

Muhammad bin Ibrahim: Financial sector talent enrichment programme – syllabus enhancement

Keynote address by Mr Muhammad bin Ibrahim, Deputy Governor of the Central Bank of Malaysia, at the launch of the “Financial Sector Talent Enrichment Programme (FSTEP) – Syllabus Enhancement”, Kuala Lumpur, 20 July 2010.

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I am delighted to be here this morning to officiate the launching of the Financial Sector Talent Enrichment Programme – Syllabus Enhancement which will be implemented for the next 5 batches until batch 10. Today marks a milestone for FSTEP as the programme has delivered more than 680 graduates to the industry and is now poised to deliver another 500 graduates under an enhanced syllabus.

The development of human capital in the financial services industry is core in promoting a well-functioning and stable financial sector. Human capital development is critical in nation building as a whole. At Bank Negara Malaysia, for many years, we have embarked on strategies to strengthen human capital development in the financial services sector. Various institutional platforms were established such as INCEIF, the International Centre for Education in Islamic Finance; ICLIF, the International Centre for Leadership in Finance; AIF, the Asian Institute of Finance; and of course, FSTEP, which is entrusted with equipping talents with the right skills and knowledge for their smooth transition into the financial services industry in Malaysia.

It is such initiatives that would put the necessary foundation to promote Malaysia as a centre of learning for financial services this region. Attracting, retaining and nurturing talent of our brightest mind would form the basis for our country’s transition to being a high income growth economy. It is also the groundwork that we need to build and strengthen so that our financial services remain competitive and innovative.

With the support from the industry players, FSTEP can serve as a bridge that connects the needs of the financial services industry with the talents produced by institutions of higher learning. But the industry must be forward looking in its approach. FSTEP was designed and intended to develop the best graduates that we can recruit. Properly trained and exposed, they could form the pool of future leaders and senior management for the financial services industry. FSTEP was not envisaged to produce technicians and mechanics. Neither was FSTEP created to duplicate the training programs of financial institution. FSTEP comprehensive one-year programme while emphasizing the important facets of technical knowledge also exposed trainees to personal development and on the job internship. FSTEP was intended to produce graduates that can be entrusted with positions of responsibility in the industry over the long term. This was the idea behind the formation of FSTEP and we need to bear this in mind when devising the syllabus and enhancement in the future.

The Quality Assurance Committee was created based on the thinking that a dynamic and relevant programmes requires continuous and timely revision. The QAC that had developed the new syllabus incorporated valuable inputs from the industry. The new syllabus was approved, by the FSTEP Steering Committee on June 28, 2010. Under the revised syllabus, the programme design and delivery will be more balanced between classroom-lectures and experiential learning in the form of case studies, role plays and simulations. This methodology is better suited for adult learning and shift somewhat the responsibility of learning to the trainees.

With this in mind, the content and details of the programme will be regularly updated and align with the progressive development of the financial industry. It will keep participants abreast with market needs in this age of advance technology and knowledge. As the financial services industry matures and the lines between businesses become even more blur, the

skills and talents needed to navigate the industry becomes even more diverse and demanding. The change in syllabus and other enhancements will differentiate FSTEP from other training programmes offered by the financial institutions and training institutes. So I don't expect FSTEP syllabus to converge with the training programmes offered by individual financial institution.

In order to ensure FSTEP secures a constant flow of quality graduates from both local and foreign institutes of higher learning to its training programme, initiatives have been mooted by FSTEP to sign a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with all public universities and a few reputable private universities in Malaysia to instill the way for greater cooperation and collaboration in matters of mutual interest and benefit. In particular, FSTEP will offer scholarships to eligible top graduates from various universities to participate in its one-year fast-track training programme.

I wish to congratulate FSTEP for the successful effort in designing a new syllabus and its continuous effort to improve the FSTEP programmes remain contemporary and relevant agreed to by all parties within the financial services industry. More importantly, it is my hope that FSTEP will continue to produce the quality of graduates that will meet the needs of the industry. I hope that all of you will have a fruitful discussion and dialogue. On this note, I declare open the event "FSTEP: Syllabus Enhancement".