

## UMNO Youth in the Future of Malaysia

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**Abstract:** Youth plays an integral role in the making of Malaysia and its future. The nation building is depending heavily towards the wellbeing of the young citizens, especially, young leaders. This is because they are the one who will receive the baton from the seniors as the successor for the nation. Since, UMNO has been the chosen one for Malaysia, since, the year of its independency, more concerns are drawn as recently their popularity has decreased due to lack of involvement of young leaders in the party comparing to the opposition which has approached the community with new and fresh leaders. These young leaders shall not be given less attention as they have a lot of new ideas in developing new Malaysia. Therefore, in order to keep its relevancy, UMNO should cope with the situation to keep the prime chair as theirs.

**Key words:** Youth, leader, UMNO, Malaysia, nation building, involvement

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### INTRODUCTION

Youth constitutes the future. From the perspective of nationalist, youth are the group that will carry the weight of the nation in the future. They can be considered as the most valuable asset of the nation as this group will be the successor of whatsoever plans which is being construct today. Youth represent a significant group in a society. The Statistic Yearbook Malaysia 2010 recorded that 42% from a total of 26 million Malaysian citizens were youth. Therefore, in order to create a promising future of the nation, the power of young people should not be taken for granted and the development of youth is too substantial to be ignored, especially, young leaders. The effort of youth leadership development should not be done ignorantly (Aribi *et al.*, 2007). We have to note that their characteristics within the society are reflecting the hope or despair to the country. Lack of competency in leadership of young leaders may bring cataclysm to the future of the nation. A famous quote from Indonesia's first president named Sukarno: "Give me 1,000 men, I'll move the mountain. Give me 10 young men, I'll shake the world." This famous quote exemplifies the importance of youths in the country and their contribution to nation-building.

Being the future leaders, youths will replace the current leaders and chart a new course for the nation in time to come. So, the concern is to provide them with good education, enabling them to become the country's human capital. The youth should be developed and

guided to enable them to become productive resources through programs that would increase their knowledge, skills and engagement, find a place in the community and learn how to contribute to a community (Brennan *et al.*, 2007). An old-fashioned approach that has been successfully produced youth figures in the past need to be re-evaluated. This is because youth development is very sensitive to the changes of orientation within the society. That leads us to the first question, "What are the strategies in developing our young leader who will lead our country in the future."

**An overview of UMNO and the nation building of Malaysia:** Since, the year of its independency in 1957, the nation building of Malaysia is very much related to United Malays National Organisation (UMNO). Malaysian leaders such as Tunku Abdul Rahman, Tun Abdul Razak, Tun Hussein Onn, Tun Mahathir Mohamad, Tun Abdullah Badawi and Dato Seri Najib bin Abdul Razak are all succeeded as the Prime Minister of Malaysia and they are all from UMNO. Malaysian voters has shown their trust towards UMNO as the party has been the favourite party for the people for so long.

However, the rise of young voters in 13th General Election (GE) which contribute millions of new vote should catch the attention of not only UMNO but to the other political parties and the nation itself. According to REUTERS, 2.6 million Malaysians registered to cast their ballots for the first time, making up roughly a fifth of Malaysia's 13.3 million eligible voters. That number is

much higher to be compared to previous GE where 638,000 new voters were recorded. This phenomenon has changed the atmosphere in Malaysian politics.

Given the fact that the population of young voters in Malaysia has increased, staggeringly, only 22 MPs which is only 9% of Malaysia's 222 MPs fall within the group of youth which is below 40 years of age. The percentage will be much lower after the implementation of New Youth Development Policy which has grouped youth as those aged 15-30 later in 2018. If we look at the current MPs, there is none of them is under 30 years old that leads us to the next question: "How our youth can be one to represent the people in the government or is there a ripe age for such a mammoth task?" and another mind disruption of "Are our youth ready whether at state or federal level to take up the challenge."

In recent years, the opposition party seems to have become more popular than before providing UMNO challenge to keep the prime chair. Many political experts and pundits are pointing on the raise of the young Malaysians who seems to be favouring the opposition side. The same report says that a survey, released in January by Universiti Malaya, showed that 52% of new voters are backing opposition leader for prime minister. This may be resulted by the approach used by the opposition when they promote new and fresh young politicians in their campaign. From this point, raised the idea that Malaysian young voters are supporting young politicians who are more proactive with new ideas and spirit for the new Malaysia.

Having the fact that most of the new voters are young citizens and that their awareness towards politics is increasing, great attention from all political parties is very much needed, especially for UMNO in order to keep their reign. With the staggering stats that most of them who caught the eyes and minds of the young people are from the opposition party, UMNO should have a masterplan to the development of their young leaders in order to secure the future to remain as the governing party which will lead to a better Malaysia.

**Literature review:** Youth generation in Malaysia must be developed as homo intelligence youth which is generation of post-modern knowledge era have high personality, smart in using knowledge for life progress and contribute to development of society and nation (Jalaluddin, 2009). By year 2020, it is estimated that more than half of the population will consist of youth (citizens between 15-40 years of age). This is crucial for UMNO as they have to be the favourite for these group of citizen in order to gain votes to at least remain as the governing party.

The need for proper planning in UMNO youth development shall not be taken for granted, especially,

those young politicians. This is because young politicians are the potential of human resource and their capabilities are at the highest stake in this stage of the human lifecycle as those in this age group are more energetic and capable to participate in the process of development and nation building. Asnarulkhadi (2009) stated that youth in age group of 15 till 40 years is significant numerically and if translated into power sources, youth is positively influential towards nation formation whether from politic aspect (voters), social (unity) and economy (human capital).

Understanding and developing leadership among youth will help UMNO to develop an effective strategies that will nurture youth potential and talents and encourage participation, especially in politics. Therefore, nobody can denied that youth is an important agent for development, capable of ensuring national or party stability and sovereignty to support progress and development. However, studies of managing political leadership among youth in Malaysia are rare in comparison to other areas. Although, many scholars has researched a lot about youth development (Wehmeyer *et al.*, 1998; Lewski and Singh, 2007; Fulmer and Conger, 2004; Marcus, 2004; Wellins and Byham, 2001), there are still much can be done to better understand the way young people experience and construct their lives and to strengthen efforts to assist them in leading productive future. UMNO has been essential and always has the potential to steer Malaysia in leadership, business, law and governance, human capital and spiritual aspects. Youth development in UMNO is the key to success. The ultimate criterion for development is determined by the extent in which each individual in the society is provided with opportunities to contribute to and gain from the development and advancement of the society. Youth play an integral role in this process as future leaders and also as the citizens. It is an essential role of UMNO to ensure that the needs of their youth are taken into account in all areas of the organization policy and decision-making and also to provide the youth with suitable platforms and thereby bringing about a mature and responsible population for the coming generation to lead for a better Malaysia in the future.

Perspective of youth leadership development should not be viewed in a shallow context. Leadership development has been taken seriously and organizations around the world has lavished a lot of time and money for this purpose. According to McKinsey Quarterly, educational organizations such as colleges and universities has spent almost \$150,000 a person for customized leadership development courses for years. In corporate world, US companies are sending around

14 billion dollars annually for this cause. The aim of the program is absolute to have a better leader in future which will be carry out by the youth as the successor.

Youth leadership development and its management is extensively wide-ranging and involves a lot of activities. According to Boyd, leadership can be learned. However, the process of learning and the experiences cannot equally considered as the reflection of the leadership development potential and its effectiveness. There are distinctive characteristics of effective youth development programs. Developed by solid principles of youth development an effective programs must emphasize on development areas and its component that enhance youth leadership. Such program should support the young leaders to develop the ability to analyse his or her own strengths and weaknesses. The program also must be able to let the young leaders develop their self-esteem, confidence, motivation and leadership abilities. Besides that, an effective youth leadership program should be able to guide the young leaders to direct others to act to influence the opinions and inspire others and to prepare them as a role model (Wehmeyer *et al.*, 2000).

The practices of leadership development are not exceptional from having arguments underlying it. There are many views and different models of leadership development. A lot of perspectives regarding the leadership development components has to be taken into account. Leskiw and Singh (2007) in their extensive review of the literature, reveals six key areas of importance in leadership development.

## **MATERIALS AND METHODS**

This research is conceptual based and it draws information from purely secondary sources which includes textbooks, journals, conference papers, newspaper publications, interview and personal observations. The researcher chose mixed-method approach in this study. This to adhere leadership phenomenon and its complexity as it is best to be determine quantitatively and qualitatively (Conger, 1998). According to Creswell (2009), both quantitative and qualitative method occupy various techniques in order to gather data and knowledge including of ethnographies grounded theory case studies and phenomenological studies.

**Research design:** Based on researches that have been conducted, researchers have using the descriptive statistical analysis. Descriptive statistical analysis method

is used to analyse the tendency and percentage of respondents that includes studies on demography factors.

**Location, population and research sample:** This study will be carried out in Malaysia mainly focus on the young leaders in UMNO. Respondents being chosen are those who are in age group of 15-30 years old (based on the new implementation of youth by National Youth Development Policy). Research population is made up from UMNO youth member.

An estimation of at least 750 questionnaires will be distributed to UMNO youth members. The samples are divided to 5 categories based on the regions in Malaysia which consists of central region (Kuala Lumpur, Putrajaya, Selangor, Negeri Sembilan), Northern Region (Kedah, Perlis, Perak, Penang), Southern Region (Melaka, Johor), East Coast Region (Pahang, Terengganu, Kelantan) and Borneo Region (Sabah, Sarawak and Labuan). The research sample includes gender, age, race, religion, residential area, elementary school, secondary school and occupation, level of education, income and districts represented by respondents. Sample was chosen through random stratification sampling of the organization.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

**Needs assessment:** Organizational leaders involved with successful leadership development programs begin with a thorough needs assessment (Fulmer *et al.*, 2000; Morgan *et al.*, 2000). There are two parts of need assessment, develop objective and identify element of leadership. First, assessment process is organized to develop a significant objective of the program to ensure leadership development system of the particular company or organisation has correlation with the overall business strategy.

The second one is the organizing need assessment to seek the element of effective leadership. This also can be done to find the gap in the group of leaders when they are compared to the ideal. According to Fulmer and Goldsmith (2000), a clear linking development program to the organizational strategy is the best definition of need assessment.

**Audience selection:** Once specific leadership needs are defined, audience selection to identify the most appropriate people for the development has to be done. The selection can be done at all levels, not necessarily

focusing on the position or leader's level only. Despite having a different-level audiences, it need to have a clear connection with the company's succession planning, high potential employees and the company's initiatives of leadership development. In addition, Ibarra (2005) suggested that educational system which attend to develop the required skills for higher position in the management can be attained by having the succession plan and the leadership development aligned.

**Supporting infrastructure in place:** It is essential to have the right system and structure that supports the implementation and the management of leadership development program. To ensure the effectiveness and the good outcomes of the program, ongoing support and involvement from higher management is vital. As mentioned earlier, leaders develop their leadership potential when they are allowed to grow and challenge the system with their ideas and might and this cannot be done without proper support from the organization infrastructure and the surroundings such as company's directions or objectives and senior management people. This is significant to Kesler's idea that people development is a matter of corporate culture.

**Develop a learning system:** Another element for best practices in leadership development is by the development and implementation of learning system that provide the opportunity to apply and thus to improve and applied the new learning. The learning system is ranging from a formal training to role playing activities where the selected audience may learn from senior's act in the real business context. Significant to this, Marcus (2004) stated that lectures and workshops or any traditional theory-based course are now out-dated. It should be replaced with a specified and customized interactive learning. It should be a journey with numbers of session, which will offer the audience with a real business context learning. To ensure the program is effective, we are not only to focus on the developmental opportunities and its relationship to the company's objective but we also have to focus on the audience response that can be gained from a developmental feedback systems. Day (2000) stated that leadership development comprises of the development of individual knowledge, skills and abilities. We have to admit that every person in the world has the potential to grow and it is essential to have a collective development in order to supports this determination.

**Evaluate effectiveness:** Many organizations have the thought that we cannot value things that cannot be measured. According to Ready and Conger (2003), they

argue that leadership have been exceptional to the idea where we can achieved through pointing the right questions in the leadership program, although, it is not measurable in quantifiable terms.

Effective evaluation of leadership development should determine the effectiveness level of the program. How effective is the program is can be evaluated by addressing particular criterion. The evaluation shall see the fulfilment of the initial needs that has been drawn in the early process of assessment. This includes the objective of the program, the characteristics of leader and the desired outcomes that were defined for the organization and its expectation.

**Reward success and improve on deficiencies:** The final stage is to reward success and improving the deficiencies. Feedbacks from the evaluation can be use in this purpose. Skinner (1953) stated that rewarding success is grounded in several behavioural theories, especially in reinforcement theory which suggests that people react to behaviours and its consequences. An individual will repeat good behaviours which they think is satisfying where it normally contribute by recognition and reward by others and vice versa.

Green (2002) describes reinforcement by rewarding or recognition, either closely or publicly is critical for participant's success in leadership development. Psychologically, this is the best encouragement as it provides excitement for well behaviour.

## CONCLUSION

Youth development is undeniably important for greater nation building, especially in leadership. UMNO as the party which has developed Malaysia, since, the year of its independency shall not look at this matter simple, yet, they have to lead Malaysian politics in order to prolong the party great history in Malaysia. By having a specified program for the cause of developing young leaders, it is believed that UMNO will have a pool of leaders for future planning hence promising the relevance of the party for longer period.

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