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June 5, 2016

Meet Dr. Solehah Yaacob: She's The 'Real Product' Of IIUM

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By Nuraidah Binti Haji Abd Hamid

Finally, I met the person who became a real 'product' solely from IIUM!

Meeting the humble lecturer with a beautiful smile, it gave me abundance of pleasure to conduct an interview with this special person. The session took almost one and a half hours, and I was still not aware that the time flew so fast. She inspired me from many aspects; from her academic background until the reflection about the title of student itself.

Expert in Arabic Linguistic

Dr. Solehah Yaacob is a lecturer of the Arabic Language and Literature Department who is an expert in Arabic Linguistic. Listening to her story of 20 years ago, it reminded me of my entrance to the Centre for Foundation Studies, IIUM. She was a student of IIUM for the whole journey of her studies. Starting from 1995, she entered Matriculation Centre which was located at Subang and at that particular time, her batch was the pioneer students. After that, she pursued her studies at Petaling Jaya IIUM taking Bachelor in Arabic Language and Literature. Next, she furthered her study doing Master of Arabic Language as a Second Language in IIUM. Without any delay, she continued her study completing her PhD, also in IIUM, specialising in Philosophy of Arabic Grammar.

When she was asked about her passion in education, she answered, "It is the background of the family. The family will shape you to become who you are. My parents have excellent education background. I have learned to seek the book in the library because my father asked me to do so."

"Aidah, one thing you should know, I love these two places which are, the library and *masjid*. You know what, when you are surrounded with books, it makes you feel good in the sense of feeling 'clean,'" Dr. Solehah said.

Previously, she was asked by her father to find the rough *kitab* which was only used by the lecturer. Since she was the daughter of a lecturer, she developed herself by doing so. This was how she developed as a person who became intimate in dealing with all sorts of books.

Another thing that she was concerned of, is the value of time. During break hour, she would never return to *mahallah* as she knows she will waste her time. Instead, she would stay at the Centre and she was able to do so many things.

Life is a cycle. She said there are some events that we cannot afford to do by ourselves. When I asked about the failure in doing something, and how she dealt with it, her answer made me surprised. "We have to maintain, Aidah. It is just a failure in this world. No meaning at all. It is just a game. Our emotion must be strong, and our spirit must be strong. At last, we just need to be ourselves. Allah is 'Adl, Aidah." Then, she smiled to me. It really made sense. The conversation stopped for a while as I took a deep breath after listening to her statement.

Writing Journals and Research Papers

In almost ten years, she busied herself in her studies, then she started to focus in her field (Arabic Linguistic) where she really put her efforts in writing journals, research papers and articles. Dr. Solehah said, "I knew my own abilities when I first started to write articles and journals. Since that, I really focused on what I am doing. Other than that, I did not take any position as I know it will disrupt my work in doing all those things. Aidah, my mind is fresh at that time, I used it fully as I am. And the most important thing, this is my destiny where Allah has given me a way in this area."

Most of her journals were published all over the world. She brought me to a small library behind her desk, and she showed me the variety of journals which were published at international level, such as in Egypt, Jordan, USA, Iraq, Poland, Germany and many more. Interestingly, she gave me a chance to hold and read her own book entitled "Dirasah Naqdhiah fi at-Tafkir an-Nahwi al-'Arabi". The most important thing was that the book was published at Dar as-Salam which took place in Egypt. Also, one of her books was published in English entitled 'The Intricacy and Delicacy in the Historical Development of Arabic Language'.

The works of Dr. Solehah have been highlighted all over the world in the research field. She is one of the Members of World Academy of Science, Engineering and Technology (WASET), and one of the International Scientific Committee and Editorial Review Board on Cognitive and Language Sciences. This was a remarkable level as she is an expert in Philosophy of Language (Philosophy of Arabic Grammar), Linguistics and Literature, Linguistic Structures (Including Grammar, Phonology, Lexicon, Semantics, Orientalist Views on Arabic Grammar), Language in Time and Space (Including Historical Linguistics, Dialectology, The Ancient period before the existence of Arabic Grammar, Historical Linguistics, Dialectology, Traditional Arabic Grammar & It's History), Language in Culture and Society (Sociolinguistics, The comparison between the Theory of Noam Chomsky in Government Binding and the Theory in Arabic Grammar) .

With her enthusiasm in doing research (writing academic journals and articles), Dr. Solehah said, "I have been proposed by TV Al- Hijrah where the previous producer of Jejak Rasul, Dato' Wan Alias contacted IIUM to conduct a programme related to pre-history with Islamic context and Arabic language as a whole. This is a huge project where

IIUM itself agreed with TV Al-Hijrah to collaborate and sponsor me in doing this research. This is indeed a blessing from Allah.”

TV Documentary

I told Dr. Solehah, the thing that ignited me to meet her was when I saw her on TV Al-Hijrah where she shared her views on her plan for the history documentary. This first Islamic pre-history documentary will be conducted to deliver facts and information to the public with simple words and creative forms. In order to run the programme as best as they can, people from academic field and the multimedia field really needs a good collaboration with one another. It needs a lot of time, energy, and of course money, to ensure the programme runs smoothly.

In the last 30 minutes, Dr. Solehah shared her deep knowledge about the pre-history of the Arabic language. She stressed the important tips in being a good researcher in academic field which consists of critical archeologist, critical linguistic, critical historian, and critical literature. These combination would make someone critical.

Her calmness and kindness shown in the first meeting with her made me respect her more. At the end of the session, I asked Dr. Solehah to give her last words on her hope for the students for the future betterment of the *ummah*.

She responded in full of spirit: “I hope the students specifically in IIUM and the students out there generally, do not be weary in seeking knowledge. Please do not rely on one book but search and read from various books about selected topics. You must be a thinker. Not only just a reader but a thinker. If you read but do not think, it will stop you from doing research. Give your mind the freedom to think.”

She added, “In any field, I believe, if you want to study, you must go deeper. In Arabic words, it must be from jazuura (the root). If there is a root, we can know the story. We can tell the story from its beginning. The history is also very important. If there is no historical assessment, we do not have something to rely on.”

This session had made me to think again and again. This question keeps playing in my mind. With the abundance of story from Dr. Solehah, it encouraged me to take an action from now. Being an IIUM student is a great pleasure to seek knowledge. There is no failure if you know how to struggle with it. IIUM is the best place to create a good product for future betterment. The proof is in front of my eyes. Hence, there should be no doubt in this.***

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