UTP Transformation Journey

INSIGHTS ON UTP TRANSFORMATION JOURNEY

ASSOC PROF DR FAKHARUDDIN

Table Of Contents

Introduction
Interview with Assoc. Prof. Dr. Fakharuddin

Assalamu'alaikumWarahmatullahiWabarakahtuh dan salam sejahtera saya Fakharuddin bin Hashim dekan Fakulti Kejuteraan Universiti Teknologi PETRONAS.

Reflection on the university's transformation, my perspective on the matter would be the journey and the end state that UTP wishes to arrive, as well as the journey that the university would pursue and undergo through various challenges both institutionally and whatever resources that the university has at that point of time. Previously I was employed in a public university, my first impression when I first stepped in as a full-fledged academic staff in a corporate-style private university, the transformation intended on making me personally to be more focused on what we aspire to be and appoint specific duration or time. So, *secara peribadi banyak kisah-kisahmenarik yang saya telah lalui dalam agenda transformasi universiti dan dalam waktu yang sama, dia memberikan peluang yang banyak juga.*

Firstly, there are a lot of opportunities in the university towards a betterment journey as long as we have the stamina to cope with it.
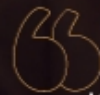
> It's not about transforming the university, but it's also transforming yourself in line with whatever the university aspires to be.

Secondly, to reach what we aspire to be, alongside the university's aspiration, you need to be creative, show your talents, and be resourceful because it benefits others. *Jadi manafaat itu melimpah ruah* when we talk about transformation because *pada saya* it's not about transforming the university, but it's also transforming yourself in line with whatever the university aspires to be.

On that note, *ramai juga kawan-kawan tanya, boleh ke capai? Saya kata* "where there's a will there's a way" *bila ada kemahuan maka adalah jalan,* so sebab itu kreativiti, innovation and stamina to go through it, *adalah satu prinsip dan juga panduan dalam mencapai atau menyudahkan perjalanan terhadap mencapai aspirasi university dalam suasana semasa yang dinamakan* fulfilling the transformation plan.

HICCUPS

Reflecting upon the transformation journey that UTP has undergone thus far during initial years, there are a lot of tiding problems and hiccups, even to the point that the self-confidence among staff and resources that we had were relatively low. We were a young university, UTP *ini universiti yang muda* there are a lot of experiences that we have yet to gain. However, the constrain in the initial years more or less relies on whether we have sufficient talents to reach whatever we aspire to be. Therefore, *saya ingat lagi* during the early years, we started on developing master plan, which is not a common feature to some universities, *saya ingat saya di libatkan untuk penyediaan* master plan one and master plan two respectively one is academic transformation and another one is RnD journey towards excellence.

We are still having those activities from time to time and getting ourselves prepared to comply and always focus as per the master plan. During the early years, it was tough and rough as well. Back then, I was given the task or responsibility '*tanggungjawab*' to look closely at the RnD master plan as one of a former director research-wise, especially deepwater technology machine-oriented research director. Development of the so-called road map itself took ages *kalau tanya saya bila nak lengkapkan road map ini*, it was one of the daunting tasks. Number one, to get the road map completed. Number two, to get the critical human resource team, to form the team, pasukan yang nak menjayakan whatever stage-gate master plan itu as according to the road map. It was not an easy task because you have to do a lot of lobbing, finding the right people, and getting the necessary talent.

We were small so we didn't have a sufficient amount of time but *Alhamdulillah* with a lot of perseverance and strategic planning, we managed to get a core group. Therefore, it was business from day one in that sense. Continuing from the narrative on team formation to get the RnD journey smoothly on board, the members were quite skeptical initially, *dia masih ada ragu-ragu lagi*. because in reflecting upon our mission-oriented research MOR deepwater technology, it was a new thing to the team.

To beef up our confidence level, we practically had to go and search for new information and spent time in the library. So, imagine that all *orang-orang tua ni kena pergi balik* library spent time to recapture back new knowledge regarding deepwater technology because that day the road map *yang kita nak plan bersama* must be based on fakta, ilmu atau knowledge at the same time we must be certain on how to arrive at whatever end state that we have planned. That was one of the earliest challenges when we started on the journey reflecting upon the research aspiration.

> We keep improving ourselves, time and again we reflect on the gaps, and we set forth, also improve as we go along. Hence, nothing is perfect.

I have mentioned one of the key factors to be completed as one of the enablers for the transformation journey which is about people. The other aspect that also needs to be looked at carefully is what sort of technology.

I mentioned about facilities, so facilities tied in carefully with the technology that we opt to have either you bring in or you develop it in-house. As well as the other element that is equally important in ensuring that the transformation journey can be fully satisfied and meets the University requirement, it will be what sort of processors and approaches including some of the so-called key mechanisms that allow things to move smoothly.

For instance, processors can be related to procurement, processors can also lead to governance, as one of the entities under the umbrella of PETRONAS issue of governance integrity which has always been hot and been observed from time to time.

To acquire certain technology or manpower in that sense are not well developed, then obviously there will be delays and hiccups, and the most frustrating thing will be, people may assume there's a lot of so-called red tapes, but to me personally, as long as the processors are agreed upon in consensus and therefore, we just follow through it smoothly and hopefully *InshAllah* things can run accordingly within budget and time *MashAllah*. Okay, *baru-baru ini dalam satu pertemuan di satu jamuan organized* by professional body, *ada rakan-rakan daripada universiti lain yang saya kenal bertanya so far,* knowing the fact that UTP *dia punya* ranking and rating *dah naik,* so you all *tak* stress? My answer, *kata mana ada benda tidak stress saya kata, makan pon boleh stress.* But the good part of it is that we plan, and we aspire to be at a certain level as good as other universities. Then there was another question, they asked if I have achieved what I aspire to in line with what I outlined in the first place? Saya kata, di transformation journey itself, the agenda as per UTP context is an ongoing continuous journey.

Key Performance Indicator (KPI)

As I said earlier, one of the key features that differentiate between some universities and UTP for instance in transformation is the Key Performance Indicator (KPI) which has always been a stressful topic to talk about. On another dimension, if the KPI is treated as a guiding factor, as *panduan dalam menjalani rutin sebagai seorang* academician you will know your target and be aware of what to achieve at the end of the day or even year. Unless if there is no indicator, you *jadi syok sendiri*. So, as you go into a higher level of your services and towards the accomplishment of your journey, obviously the indicators become *lebih sukar tetapi* it's a challenge to move higher.

However, as we progress some of the target settings can be quite straightforward to be resolved with good teamwork that knows which processor should be adopted. Hopefully, we will enjoy whatever result we get at the end of the duration of the target setting. If somebody asked me, "If you are given a second chance, what can be improved and what can be rectified in our transformation journey?" On a personal note, there are a few things that we can improve or rectify.

I believe it was time that we should embark upon Flexi KPI because each of us either academic staff or non-academic staff have resources of different talents, styles, and inclinations. Also, with the talent and capability of different threats, *kita boleh raikan* in flex events, *mereka akan lebih terselah dan akan cari bidang mereka.*

They will say "I'm good at this one so I can maximize it to the fullest to deliver the best for the university" that would be one. *Dalam waktu yang sama*, another possibility of putting ourselves in a better position, maybe we should look at "low-hanging fruits" *kata orang putih.*

Low-Hanging Fruit

❝ Building reputation is a 'low-hanging fruit',
now with technology lagi senang you can always
promote like promotion of products online.

Sometimes we have hard targets that we intend to aim. For example, I was a director of research before becoming a dean, there are certain hard targets that we aim for in both divisions, such as the number of publications and the number of research centers to be established. That time *dia memerlukan usaha, tenaga dan buah fikiran yang berterusan* and there's no guarantee that these hard targets can be physically realised, but there are "low-hanging fruit" *ada beberapa sasaran yang mudah dicapai yang boleh membantu meningkatkan reputasi universiti dan masa yang sama dia juga boleh membantu kita mempercepatkan* achievement of our end state of transformation. For example, how do we promote ourselves among the local contexts? *Saya pernah terjumpa warga penduduk setempat yang menggunakan bahasa Perak dan saya bertanya "Makcik tahu ada Universiti dekat sini?" Balas Makcik itu "Dekat mane?"* That was the time when UTP *tidak ada* totem pole. So let say if locality *pun orang tidak tahu ada university, ini kan pula di luar sana sebab* we have cases of our friends who came to Perak ended up in pekan of Tronoh to find UTP. That's why I call it as an analogy of 'low-hanging fruit', building a good reputation and that reputation came with santai-santai of meeting people that you can reach out to and you don't have to go far away. At times, international regulation is good but at the end of the day, it's the cost factors tie to it. Building reputation is a 'low-hanging fruit', now with technology lagi senang you can always promote like promotion of products online. I think during the early years the leadership of UTP management was not favorable of this. I can see why because at that time, it was newly started, so one of the kata-kata hikmah was thrown to us "we do not want to be "tin kosong, nampak hebat tapi tin kosong", I can see the case. However, now we are different as we have substance, so we are no longer tin kosong. Promotion and building reputation are the keys. Another 'low-hanging fruit' that should be considered in our transformation journey is to look at the possibility of having a public-oriented punya exposure about UTP.

Closing Note

I can see now how it is moving because we open events to the public and that's a good thing. It's not an easy thing to do and it takes courage to lead. It doesn't cost a lot and you get more positive feedbacks, not only on reputation but also quick feedbacks from our peers when we have that public domain reach out. Last but not least, if I can see how we can improve further on this, as the university grown and matured, our workforce also ages. I was fortunate, to look at the number of years of service with UTP has reached 18 years.

Initially, when I started working with the university, I promise myself to give fully 2 years in UTP during the interview because I have plans for a personal venture, but it has been 18 years thenceforth.

.In that sense, as we were to arrive at a specific stage-gate of the transformation journey, we also should be looking at work-life balance. So, sometimes to keep up with the productivity of individual staff, managing stress, and to have more work life balance would be good because then, the otai-otai or seniors can be considered as a mentor to the junior staff.

The work balance *kena ada kalau tidak* it would affect our health but at the same time, we want to minimize unnecessary constrain that could affect the productivity of the work. I think with those few notes in mind, I believe *InshAllah* our transformation will still segar and fresh. The juniors and students should see the journey as a lot of opportunities. I'm still here after 18 years, it takes a lot of courage and creativity to see who you want to be in the context of university transforming from one stage to another. Wallahualam, I think with this sharing, I hope I've enticed a lot of motivations among some of us out there.

Thank you.

Assoc. Prof. Dr. Fakharuddin