A GLOBAL OVERVIEW OF ACADEMIC RANKING, STRATEGIES & PROPOSED ACTION PLANS TO INCREASE AND RETAIN ACADEMIC STAFF WITH DOCTORAL DEGREES

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PRELUDE

The Malaysian Private Higher Education in contrast with the Public Higher Education faces many challenges in achieving its objectives, one of which is the lack of qualified manpower due to the increase in the number of universities and university-colleges. The recruitment of academicians poses a big challenge.

With Malaysia's shift to the knowledge economy and to globalisation and flexible organisations of production (which include the education industry), the need for highly knowledgeable, highly skilled world class human capital is never more felt today by countries wishing to move forward and catch up with the more developed economies (Musa, 2007).

Indeed, Malaysia is no exception to this change. In the 9th Malaysia Plan (9MP) (EPU, 2006), there are calls by the Government to raise our capacity for knowledge and innovation. There is a wake up call to higher education in Malaysia.

Higher education institutions have been called by the Government to benchmark itself to international standards as far as teaching and learning and also research. Benchmarking to international standards or more precisely, benchmarking to the standards established by top universities in the more developed world, has been the preoccupation of many Malaysian universities (both public and private) in the past. With a prime national policy structured in the 9MP, it will be an important milestone which will lead ultimately to making Malaysia a world leader in higher education.

As indicated by Musa (2007), today countries like the United States, Britain, Australia and a few other countries around the world can rightly claim to be world leaders in higher education. Besides research and to a certain extent, entrepreneurship, these universities also excel in providing their students with a strong faculty of PhD holders and specialist in their study field.

Malaysia, as a developing country, has a comparatively strong educational system at all levels. Its higher education institutions are rated among the best in the region. However, to leapfrog into the developed status by 2020, it is not sufficient for higher education to remain just an average player on the world stage. Instead, its universities must be at the frontiers of research, actively contributing to the growth of the knowledge industry in the country, be capable of producing 21st century workers in demand throughout the world, and be one of the preferred destinations for international students from around the globe. In fact, Malaysia must strive to be one of the world leaders in higher education.

Taylor's University College and Taylor's College (indicated Taylor's hereafter) is also in this rat race industry of private higher education. As indicated by Coaldrake (2007), the changing operating and academic environments is a challenge for the survival of the many private higher education in Malaysia.

As far as the operating environment, any form of funding for private higher education is scarce but the audit and quality control is increasing (with the setting up of Malaysia Quality Assurance, MQA). Performance benchmarking is a norm with these institutions. With increased competition, the business of private higher education is indeed challenging. Recruiting qualified academic staff is a big challenge for any Human Resources Department in these institutions.