



**The Challenges and Commitment of the Leaders in
Higher Education Transformation**

**Keynote Speech
by**

**The Honourable Dato' Seri Idris Bin Jusoh
The Minister of Higher Education**

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Bismillahirrahmanirrahim

The Honourable Datuk Professor Dr Asma binti Ismail,
Director-General of Higher Learning Institution (HLI)

The Honourable Tan Sri Dato' Ir Dr Haji Ahmad Zaidee
Laidin, *FASc*
Chairman of UiTM Board of Directors,

The Honourable Prof Emeritus Dato' Dr Hassan Said,
Vice-Chancellor of UiTM

Distinguished Guests and Participants

Ladies and Gentlemen

Assalamualaikum warahmatullahi wabarakatuh
and Good Morning,

*Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen. Thank
you Mr.Chairman for the warm introduction.*

1. May I firstly take the opportunity to commend Universiti Teknologi MARA for the commitment to keep up with the hosting of the International Conference of University Administrators, which, I understand, went back to as far back as 1979, when

it was just a meeting of administrators at a national level.

2. Secondly, as the Minister of Higher Education, I am very pleased that UiTM, as the organiser and host, has selected Terengganu; which is close to my heart to hold this conference.
3. Indeed, it is good to know that Universiti Teknologi MARA has been steadfast and consistent in exploring possibilities to share knowledge and add on to our frame of reference by listening to the experience of experts and professionals throughout the three days.

Ladies and gentlemen

4. The theme 'Revitalising Leadership in Academic Institutions', is timely and well-chosen. In fact, we are not just reflecting on the importance of leadership in academic institutions but also stressing on the need in revitalising leadership to

produce effective and transformational leaders who are capable of leading and executing the vision and strategy of the higher education.

5. Let me just share my thoughts on the topic of: **“The Challenges and Commitment of the Leaders in Higher Education Transformation.”**

Ladies and Gentlemen

6. With the current landscape of higher education in Malaysia, I strongly believe that, only in the hand of most effective and capable leaders, the higher education institutions will be able to go through a huge transformation and a successful one.
7. Without effective and determined leadership, it is challenging to revitalise administration in any higher learning institutions. We may feel that it is only important to have a sound policy and institutional framework for revitalizing administration, however, these cannot be

overemphasized, it is leadership that primarily drives the change process. Excellent leadership will materialise the harmonisation of these higher learning institutions, creation of better track record, branding and positioning, that can contribute to the achievement of the goals set by the MEB(HE), and most importantly, enabling the higher education to continue '**Soaring Upwards**'.

Ladies and Gentlemen

[ROLES AND ATTRIBUTES OF LEADERS IN HIGHER EDUCATION TRANSFORMATION]

8. The higher education transformation in Malaysia primarily aims at lifting the local universities to become top ranking universities in the world and equally important, respected and referred globally.

9. Many of you here are leaders of higher education institutions. You are the key players in higher education transformation. To be effective and capable to boost up productivity and morale of workforce is your challenge. The knowledge, skills,

values and attitudes of the administrators are at the heart of the higher institutions performance.

10. As leaders, you are the ones responsible for delivering creative solutions by being dynamic and responsive to multiple challenges and opportunities in the current competitive environment.
11. Also as leaders of the institutions of higher education, you should possess both personal and interpersonal emotional intelligence. It is important that you keep your skills and knowledge up-to-date. You must be decisive, committed, able to communicate effectively, able to influence diverse groups of people, good at analysing situations and forming strategies. As leaders, it is essential to possess a different skill set and a high degree of responsibility and accountability.
12. The revitalisation of the administrators, however, must be seen from the holistic perspective. As leaders, it is crucial that your basic mission is

acknowledged and fully focus to propel on the leadership goals.

Ladies and Gentlemen

13. Changes, transformations are a long-term process, requiring the adoption of a comprehensive strategy that promotes the development of core capacities to provide leadership; to formulate sound policies; to promote greater performance-orientation in service delivery; and to enhance professionalism in public management.

14. As administrators and leaders of the higher institutions that you serve, perform what is privileged for your people and believe in yourselves. When mistakes transpired, be focus. In his book “Good to Great”, Jim Collins precisely expressed that the most successful leaders will be inclined to take the thrust of the responsibilities. Leaders should also acknowledge the difference between failures and feedbacks. Focus on building the leadership pipeline towards sustainability.

15. Leaders should be flexible and be a source of inspiration and positivity. Adjustments, changes and transformations need to be made when time calls for them.

16. As administrators and leaders, you map the mission instead of setting the boundaries. As I mentioned earlier route adjustments will become necessary when one calls for them. Form strategic adjustments and do not set rules that are engraved on stones. However, execute all these with careful consideration, weighing out the ramifications of the move. The further you rise in the leadership chain, the greater the responsibility. Remember, that administrators as leaders do not commence at the pinnacle from day one. It is a process of years and years of hard work and determination.

17. As administrators of higher institution who are charged with the “massification” of responsibilities, never lose sight of where you came from. As administrators the essential prerequisites for the

formulation of a strategy to strengthen the capacity of human capital in order to revitalize administration at the higher institution level are crucial.

[CHALLENGES OF LEADERS IN HIGHER EDUCATION TRANSFORMATION]

18. The higher education system needs to evolve, both in response to global trends as well as in preparation for further disruptions. To that end, the MEB(HE) 10 Big Ideas is to bring the major shifts in the way the system operates.

19. As leaders, you need to keep pace with the rate of change; challenges and contexts of the 21st Century. Evolution and transformation of the higher education are crucial in this complex, interconnected, diversified and borderless world in order to stay relevant and to compete in the global marketplace.

[Challenge No. 1] – Quality Education

20. The principal challenge that you as leaders of higher education institutions of Malaysia is to be consistently engaged in the pursuit of providing quality education capable of nurturing future-ready graduates who are holistic, entrepreneurial and balanced graduates, equipped with the relevant knowledge, skills, attitudes and competencies to be able to live and work in an international and multicultural society.

Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen,

[Challenge No. 2] – Top Ranked Universities

21. The second challenge for Malaysia's higher education institutions, particularly universities, is the aspiration to be top ranked universities at the world level.

22. In order to fulfil this noble aspiration, higher education institutions have come under greater public scrutiny since no Malaysian institute of

higher education has secured a position in the Top 100 in the recent QS World University Ranking or the Times Higher Education (THE) World University Ranking.

23. For this reason, the challenges of the Malaysia's higher education institutions include the following:

- i) produce top quality graduates,
- ii) enrol top quality graduate students,
- iii) produce as well as to attract top scholars,
- iv) develop and to retain quality lecturers and researchers,
- v) instil powerful institutional desire to excel in research, innovation and commercialisation,
- vi) produce more and higher quality R&D&I outputs,
- vii) develop strong international benchmarks,

viii) make their institution's presence felt and create more impact, especially in relation to the benefit to the community.

24. Currently Malaysia is rated as the 9th preferred destination in the world for education, I personally believe that being able to position any of the Malaysian universities in the top 100 universities in the world would further uplift the reputation of Malaysia's higher education system as the knowledge and skills hub as well as the world-class education provider, that is referred, respected and relevant.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

[Challenge No. 3] - Accessibility and Flexibility

25. To meet the demands of the changing market economies, Malaysia is evolving from a production-based economy to an innovative, knowledge-based that requires the development of a highly

skilled and knowledgeable workforce. To ensure the growth of this critical workforce, there is a need for an increased accessibility and flexibility to higher education.

26. This is when creative leadership needs to be put in practice and where higher education institutions need to transform and diversify learning and teaching experiences, as well as to increase access to education through innovative practices and open online education.

Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen,

[Challenge No. 4] - Financial Sustainability

27. The next challenge would be on financial sustainability.
28. It is eminent that with the increase demand for education, there will be the rising costs for universities and other higher education institutions to bear. But, funding for higher education does not grow at the same pace as costs.

29. Thus, to confront issues of increasing costs and limited funding, higher education institutions, especially Malaysia's public universities, will need to maximise the value of every ringgit spent without compromising standards.
30. The Ministry will link government funding to performance, reform existing student financing mechanisms, and encourage HLIs to diversify funding sources.
31. Public and private higher learning institutions (HLIs) will need to draw on diverse sources of funding to allow continuous improvement in the quality of their programmes, and be more prudent and innovative in the use of their resources.
32. This requires the roles and leadership of leaders of the HLIs, particularly all of you leaders, to develop some coherent strategies for revenue diversification and innovative fundraising techniques.

[Challenge No. 5] - Graduate Employability

33. The next challenge for higher education institutions is to address the graduate employability (GE) concern.
- Graduate employability can be influenced by many aspects such as individual students' factors, labour market factors and industries requirements
34. GE matters should be the pivotal consideration for all higher education institutions. Employability itself means graduates having the ability to get the first job, keep it, and acquire new job if needed.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

[CONCLUSION]

35. This is the way forward. Leadership is a critical factor for the success of higher education.
36. Hence, leaders have to switch on their strategic awareness capacity where new ideas and

innovation are constantly generated. With strategic initiative, we will shape better talents who operate beyond the goal of competing and actively seizing new and different possibilities. Together we will make the transformation achieves its goals and delivers its outcomes.

37. It is my hope that all the leaders, staff and education community will embrace matters of character and the spirit of working harder and together as a team, to make the transformation of higher education in Malaysia a reality and a success. Therefore, as educational leaders, reclaim duties and fulfil a charge of revitalising the leadership mission with the functional mission to thrive in the fullest sense.

38. As famous quotes say:

**“When you focus on possibilities,
you will have more opportunities.”**

**“Education is the most powerful weapon
which you can use to change the world”**

39. What can happen initially starts with our own mind. If we optimise the potential of great minds of ours, whatever we do, God willing, we will achieve the outcomes intended.
40. On a final note, my sincere gratitude to the organisers once again and I truly hope that all our esteemed speakers, international delegates and fellow participants would take this wonderful opportunity to build the global bridges of comradeship and “share-good-practices” with all those involved in this event.
41. I am confident that this gathering of university administrators and experts in the spirit of revitalising leadership, will, once again, bring fresh and innovative solutions for the transformation of the higher education sector of our nation – making it better for the citizens, businesses, society, the country and the world as a whole.

42. To end my speech, I wish everyone a successful deliberation in this conference and your knowledge and experiences will be invaluable. I particularly would also like to wish our distinguished guests from around the world a safe and memorable stay here in Terengganu. I do hope you enjoy your time here in Terengganu, Malaysia.

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On that note, with Bismillahirrahmanirrahim,
It gives me great honour and privilege to declare open the 18th International Conference of University Administrators (ICUA 2016).

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Thank you
and Assalamu'alaikum warahmatullhi wabarakatuh