotional, intellect, and spiritual maturity. Naturally, the former happens once an individual hits puberty, while others is the effect of surroundings. It is likely that the youth fail to grab the concept of accountability, where they are not aware of the responsibility of their actions, when they are not treated as adults. The speaker also added that the youth, with their high spirit, curiosity, and creativity has plenty of

potential and ability, which is sometimes underestimated. This could be due to the classification of youth, which inadvertently leads to this underestimation.

In the book entitled *Weapon of Mass Instruction* by John Taylor Gatto, the author puts forth the notion that education is the main force of maturity. The speaker adds that while education is a goal towards a mature society, schooling is just one of the methods utilised. In this digital age, information is readily available everywhere from a portable device, therefore it is not possible to control knowledge and information dissemination. As such, education holds the key and the youth must be guided towards the path of maturity, specifically on how to respond to information and knowledge obtained.

The youth are often seen as easily influenced, whether positively or negatively, and the social media seems to provide an additional source of influence. Social media can often be an outlet for emotional release as it provides the perceived notion of freedom. However, this has led to the erosion of our sense of human connection. Therefore, despite the increasing trends of social media in educating the public, the human connection remains crucial as the youth easily detect insincerity. Engagement with the youth must be meaningful, genuine, and sincere. It also needs to be continuous and the 'engager' has to persist with patience.

In any effective engagement, listening is a crucial foundation. It requires for both parties to listen and acknowledge each other's' opinion, that could lead into a constructive discussion or discourse. More often than not, the youth feels left out from society simply because they felt that their opinions are not heard and their needs unacknowledged by society. Once this sense of belonging is lost, their need to channel their creativity, curiosity, and opinions may be channelled elsewhere, for better or worse. It is only through proper education, a system that enhances creativity and accountability, that the youth can be the agent of change for the good of the society.

Issues Raised

- Age classification such as youth, teenagers, adolescence, can be seen as a social construct. In the past important executive positions have been held by individuals as early as 12 years old. However, considering that people are currently living longer than they have had in the past, the 'restructuring' of what age is appropriate to hold responsibility naturally takes place.
- Having said so, it is important to inculcate positive values through education to the youth. This need not be in the form of formal education system such as schooling. It should take place in many ways with various methods by different sets of group. The responsibility should not lie solely on parents or teachers alone. It must be a collective responsibility in educating our youth.

- Youth often surprises society with their ingenuity and creativity partly because they are able to adapt and utilize the current technology to create impact to the society.
- Globalization has created convergent values especially among the youth where they are more critical in issues such as politics, environmental sustainability and volunteerism. A democratic space, where different views can be acknowledged, is desired by the youth. 'Agree to disagree' culture needs to be fully cultivated, to ensure that issues that are controversial or otherwise can be discussed critically and intellectually, without succumbing to petty emotive outbursts.
- Engagement with the youth must be meaningful in order for it to be effective. It has to be genuine, respectful, and continuous to gain lasting impact. Engagement must be done with a goal in mind and with purpose, not merely checking the box.

About the Speaker

Mr. Aiman Azlan is a social media sensation and YouTube celebrity in Malaysia. He is also a public speaker, author, and a graduate from University of Toronto Mississauga, Canada with a degree in Biology and Psychology. He has uploaded numerous videos on YouTube about community engagement, religious and social issues as well as personal issues which are of concern to him which has gained him over 30 000+ subscribers on YouTube, 7000+ subscribers on his blog and over 88 000+ likes on his Facebook. Mr Aiman Azlan is an active youth motivator and his message has garnered him the attentions of youths from numerous backgrounds.

Contact

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