

RSOG Seminar

Soaring Upwards: Malaysian Higher Education

with

YB Dato' Seri Idris Jusoh

When : 19 October 2015
Where : Razak School of Government
Speakers : YB Dato' Seri Idris Jusoh

About the Workshop

Nelson Mandela once said “Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world.” In the Quran, the first revelation emphasised the importance of knowledge and reading. From historical figures to religious texts, the value of education is evident and today, it features heavily in all facets of our lives. The OECD in its Education Highlights 2012 outlined the economic and social benefits of education. These include enhanced upwards mobility, improved employment prospects, increased earning capabilities as well as greater national growth and prosperity. Education is also often cited as a contributing factor in facilitating innovation in many developed countries. Considering the impact and significance of education as an engine for growth and Malaysia’s development plans by year 2020 and beyond, it is timely that the Malaysian government has launched the Malaysia Education Blueprint 2015-2025 (Higher Education). This seminar intends to explore the Higher Education Blueprint and ask, among others: Can it improve Malaysia’s higher education system? Will it enable Malaysia to meet its development goals and human capital needs? And above all, is the Higher Education Blueprint realistic, doable and achievable?

Summary

YB Dato' Seri Idris Jusoh, the Minister of Higher Education stressed that “Malaysians deserve the best education system that the country can offer”. He shares that our higher learning institutions (HLIs) currently comprises of 20 public and 510 private, 33 polytechnic, and 92 community colleges, making it about 79,122 academics with roughly 22.6% Ph.D holders. Recently, enrolment in HLIs is at 1,253,501, with 8.4%

international students. Despite these sheer numbers, our education landscape faces many challenges which includes graduates lacking communication skills, financial sustainability as the sector is highly reliant on government funds, the quest for high ranking for HLIs, balancing the demand for Research and Development outputs and commercialisation, among others. Thus, the Ministry of Higher Education introduced the Malaysia Education Blueprint 2015 – 2025 (Higher Education) in the effort to address these challenges, specifically spelling it out “to create a higher education system that ranks among the world’s leading education system and that enables Malaysia to compete in the global economy”.

With that statement alone, it can be inferred that the role of HLIs is not only as a vehicle to provide the opportunity for attainment of knowledge, but also to assist the nation in producing citizens who are able to contribute to the economy, thus competing in the global market. The MEB (HE) has outlined 10 shifts that will spur continued excellence in the higher education system:

1. Produce holistic, entrepreneurial and balanced graduates,
2. Attract, develop, and retain talent excellence in HLIs by offering more diverse career pathways for academicians through high quality seminars,
3. Promote a lifelong learning attitude among Malaysians under the Accreditation of Prior Experiential Learning,
4. Generate quality Technical and Vocational Education Training (TVET) graduates through enhancement of the nation’s various polytechnics and expected 2.5 times increase in enrolment,
5. Seek financial sustainability through foreign research grants, endowment, alumni support and recollection of PTPTN loans,
6. Empower governance of HLIs by providing HLIs more control in their administration where the ministry/government will act more as policy regulator and policy maker,
7. Develop innovation ecosystems in selected strategic areas that are critical to the nation’s economic growth through partnering with agencies such as Public-Private Research Network and Malaysia Institute for Innovative Nanotechnology,
8. Increase global prominence through increasing enrolment of foreign students through collaboration with notable foreign HLIs such as the establishment of Asia MIT Sloan School of Management – Asia School of Business in Kuala Lumpur,
9. Globalise online learning through cyber infrastructure such as Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs) where 70 percent are expected to undertake “blended learning” by 2025,
10. Transform higher education delivery and the ministry to become more effective regulators and policymaker.

It must be noted that our HLIs have received many international and local recognition for their achievements. For instance Malaysia HLIs are amongst the best in the region – whereby in five year period saw four fold increase in citation, and RM1.25 billion revenue generated from Malaysia Research Universities as solution providers to industries, agencies, and NGOs. Among other achievements also include University Putra Malaysia being ranked number 1 school for agricultural science in Southeast Asia, Gold accreditation to a number of polytechnics by Asian Pacific Accreditation and Certification Commission (APACC), and winning various competitions abroad such as Roboworld Cup Korea 2015 and Sony World Photography Award 2015. These achievements, he stated, are among the contributing factors for Malaysia's improvement in the Global Competitiveness Index ranking 2015/2016; currently at 18th place from previously 20th place. In short, achievements in the higher education sector translates to positive impact on Malaysia as a nation in a competitive world.

Looking onwards, the ministry is aiming for more university lecturers to continue their doctoral and post-doctoral studies at renowned universities around the world – a response for the constant need to update the academia with the latest know-how and deepen their knowledge and expertise in the specific subject matter area. In balancing between commercialisation and Research and Development output, with over RM100 million grants from both public and private sector, the ministry encourages more research and publication by HLIs without ignoring the possibility of commercialisation. In the effort to address the criticism that Malaysia's HLIs are being too academically oriented, the shift is now to partner with experienced institutions around the world to develop a more dynamic curriculum. The ministry remains committed in developing entrepreneurial graduates who can then contribute back the society and develop the nation's economy. It is the hope of the minister himself that Malaysia will fully support the ministry's commitment in improving higher education standards and their aim to ensure that education does indeed soar upwards.

Issues Raised

- The blueprint serves as a foundation and a guide for the direction of the country's higher education. However, other alternatives should always be considered as any effort towards innovation and betterment of the sector must not be stifled.
- While KPIs is an important factor in determining university's prestige, it must not pose as a constraint towards innovation in HLIs.
- Technical and Vocational Education Training (TVET) module and importance is likely to increase in the future, with higher demand of jobs in TVET industries predicted.

- Student activism is encouraged, however it must not interfere with on-campus activities in accordance to higher institution's procedures and guidelines to ensure the safety of students and faculty members.

About the Speaker

Dato' Seri Idris Jusoh is currently the Minister of Higher Education. Previous positions he has held include Minister of Education II, Chairman of Majlis Amanah Rakyat, Menteri Besar Terengganu, and Deputy Minister of Entrepreneurial Development. He has an Honours Degree in Social Sciences (Economics) from Universiti Sains Malaysia and an MBA (Finance) from New Haven University. Dato' Seri Idris has attended executive management programmes in Harvard and INSEAD, as well as learning Arabic in Jordan. He is also a proud alumnus of Sekolah Tuanku Abdul Rahman (STAR), Ipoh.

Contact

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