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Leapfrogging in education



By Datuk Dr Ibrahim Ahmad Bajunid | iabaiw@yahoo.com

Writer is a deputy vice-chancellor, INTI Laureate International University

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VISIONARIES NEEDED: It is time Malaysian educators became generators of knowledge

SHANGHAI has now become a showcase for China's drive to become an educational superpower. A city of more than 21 million, it is said to generate almost 13 per cent of the country's income. It is telling that in Shanghai, more than 84 per cent of teenagers go on to higher education.

Unlike the highly publicised Economic Forum in Davos or the World Education Summit for Education (WISE) in Doha, in Shanghai recently, there was the silent and strategic Asia Leadership Roundtable, after meetings in previous years in Hong Kong, Bangkok, and Ho Chi Minh City.

As director of the Asia- Pacific Centre for Leadership and Change (APCLC) in Hong Kong, Hallinger initiated the Asia Leadership Roundtable several years ago.

Like anthropologists of yesteryears, the yet untold story of Philip Hallinger is the story of a scholar driven with the passion and quest for knowledge and contribution. This drive set him on the path of contributions to the education knowledge field in Thailand, Malaysia, Vietnam and China -- transferring knowledge from the Western world to Asia and among the various countries of the region.

Everywhere, at every level, in schools and universities, there are scholars and practitioners from Western or Eastern countries who discover the excitement and enlightenment of challenges of working in a different society.

Hallinger, like other scholars, settled in the region and made all kinds of

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personal sacrifices while enjoying the surprises of social and cultural learnings.

Scholars who remain complacent in the enclaves of academia in the West or East would not have opportunities of experiencing the world from different cultural lenses, with the heightening of different senses of realities.

It takes leadership vision, will, hard work steadfast teamship and loyalty to make things happen and sustain great initiatives.

Hallinger's initiative is no mean effort. It is about networks and connections at the global and national level. With his team, Hallinger brought together scholars by invitation only, not for the rituals of seminars or conferences but for sharing and pushing further the frontiers of research in one of the most important areas of development in all societies -- educational development.

Educational conferences allow for school and university visits to understand pieces, albeit, often fragmented of the heritage and the bold changes being made in any particular society.

During the Shanghai Roundtable, scholars may take away some insights from the various presentations, dialogues and conversations:

SEEK truth, Foster originality and Live Up to the Name of the Teacher. (The motto of the East China Normal University);

NOT all ideas are created equal (Reminiscent of the paradox All men are created equal);

SEE paradoxes and contradictions as given and exciting elements of life's happiness;

THE pursuit and management of happiness is a central educational agenda, whatever a person's lot and destiny in life; and,

DESIGN Thinking across schools and universities will create a new generation of national and global leaders.

There is much to learn from countries like China with a population of close to 1.4 billion people and with 200 million migrant populations. The migrant populations are those who move from the hinterland to the cities, with about 70 million schoolchildren on the fringes of society whose aspirations have to be met and expectations to be served.

On the other hand, there are also lessons to learn from societies with smaller populations like Norway, Dubai, Qatar or Singapore.

Within each nation, there are successful stories of education reform initiatives in schools and universities, specifically, in cities in the educational league table, like Shanghai and Hong Kong.

The Shanghai Roundtable is about generating, not just ideas, but, "high quality ideas" regarding high quality access, equity, efficiency and innovations.

Roundtables create opportunities for the sharing of breakthrough research, educational innovations, as well as time honoured education ideas and practices.

In Shanghai, scholars identified priorities in educational areas that need further research in different societies.

Malaysia has the Sultan Idris Education University, Institute of Principalship, University of Malaya and the National Institute of Management and Leadership (Institute Aminuddin Baki) with scholars

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trained in all corners of the world.

It is time for these scholars in these organisations to come together to become leaders in this knowledge field in which Malaysia has already invested so much in.

It is time, too, that Malaysia becomes a generator of knowledge in the education field instead of mere consumers of knowledge generated elsewhere.



Philip Hallinger is a scholar driven with the passion and quest for knowledge and contribution

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Writer is a deputy vice-chancellor, INTI Laureate International University

   

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