I'MPOSSIBLE

Leading Change

Noor Azizi Ismail

CONTENTS

PART THREE: THE UNFINISHED BUSINESS

LIST OF FIGURES

ABBREVIATION

AACSB	Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business
ABEST21	The Alliance on Business Education and Scholarship for Tomorrow
ACCA	Association of Chartered Certified Accountants
ACEEU	Accreditation Council for Entrepreneurial and Engaged Universities
AI	Artificial Intelligence
AIS	Accounting Information Systems
AKEPT	Higher Education Leadership Academy
AMBA	Association of MBAs
ASEAN	The Association of Southeast Asian Nations
ASM	Academy of Sciences Malaysia
CAECW	China-ASEAN Education Cooperation Week
CAU	China Agriculture University
CIMA	Chartered Institute of Management Accountants
CWIS	Campus-Wide Information System
DBA	Doctor of Business Administration
DVC	Deputy Vice Chancellor
ECAIS	European Conference on Accounting Information Systems
EIE	Entrepreneurship Integrated Education
EQUIS	European Quality Improvement System
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GE	Graduate Employability
GII	Global Innovation Index

GLC	Government Linked Companies		OYAGSB	Othman Yeop Abdullah Graduate School of Business
IJAIS	International Journal of Accounting Information Systems		PFI	Private Financing Initiative
ILO	International Labour Organisation		PPRN	Public-Private Research Network
IMD	Institute for Management Development		QMS	Quality Management System
IoT	Internet of Things		QS	Quacquarelli Symonds
ISO	International Organisation for Standardisation		RICE	Research, Innovation, Commercialisation and Entrepreneurship
IT	Information Technology			
KFA	Key Focus Area		RMIC	Research Management and Innovation Centre
KPI	Key Performance Indicator		STEM	Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics
MaGIC	Malaysian Global Innovation and Creativity Centre		SWUFE	Southwestern University of Finance and Economics
MAVCAP	Malaysia Venture Capital Management Bhd		THE	Times Higher Education
MBA	Master of Business Administration		UMK	Universiti Malaysia Kelantan
MD	Malaysian Digital		UMKBV	UMK Business Ventures
MDEC	Malaysia Digital Economy Cooperation		UniTP	University Transformation Programme
MEA	Ministry of Higher Education Entrepreneurship Award		UUM	Universiti Utara Malaysia
MEDAC	Entrepreneurship Development and Cooperatives Ministry		VC	Vice Chancellor
			VUCA	Volatile, Uncertain, Complex and Ambiguous
MIA	Malaysian Institute of Accountants		WBL	Work-Based Learning
MIT	Massachusetts Institute of Technology			
MNC	Multinational Corporation			
MoF	Ministry of Finance			
MoHE	Ministry of Higher Education			
MOOC	Massive Open Online Courses			
MOOE	Massive Open Online Experiments			
MOSTI	Ministry of Science, Technology and Innovation			
MPC	Malaysia Productivity Corporation			
MRANTI	Malaysian Research Accelerator for Technology and Innovation			
MSC	Multimedia Super Corridor			
MTDC	Malaysian Technology Development Corporation			
MySTIE	Malaysia Science, Technology, Innovation and Economy			
NPSTI	National Policy on Science, Technology and Innovation			
NUS	National University of Singapore			
OBB	Outcome-Based Budgeting			
OIC	Organisation of Islamic Cooperation			

PREFACE

Either write something worth reading or do something worth writing.
-Benjamin Franklin-

I have been in academia for over thirty (30) years and dedicated thirteen (13) of those years as an academic administrator. Put aside junior administrative positions, I served as Dean of Business School (2009-2015), then promoted to Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research and Innovation) (2015-2017), followed by Deputy Director General of Higher Education (2017-2018), and finally Vice-Chancellor (2019-2021).

Like other academic administrators, I have learned so much from these experiences. I believe that street lessons are equally, if not more important than theories found in textbooks. Unfortunately, most of those experiences are hidden or not shared publicly. Thus, people are not learning from what has happened in the past to use in the future. Therefore, when I first thought about writing this book, two things immediately leapt into my mind. First, the focus is on the street lessons, the simple and fundamental lessons people often ignore. Second, the book has to be simple and easy to read; with a storytelling style of real-world stories surrounding higher education.

Several groups of readers may benefit from this book. The first group of readers are young academicians who aspire to become

academic leaders. The second group are academic administrators who, I believe will benefit greatly from the real stories shared. The third group are university student leaders. Fourth and finally are the lay public who are interested in leadership and institutional transformation generally and higher education specifically. While many examples used in the book refer to the institutions I have worked with and currently working with, they are also applicable to any context of higher learning, and in fact any institutions. This book is broken into three parts; my thoughts about issues surrounding higher education; strategies and actions; and the unfinished business, things I have started but was unable to complete when my term as the Vice-Chancellor ended.

Part I shares my thoughts on several issues surrounding Higher Education and the Institutes of Higher Learning such as Leadership, Governance, Talent Management, Succession Planning, Academia-Industry Collaborations, Negotiation, Innovation, and Entrepreneurship. It comprises ten (10) chapters which are the extended version of the articles I have published in the New Straits Times, Marketing in Asia and 300TH. Part II is more like a case study that discusses challenges, strategies and actions taken to transform Universiti Malaysia Kelantan (UMK) from a bottom-ranked public university into a respectable one. This part comprises three (3) chapters; starting with a little chapter on the importance of actions; followed by the small steps taken to bring quick wins; and finally, the visionary actions that will bring the institution to the next level. Part III discusses several game-changer strategies. This final part comprises five (5) chapters. First is the establishment of Ignite Venture Innovation Lab. The Lab aims to change people's mindsets, the way we see things, and how we identify problems and turn them into opportunities. Second is the effort to nurture religious students with hi-tech knowledge and skills to become the nation's future tech workforce. The third is about the challenges and strategies to raise waqf funds as an alternative source of income for universities. Part III concludes with a little chapter about pushing the extra mile.

I hope the readers will enjoy reading the book and learn some lessons to make higher education institutions a better place that will transform the students to become not only responsible for their businesses or organisations they work with (profit) but also liable for the consequences of their actions to the environment (planet) and society (people) at large.

Noor Azizi Ismail

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Why are you knocking at every door?
Go, knock at the door of your own heart.
-Rumi Jalaluddin-

This book is dedicated to many people who become part of my academic and life journey. First are my beloved mother Wan Embong Wan Yusof, my late father Allahyarham Ismail Ibrahim and my late uncle Allahyarham Wan Yusof Wan Ngah, who have raised me to become the person I am today. Second is my beloved wife, Rosmawati Mamat who has been my loyal companion through thick and thin for the past 27 years. Third are my children, Nur Fatehah Afiqah, Muhamad Afiq Danial, Nur Natasya Amira, Nur Aneesa Sofea, and Muhamad Danial Rizqie. They are the joy of my life. Fourth are my siblings, Wan Aini whom I call Ummi, Noor Azhar, Noor Azli and Nasrul Hadi who have been supporting me throughout the years. Fifth are my mentors and friends, YB Tan Sri Idris Jusoh, Tan Sri Dr. Noorul Ainur Mohd Nur, Datuk Dr. Siti Hamisah Tapsir and many others, from whom I have learned a lot during my short stint at the Ministry of Higher Education and Ministry of Education. My sincere thank also goes to YB Dr. Maszlee Malek who took the risk and put his trust and confidence in me to lead and transform a bottom-ranked university. I hope you are not disappointed with the results. Universiti Malaysia Kelantan is no longer at

the bottom and proudly stands among other top Malaysian universities. This book is also dedicated to my colleagues at UMK who were with me during my tenure as the Vice-Chancellor and are still with me after it ended. You know who you are. I truly appreciate the true friendship. A special mention and gratitude goes to Dato' Hussamuddin Yaacub who as the former UMK chairman have guided and supported me during good and bad times. I am forever grateful. Not to forget my former bosses and colleagues at Universiti Utara Malaysia who have played a big part during my early journey in academia. My appreciation also goes to Dr Adams Adeiza, my former PhD student at UUM and is now my colleague at UMK, who contributed his wonderful ideas and experiences to co-author Chapters Eight, Nine, Fifteen and Sixteen. Last but not least, to all my friends and also haters, we may be different in our approach but I am sure we all want the best for our students and nation. Thank you for the wonderful lessons and experiences.

SUMMARY

Chapter 1: Change Leadership

All leaders want to bring change and leave a positive legacy in the institutions they lead. However, not all are successful with some, inversely causing more harm than good. The big lesson is, leaders should not be fixated on mere change for legacy purposes. Great leaders are not power crazy. They only bring change when it is necessary, and they do it in the best interest of the organisations. When they do, they 'Communicate' well, they 'Collaborate' and they 'Commit'.

Chapter 2: Transformative Leaders Who Hug Their Haters

Transformative leaders are usually singled-out and rebellious but they have special qualities that ordinary leaders don't. They are committed, and ready to work beyond their self-interest to identify change and create a vision to guide and push for the change agenda through influence, inspiration, and execution of the change. They can inspire and bring people together to work on disruptive ideas that may be crazy to some but will bring major impacts not only to the organisations they lead but also to the environment and the larger society.

Chapter 3: Institutional Transformation

In a volatile, uncertain, complex and ambiguous world, institutions need not only change but transform the way they conduct their businesses. Three important steps to successful institutional transformation are understanding organisational health, enforcing governance and quality systems, and formulating winning strategies. Each step comprises several actions. The institutional transformation is about putting the right culture, strong governance, and right strategy in place; and with strong leadership and a team of high integrity, nothing is impossible.

Chapter 4: Talent Management and Succession Planning

An academic institution is unique compared to other institutions. There is no real boss because the basis of leadership is very much based on collegiality. Managing and leading the so-called "intelligent people" can be a nightmare to many academic leaders. Mutual respect and trust are keys to successful academic leadership. Therefore, the process of recruiting, nurturing, promoting, and retaining talents in universities must be by design, not by chance. Most importantly, political consideration should never precede talent.

Chapter 5: Academia-Industry Collaboration

Real world perspectives are topics that academicians can get carried away with. There is always a blaming game between academia and industry. Two keywords that can lead Higher Education Institutions to success are collaboration and relevance. Instead of separating the two worlds, we have to create a bridge that connect the two entities. Industries provide real-life experiences and cater to an immediate productivity-economic need, while academia provides theoretical appreciation which is not merely technical in contents but encompasses arts, humanities, history, sociology and more.

Chapter 6: Innovation – Lessons From China

Talents and a conducive ecosystem are two important drivers of technological innovation, and innovation is critical to boosting productivity which is important for the sustainable economic growth of a country. Using the Quadruple Helix approach and China as an example, Malaysia needs to create a comprehensive ecosystem that coordinates Higher Education Institutions, industry, relevant government agencies, and community to innovate and increase productivity to move out of the middle-income trap. While every sector has important roles to play in the ecosystem, coordination and execution are the keys to success.

Chapter 7: Innovation, Technology and Talent Development

Higher Education Institutions need to revisit their original mandates and match them with their current aspirations. To become a fully-developed country, Malaysia must increase its productivity by focusing on innovation agenda. In the context of higher education, universities should focus on the KPIs based on their mandate of establishments. Research universities must focus on fundamental research, technical universities must focus on applied research, and others on their niche areas. Basic and applied research complement each other. Once we have research that is transformed into real-world applications, the process will encourage more fundamental research and make it more sustainable. Importantly, there must be a strong partnership between universities, industries, and funding agencies.

Chapter 8: Turning Malaysian Universities Into Hatcheries For Technology Start-Ups

To move into a high-income economy, the focus of entrepreneurship education must shift from a traditional business to innovation-driven entrepreneurship backed by Science and Technology. Innovation is

about leveraging emerging technologies to scale new solutions and solve societal problems. The keyword is scale. The focus on tech-based start-ups will help the country provide high-quality jobs for sustainable economic growth. That requires high commitment from the Ministry of Higher Education and university management to invest in a conducive ecosystem that fosters innovation-driven entrepreneurship. Seven important factors are; commitment from university top management; physical space for incubation; availability of talented champions; linking up with the industry and the outside world; widespread mindset of going the extra mile among faculty members; supportive internal and external start-up ecosystem.

Chapter 9: How To Build Thriving Start-Ups of Little Known Emerging Technologies

Many little-known technologies offer great opportunities to solve critical human problems, and in the process, people can build thriving start-ups off them. Among the technologies are bioprinting, implantable technology, neurotechnology, designer being, 4-D printing, and nanomaterials. However, for them to be useful and serve humanity at scale, a business model must be built around the technology. There are three important steps for tech start-ups. First, understand the pressing customer and societal needs. Second, understand technological possibilities. Third, deploy disruptive business models.

Chapter 10: Negotiation and The Magic of Storytelling

Storytelling is a powerful way to build a relationship because stories stay in our memories better than theories, concepts or facts. In business, negotiators often use storytelling for effective negotiation. It is one of the critical skills for many great leaders. There are five key principles to negotiation. First is preparation. While negotiators need to be clear on the

end goal, they must be flexible on how to get there. The second is about mindset and the importance of cultivating the relationship between the two parties. Third is creative problem solving, where negotiators must engage in innovative explorations. Fourth is managing emotion during the negotiation process. The fifth and final principle is uncovering the hidden dimensions such as cross-cultural elements and other psychological factors that may impact the negotiation process.

Chapter 11: Beyond Ideas

The keyword is action. Inaction breeds doubt and fear, while action breeds confidence and courage. To be successful, go out, draw your weapons and get into the battlefield.

Chapter 12: Little Things That Matter

In any institutional transformation, the first critical step is to fix the fundamentals. Using Universiti Malaysia Kelantan as a case study, this chapter focuses on several issues often ignored by many academic leaders. First is setting up the right organisational structure with clear lines of reporting and responsibility. Second is putting the governance and quality systems in place. The third and most important is integrity. Other little things that matter include meeting rules and etiquettes, branding and visibility, use of data for effective decision-making, and prudent financial management.

Chapter 13: The Magic of Thinking Big

Once the fundamentals are fixed and quick wins are secured, the next step is to go for the big ideas and formulate the winning strategies. Again, this chapter uses Universiti Malaysia Kelantan as a case study. Many big ideas are introduced and new KPIs are set to bring the university to the next

level. Among the new initiatives include a very comprehensive roadmap for research, innovation, commercialisation, and entrepreneurship; quality systems and accreditation; talent development and succession plan; integrated campus-wide information systems; and new physical development.

Chapter 14: Ignite Venture Innovation Lab

This chapter discusses Ignite Venture Innovation Lab, a small yet visionary initiative taken to transform traditional-based entrepreneurship education at Universiti Malaysia Kelantan into innovation-driven entrepreneurship and make the university one of the start-up incubators in the country. The aim is to inculcate an innovative mindset among university staff and students, so them to be able to identify problems and turn them into opportunities. The Lab exposes students to the latest technologies and their capabilities, while at the same time guiding them to think about how they can make use of those technologies to solve real-world problems.

Chapter 15: Untapped Opportunity – Nurturing Huffaz-For-Tech (Part I)

This chapter discusses the issue of widening income gaps in Malaysia, and how the country could address this problem by adopting proven models for scaling acquisition of digital skills especially among the bottom of the pyramid and generality of the young population. It also highlights the amazing promise of emerging technologies in addressing the problem by inculcating innovative mindset and creating the much-need high quality jobs. To leverage on the available technologies, less developed countries need to invest more on Science, Technology and Engineering education, especially tech talents.

Chapter 16: Untapped Opportunity – Nurturing Huffaz-For-Tech (Part II)

This chapter provides specific structures and models based on Israel and Nigeria which Malaysia and other OIC countries could adapt to speed up the acquisition of digital skills by young people and ultimately level up income distribution in the country. In this context, religious students can be the catalyst, in addition to normal university students, to move the country into an innovative high-tech economy. The exposure to the tech world will enable them to view the world through broader lenses and make them more innovative and competitive.

Chapter 17: Waqf For Higher Education – Challenges and Strategies

This chapter addresses the issue of waqf as an alternative source of income for universities. Two examples are given. First is Turkey where waqf has become a tradition for Turkish people. Second is Singapore where the latest technology is leveraged for effective waqf collection and distribution. Several challenges and strategies are discussed. Universities need a professional team that can communicate to the public the importance and the purpose of the university, the challenges they are facing, and how their contributions will bring positive impact not only to the students but also the society. The keyword is relationship.

Chapter 18: Going The Extra Mile

This final chapter emphasises the value of having a broad perspective, acting on ideas, and going above and beyond. Therefore, it is crucial to train our mind to continuously wander, challenge, and disrupt the normal way of doing things. In the context of education, we must instil critical thinking in students so that they can recognise opportunities and turn challenges into previously unseen opportunities. The responsibility of educators is to bring out the best in them.