

MOHAMED NOOR
ROSLI BAHARUM

INSIGHT ON

UTP

**TRANSFORMATION
JOURNEY**

TRANSFORMATION JOURNEY

The Early Years

Bismillahirahmanirahim, Assalamualaikum w.h.k. my name is Mohamed Noor Rosli Bin Baharum I joined UTP in October 1998 after about 19 years in the education industry. Before I join UTP, I was very much involved in several levels of education. I was a school teacher, education district officer, an officer at Jabatan Pendidikan Negeri, and the last posting, as a school inspectorate at Jemaah Nazir Kementerian Pendidikan Malaysia. When I saw in this advertisement of UTP, it says PETRONAS is going to set up a new university. So, I saw this as a good opportunity and send my application. Alhamdulillah, they called me for an interview at Dayabumi after 6 months. When I was given the offer, I had to resign from my post after 19 years in ministry, I did ask for optional retirement from the Kementerian but they said no. So, when I resigned in 24 hours, I lost my gratuity, retirement benefit, and everything else. Of course, my friends told me that it was a foolish move to relinquish my seniority, but I said InshAllah I put my trust in Allah, rezeki Allah tentukan so, I joined UTP in October 1998.



I started as an executive in education delivery and quality system, I reported to Dr. Mohammad Fadzil Hani as he was the director of academics for UTP at that time. It was the early years, and we were situated in the old wooden building which no longer exist, and those early years were very challenging for us because we were starting new and UTP was still a baby to PETRONAS. So, we had to put everything in place which includes the fundamentals and the foundations to ensure that we can become a very good university.

Working with Dr. Fadzil at that time was a very good experience because he's a person who sets a very high standard and there is no compromise in terms of quality. I had a good learning experience with Dr. Fadzil Hani, and it was good in the sense that he was able to change my mindset from a government mentality to corporate thinking. Those were the early learning experiences that took me in my career later in life.

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FUNDAMENTALS IN THE EARLY YEARS

In the early years, we had to put the fundamentals in place, and I was in charge to look at the quality system and the delivery system for the university, then we came out with several workshops to develop our curriculum. UTP was a clean new slate and things were not in order yet, but PETRONAS demanded that we must start the university as quickly as possible. We started with several curriculum design workshops to come out with our curriculum, cost content, and structure, and it was good that we were starting new because we have a free hand in doing things. Of course, there were certain rules and regulations that we had to follow, and with the team that we had at that time which includes Dr. Fadzil Hani, Dr. Mohammed Ibrahim Mutalib who is our current Vice-Chancellor, Dr. Rashid, and Dr. Abbas, we came out with several curriculum designs for our core courses which are still relevant today. From that point, we were able to come out with our courses and we had our first batch in 1997. It was the first batch that was supposed to go to the United Kingdom but they were sited in UTP. From there, I think we moved and after a few years, I was asked to develop this education technology development unit.



ROLE IN UTP

So, my role in UTP throughout these years; one has a starter, and one has a troubleshooter, whereby I was asked to start a few units and departments. The second challenge I had was to come out with this education technology department unit, to focus more on the academic training. We have the Human Resource unit, but we didn't have a dedicated body to ensure academic development. I have experience in the education industry, and there was a master trainer when I was sent to New Zealand earlier before I came to UTP. Therefore, I used that experience to develop a few more modules, whereby we were able to use them to develop our lectures..



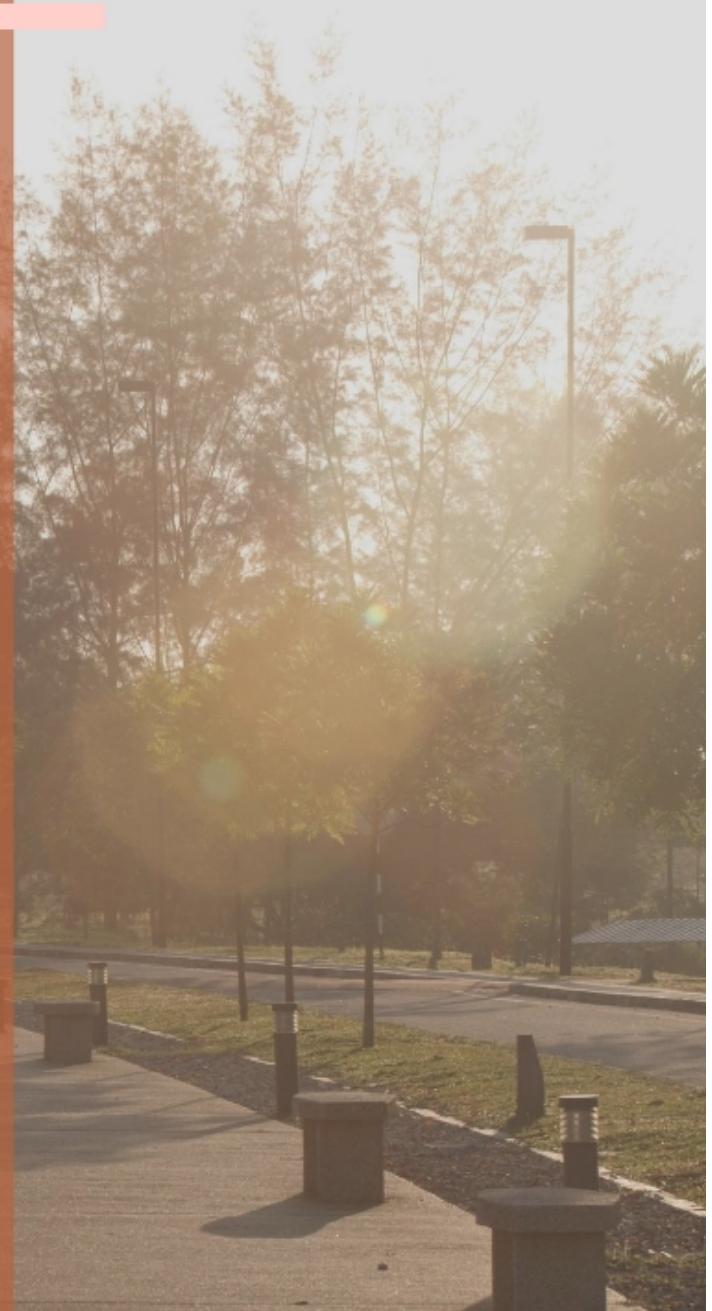
SCHEME FOR SENIOR AND TRAINEE LECTURERS

Remember we were still new; hence, we only had a few senior lecturers, and we had to take many trainee lecturers on board. I think these people consisted of seven batches and there are a few among them that are still here, for example, Dr. Taib, Dr. Serevanathn, Dr. Rosdiazli, and several more. So, these were the first batch of our trainee lecturers, and we had this scheme in which we took a good academician to come on board, and who have this aptitude to become a lecturer. So, we focus on developing these young lecturers, also, we brought the senior lecturers on board because they have the experience, but we had to change their mindset in a way of their delivery so that all of us are on the same page. We had this training program on board for all our lecturers. That was in 2002, afterward, I was asked to move to the management humanities department.



OVERCOMING LEADERSHIP ISSUES

, I was called by our director of management, and he said "Manong, now we want you to move to the academic department". So, I was in the management department before I was asked to move to the academic department, and I accepted it because that was what the management wanted. What happened at that time, they wanted me to go to the general studies department as there were these leadership issues in the department, there were 3 factions and I was asked to go there to troubleshoot. That's why I said my role in UTP has either been a troubleshooter or a starter. When I went to this department, my main task was to bring the academician together and to see their roles there are for UTP and PETRONAS. Alhamdulillah I was able to manage the group. The challenges were not coming from the academic but the management side, there were a lot of challenges in handling different strong personalities. To me, managing academics is very challenging because we are managing their ego, it was hard to manage the ego of the academicians. However, not everyone was handy, some were very good and only a few strong characters that I had to tackle but Alhamdulillah, I was able to bring them together, and soon we were moving as one department.





Offshore Personnel

So, when I moved over there, I was offered as a senior lecturer, and I was asked to do the teaching. I was teaching courses like professional communication skills, corporate ethics, and business communication. I had a very good time with these lecturers, we were able to move the department, and later the department was rebranded to become the management and humanities department. We were able to capture the first project with PETRONAS which was to do a study on the offshore personnel on this platform called Baronia. This was the first research on oil and gas personnel in the world. Alhamdulillah, when I went to Miri and had a chat with the CEO of SKO Miri to convince him to do a study on offshore personnel. They agreed, so, we sent the proposal, and we got a budget of about RM 278,000 to do that project. Again, it was the first study on offshore personnel, and I was the team leader. Alhamdulillah it was completed, from that project we were able to gain trust from PETRONAS and we gain more projects with PETRONAS.



Challenges towards Transforming

The Hiccups

When I was still reporting to Dr. Fadzil Hani I was asked to do several projects under him. One of them was to develop the UTP senate which we didn't have yet at that time. So, together with Dr. Azizul, we were asked to come out with a proposal, all the rules and regulations, and the governance for the UTP senate. We did several benchmarks with these local universities in Malaysia. We went to USM, UM, UKM, and a few other universities, from that benchmarking visit, we were able to craft and develop the governance for the UTP senate which is still in existence today.

I also would like to share that in the early years, we had to come out with all these documents to be sent to Jabatan Pendidikan Swasta, which was managing the private institution. The professors from UKM, USM, and UPM came to help with our first assessment of the UTP curriculum. I remember at that day after the introduction by Dr. Fadzil Hani, I would say they were not happy with us, somehow, they challenged us and questioned why the UTP curriculum & teaching is in English, and why do we have this long industrial internship program which at that time was 8 months, the longest in the country.

CONVINCING DIFFICULT PARTIES

Challenging the National Language's Agenda

They shot fire on us because they didn't have it. They were seeing us as if we were doing something new out of the mainstream. They cannot accept the reality that this is good, and this is what the industries want but we had to respond to them. As I mentioned earlier, they did not take things well because they saw us as challenging the norm. We were indeed challenging the current way of doing things under the engineering program, and they couldn't accept it then. I also remember when we were called by "Dewan Bahasa Dan Pustaka" I was then asked by Dr. Rosdiazli to go down to Kuala Lumpur and I went there together with Dr. Mahalib represented UTP, they called MMU and UNITEN.



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We were questioned, "Kenapa UTP buat program dalam Bahasa Inggeris" because they said you are challenging the national language's agenda. So, we had to respond "kita masih mempertahankan Bahasa Melayu tapi kita menggunakan Bahasa Inggeris ini sebagai medium for instructions because we are going global. Kita mahu pelajar-pelajar UTP lebih competitive, lebih berkemahiran dengan menggunakan Bahasa Inggeris"

That is what the industries want, so we had to explain to "Dewan Bahasa Dan Pustaka", why we were using English. Alhamdulillah, I think the pengarah accepted the reasons, of course, we were drilled by DBP kerana mereka merasakan kita mencabar kedaulatan Bahasa Melayu because we were the only university that uses English at that point in time.

Kita masih mempertahankan Bahasa Melayu tapi kita menggunakan Bahasa Inggeris ini sebagai medium for instructions because we are going global. Kita mahu pelajar-pelajar UTP lebih competitive, lebih berkemahiran dengan menggunakan Bahasa Inggeris.