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AKEPT has a vital role to play to ensure that the higher education institutional and academic leaders can contribute to the cultivation of global citizens. FILE PIC

# Values-based leadership in higher education institutions

**V**ALUES-based leadership (VBL) is gaining prominence as an important approach to leadership which emphasises on practising reflection, having people matter mindset and building good relationships.

VBL describes leadership behaviours that are rooted in ethical and moral foundations.

Values-based leaders prominently display spiritual, authentic, ethical and servant leadership practices. They are virtuous leaders that lead by example and gain the trust of their people.

VBL drives business results through innovation and enhancing retention.

Empathy, which has always been an essential competency for leaders, is vital under VBL and is often regarded as the most important thing that leaders must get right especially in the higher education landscape as universities are

producing future leaders.

Although visioning mastery, public-speaking prowess, and organisational skills remain important competencies of institutional leaders, these may not be sufficient anymore.

In the face of changing scenarios and increasing challenges in the education landscape, higher education institutions will do well to have leaders who are also transformative, aspiring, morally strong and able to empathise with colleagues, subordinates, students and the community.

These are not only confined to leaders who hold administrative posts, but also academic and administrative staff who excel and are leaders in their fields.

In the Malaysian context, the Higher Education Leadership Academy (Akademi Kepimpinan Pendidikan Tinggi; known as AKEPT) is a leading organisation that acts as the body that

coordinates competency-based talent management via profiling and development programmes for the National Top Talent (NTT) to ensure sustainable leadership in higher education institutions.

The NTT serves as a talent pool of the best leaders in the public higher education institutions.

AKEPT’s mission to develop leaders through holistic leadership initiatives towards excellence is supported by the talent management offices in all Malaysian public universities.

AKEPT equips the NTT through its leadership development programmes that incorporates the required leadership competencies for the higher education landscape, to serve as role models by demonstrating VBL for effective talent management and for their interactions with students, colleagues, industries and the community.

Its approach emphasises empathy and moral principles as the foundation for effective leadership.

AKEPT’s Leadership Competency Framework and development programmes goes beyond the traditional notions of leadership. It focuses on guiding individuals and organisations to make decisions and take actions that are strategically sound and aligned with a strong sense of values and integrity. In a currently diverse and interconnected world, the importance of VBL cannot be overstated.

As subject matter experts, academics at higher education institutions have unique opportunities and responsibility to contribute to and advocate VBL through teaching and learning, research, publications, community engagements, and other academic activities.

These critical talents are the potential leaders who are at the forefront of educating the next generation of leaders. They have the capacity and opportunity among their students and understudies through their teaching, mentorship and

other academic activities.

These are among the criteria and the traits demonstrated by subject matter experts who have won the Anugerah Akademik Negara. These talents will be those who will assume the strategic post in the higher education institutions, equipping them with the knowledge and competencies.

The Anugerah Akademik Negara is an academic award that recognises and showcases the exceptional contribution of academics in their fields through teaching, knowledge discovery, publication and knowledge transfer.

Recipients of the Anugerah Tokoh Akademik Negara, which is the highest category award under the Anugerah Akademik Negara are critical talents who have made valuable contributions to the higher education institution, the country and at the global stage.

Their contributions have enabled their higher education institutions to achieve aspirations as mediums for national development agenda towards improving the quality of life of the people and humanity in general.

As a leader in their fields, the recipients of the Anugerah Tokoh Akademik Negara are those who are also recognised by prestigious professional and scientific bodies at the national and/or international levels and consistently demonstrates leadership and excellence in their academic fields.

Realising the significance of VBL in the higher education sector, AKEPT takes the lead in developing the leaders in higher education institutions to be equipped with VBL as part of competencies development.

Development programmes with local universities and SEAMEO-RIHED reflect this commitment to developing talents.

Additionally, AKEPT also collaborates with subject matter experts and other organisations on various programmes which examine the cultural and contextual factors that influence VBL in the higher education landscape.

Such studies have led to the development of best practices and guidelines tailored to the specific needs and challenges faced by Malaysian academics and fostering a community of higher education institutional leaders who are committed to contribute to solving local and global community issues.

Additionally, series of knowledge sharing programmes were also conducted to institutionalise a comprehensive competency VBL for national talents to assume critical positions at higher education institutions.

AKEPT also bridges the higher education institutions with the industries through the sharing of knowledge on megatrends, current socio-economics and geo-political issues, technology updates and values. In the context of higher education, the subject matter experts or the critical talents have abundant of opportunities to advocate, disseminate, promote and inculcate VBL.

Challenges await in the context of ensuring that VBL is being echoed within the higher education sector, be it public or private universities.

It is important for this initiative to be received and amplified in every institution so that VBL will be part of values that are being widely recognised, received, and implemented.

In conclusion, VBL is vital for the development and nurturing of responsible, ethical, and empathetic leaders for tomorrow.

AKEPT has a vital role to play to ensure that the higher education institutional and academic leaders can contribute to the cultivation of global citizens who are not only knowledgeable but also principled and socially responsible leaders for a sustainable community.

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