

# Criteria Expected of Academicians in a Local University

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## Introduction

Recently, there has been much concern on the ranks of Malaysian universities in the Times Higher Education ranking exercise. It became clear that older and more established universities are slipping away from the top ranks. There is no doubt that the Ministry of Higher Education is trying very hard to avoid further decline and bring honour back to the local institutions of higher learning (IHLs). An outcome of their various continuous brainstorming sessions is the introduction of “National Higher Education Action Plan 2007-2010” (MoHE, 2007). This is indeed a noble effort to strategise the uplifting of IHLs in the international arena. This paper is an attempt to share an academician’s perspective on the topic of discussion. It propounds some critical points that need attention before any IHLs can aspire of becoming a world class university.

## The People Working in University

The success of any organisation lies on the quality of staff employed and their contributions towards the organisation. When Datuk Seri Idris Jala successfully resuscitated the Malaysia Airline System (MAS) from financial indebtedness to profitability, his trick was in getting the people to do it (Gabriel and Say, 2008). With respect to IHLs aspiring to achieve world class status, this paper outlined four fundamental provisos on how to get people to do it.

## The Staff’s Mind-Set

Any IHL that wishing to be well-known worldwide must have their vision embraced by all staff. Efforts are obligatory to give emphasis that staff grasp the notion of building the IHL to be internationally acknowledged. There should be a sense of pride instilled in all staff towards working as one team. The present misconception is that the burden of creating a worldly recognised university is assumed to be the responsibility of the vice chancellor, his deputies and members of the senate. As an example, during the time of Dato’ Zawawi Ismail as Universiti Malaysia Sarawak’s (UNIMAS) vice-chancellor, there used to be a special module called “Module Zero” to introduce newly recruited academic and managerial staff the history, structural organisation, vision and mission of UNIMAS. This was a visionary effort by the management then to ensure that all new recruits understood the philosophy behind the creation of UNIMAS and its direction for the future. From such programme, team spirit was being formed and people were left with a sense of belonging to UNIMAS.

## Scholarship Teaching

Scholarship teaching in university is the main expectation of undergraduates and other stakeholders. In simple terms, scholarship teaching is about lecturers gaining expertise in their discipline, excelling in their research and conveying the knowledge to their students. This is opposed to textbook teaching, whereby lecturers merely present the details contained in textbook and teach only theories without genuine applications.

To evolve scholarship teaching, the teaching-learning and research activities by lecturers should be regarded as two sides of the same coin. There should not be cases, whereby some lecturers are good in teaching-learning but uncommitted in research or vice versa. Anyone who has chosen lecturing as a career should understand the role expected of a university. They should be producers of knowledge as well as trainers of elite workers. Table 1 shows four conventional roles of a modern university as outlined by McCaffery (2004). Any IHLs that can successfully elevate the ethos of scholarship teaching will naturally fulfil the first two criteria set by the Times Higher Education Supplement (Times, 2008). These two criteria are research quality and graduate employability as described in table 2.

**TABLE 1: Four conventional roles of a modern university outlined by McCaffery (2004)**

Roles	
Finishing school	The last stage of general education
Professional school	The training of elite workers
Knowledge factory	The production of science, technology and ideology
Cultural institution	The expression of our individual and collective sense of being

## Professionalism at Work

An organisation is only as good as the people in it. It is difficult to disagree with the reality of the above statement. To be able to recruit only the best staff is not a sensible request to expect from any human resource department. Similarly, it would be inappropriate to automatically assume that all members of the organisation possess first-class ideals. However, there is a certain degree of professionalism that ought to be expected from every staff.

It is important that staff put organisation first before self. The culture inherent in private sectors, whereby employees give serious commitments towards their profession should be envied. If staff strived hard to develop their skills then the IHL will be dependent and in need of them. On the contrary, staff will be a liability when they do not enhance their skills

**TABLE 2: Times Higher Education Supplement ranking criteria and weights**

Criteria	Indicator	Brief description	Weight (%)
Research quality	Peer review	Composite score taken from peer review (which is divided into five subject areas) 3,703 responses	40
	Citations per faculty	Score based on research performance factored against the size of the faculty body	20
Graduate employability	Recruiter review	Score based on responses to recruiter survey, 738 responses	10
International outlook	International faculty	Score based on proportion of international faculty	5
	International students	Score based on proportion of international students	5
Faculty quality	Student faculty	Score based on student/faculty ratio	20

and play a positive role towards the progress of the IHL. Back in 2006, at a University-Industry seminar organised by University Malaya, a question was posed to Dato' Nazir Tun Razak, CIMB Chief Executive Officer, on how CIMB deals with staff having poor working attitude. His simple answer was that CIMB has no place for such people.

Another issue is that staff should be eager to work hard for the advancement of the IHLs. The willingness to work hard and sacrifice time and self for the advancement of the institution is seriously needed. Hard work always results in good progress and improvements. This has been an open secret of the Japanese society in moulding Japan into a developed country. Needless to say, the frontline groups that must exemplify hard work are the academic leaders and managers. One wonders why the ranking of local IHLs is not improving when everyone has been working so hard.

### Quality of Leadership

The first issue concerning leadership in local IHL is that, staff need to cohesively work as one. A good leader is not only the one who can lead but also the one who can work along with anyone. His prime importance is to ensure that unity and productivity prevails. The nature of IHL management is such that the posts of vice chancellor, deputy vice chancellor, deans, deputy deans, and heads of department and directors of centres are offered on the basis of a three- or two-year contract. Irrespective whether one is being appointed or not to such posts, staff can nevertheless contribute within their own capacity and complement one another. Another potent issue with respect to leadership is the openness towards criticism. Leaders in university should be able to accept criticism, no matter harsh or mild. In a Malaysian scenario, most IHL leaders often err towards being defensive whenever there are any complaints against them. By respecting the views of others especially our criticsers, it opens up to the door of wisdom. It hastens to be mentioned that complaining about one's work is different from that about one's individual self. The former is encouraged while the latter is forbidden.

One last issue to highlight on leadership is the attention on continual improvements. The motto of good leadership should be continuous progress and

improvements. To achieve this, all university leaders need to keep themselves proficient in the respective task they are dealing with. The leaders are expected to be well versed with the system and running of university. A university of world class is run by people who know what it takes to improve and continuously uplift the standard of the university.

### Conclusion

Table 3 attempts to summarise the important points being discussed in the earlier paragraphs. There are also other issues but the above are deemed as good starters to work on. A Malaysian university of world class standard needs to make sure that it has the fundamental strengths that will sustain its reputation. These strengths are measured with respect to the efforts of embedding positive mind-set in the staff, inculcating the culture of scholarship teaching, ensuring staff acting professionally at work and practicing of good leadership.

**TABLE 3: Summary of important points discussed on the four characteristics**

Staff mind-set	Scholarship teaching	Professionalism	Leadership
Visionary staff	Lecturers are real scholars	Staff develop their skills	Unity and teamwork
		Hard Work	Openness towards criticism
			Continuous improvement

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## Higher Education in a Globalising World: Developing and Sustaining an Excellent System

Reported by Noraini Mohamad Yusof

On 12 January 2008, the Organising Committee of Higher Education Workshop, National Higher Education Research Institute (IPPTN) in collaboration with the Faculty of Economics and Business, Universiti Malaysia Sarawak (UNIMAS) organised a workshop on Higher Education in a Globalising World: Developing and Sustaining an Excellent System, which took place at Merdeka Palace Hotel and Suites, Sarawak. This workshop gathered associate research fellows of IPPTN, a visiting professor of IPPTN and academic staff from UNIMAS.

The workshop was aimed at gathering input on developing and sustaining an excellent system in higher education. The themes were:

- Roles of universities in ensuring global and local excellence of Higher Education (HE) emphasising on developing and sustaining an excellent system.
- Quality of education: quality of lecturers, quality of undergraduate education, professional development, workforce preparedness, accountability and effectiveness, admission standards, academic quality assurance, student progress/degree completion, adequacy and maintenance of facilities and establishing interdisciplinary programmes.

- Funding/financial issues: adequacy of financial support, tuition rates and overall student costs, economic development initiatives, amount and types of student financial aid.
- HE institutions as drivers of economic, social and cultural development.
- Managing ICT and e-learning in HE.
- Policy, structure and organisation of HE: Governance and integrity, leadership, key performance indicators.
- Building strategic business alliances: Opportunities for networking and sharing good practices.

There were two sessions of discourse; "Higher Education in a Globalising World: The System and Framework" and "Higher Education in a Globalising World: Selected Issues", which saw eleven papers presented. Each presentation was followed by a question and answer session by participants of the workshop.

Papers presented will be published as chapters in an edited book. In addition, an abridged version of each paper will be included in the Bulletin of Higher Education Research.

## Roundtable Discussion on "Regional Education Markets in the Asia Pacific Region and Links to Research Activities and Collaborations in Malaysia: Taking Stock"

Reported by Wan Chang Da

The four research universities in Malaysia – Universiti Malaya (UM), Universiti Sains Malaysia (USM), Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia (UKM) and Universiti Putra Malaysia (UPM) – along with officials from the Ministry of Higher Education and Monash University Malaysia gathered for a roundtable discussion organised by the National Higher Education Research Institute (IPPTN), held on 21 January 2008 at the Equatorial Hotel, Bangi.

This roundtable discussion served as a platform for IPPTN and the universities to keep each other abreast about the latest status pertaining to research activities and collaborations of the universities, both domestically and internationally. The discussion was kick-started with opening remarks by the Director of Center for Higher Education Policy Analysis in University of Southern California, Professor William G. Tierney, who was also a Visiting Professor at IPPTN.



Participants and presenters of the Roundtable Discussion.

The discussion also included four presentations followed by a question and answer session. The first presenter, Professor Dr. Nik Meriam Nik Sulaiman, Director of Institute of Research Management and Consultancy (UM), shared UM's experiences about Memorandum of Understanding and Memorandum of Agreement. This was followed by

Associate Professor Dr. Ahmad Farhan Mohd. Sadullah, Dean of School of Engineering (USM), who gave an overview about the research management and innovation system practised in USM. The third presenter, the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research and Innovation) of UPM, Professor Dr. Abu Bakar Salleh, discussed the issue of funding and collaboration from UPM's perspectives, which was followed by Professor Dr. Walter Wong, Deputy Pro Vice-Chancellor of Monash University Malaysia, who shared about the challenges and progresses of private universities in Malaysia in research and collaboration.

The discussion ended with concluding remarks by the Director of IPPTN as well as the Chairperson of this discussion, Professor Morshidi Sirat, with an invitation extended to all paper presenters to jointly work on presenting a detailed study on Regional Education Markets in Asia Pacific Region and Links to Research Activities and Collaboration in Malaysia.

## Synergistic Collaboration between Research/Study Centres for Higher Education

*Reported by Wan Chang Da*

The National Higher Education Research Institute (IPPTN) hosted the Synergistic Collaboration Meeting on 20 and 21 February 2008 at the Parkroyal Hotel in Penang. This meeting gathered directors and representatives from the Center for Higher Education Policy Analysis (CHEPA) (University of Southern California), Centre for the Study of Higher Education (CSHE) (University of Melbourne), Research Institute for Higher Education (RIHE) (University of Hiroshima), Centre of Asia Pacific Social Transformation Studies (CAPSTRANS) (University of Wollongong), Southeast Asian Ministers of Education Organisation Regional Centre for Higher Education and Development (SEAMEO-RIHED) and Associate Research Fellows of IPPTN.

Chaired by Professor Morshidi Sirat, the meeting deliberated on the topics of international university ranking and avenues for collaboration between the centres and research institutes. Each participating centre and research institute also presented an overview of its respective organisation, in regards to the organisational structure, funding mechanism as well as past, present and future research activities and

direction. It was hoped that through these presentations and exchanges of ideas, more synergistic opportunities could be explored for future collaboration to the advancement and development of higher education research in the region.

In the closing session, the participants prepared a draft agreement on the proposal to the formation of Asia Pacific Higher Education Policy Alliance (APHEPA), which seeks to investigate three possible research topics; namely student mobility, training of administrators and the relationship between state and higher education institutions as well as private and public institutions.



*Representatives of various research and study centres of higher education and associate research fellows from IPPTN.*

## PUBLICATION



This 11<sup>th</sup> monograph of IPPTN discusses the future pathway of Malaysia's higher education institutions through a hybrid scenario that emphasised on knowledge as the principal wealth-generating method without sacrificing humanistic and environmental values. This monograph underlines four main aspects which are research and development, teaching and learning, economy system and environment, as well as life-style which contribute towards the existing universities in the future. This scenario foresees the future in the changing landscape of higher education where the future development of local universities is to be decentralised to enable each university to decide and shape its future individually.

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# Calling for Articles and News Briefs

## Guidelines on Submission of Manuscripts

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2. The length of the manuscripts should not exceed 1,500 words. An abstract of about 150 words should be included.
3. Authors are responsible for obtaining permission to use any published material. The publisher shall not be held responsible for the use of such material.
4. Citations in the text should include the author's last name and date of publication, e.g. (Ashton, 2001). If quotations are used, page numbers should be indicated, eg. (Ashton, 2001: 30).
5. Endnotes may be used.
6. Include tables and figures within the text. Number tables and figures consecutively.
7. The reference list should be arranged in alphabetical order and should include only works cited in the text.

Examples:

Altbach, P. G. (2004). *The costs and benefits of world-class universities*. Retrieved 23 October 2005 from <http://www.aaup.org/publications/Academe/2004/04jf/04jfaltb.htm>

Mahadhir, M., Ting, S. H. and Carol, D. (2006). *Learning materials and human factors: Looking at the chemistry in the genre-based approach classroom*. Proceedings of 2<sup>nd</sup> Science and Art of Language in Teaching International Conference, 'Change: Bridging Theory and Practice', 20 - 22 November, Universiti Teknologi MARA, Pulau Pinang.

Watkins, D. (1998). A cross-cultural look at perceptions of good teaching: Asia and the West. In J. J. F. Forest (Ed.), *University teaching: International perspectives*. New York: Garland.

Wolfe, R. N. and Johnson, S. D. (1995). Personality as a predictor of college performance. *Educational and Psychological Measurement*, Vol. 2, 177-185.

Yule, G. (1996). *Pragmatics*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

8. All submissions should include a cover page containing the title, name of author(s), designation, affiliation, mailing/e-mail address and telephone/fax number. A brief biographical note of the author(s) should also be included.
9. Manuscripts submitted must not be those already published or those which have been offered for publication elsewhere.
10. Manuscripts received will be acknowledged but not returned.
11. Submission of a manuscript will mean that the author agrees to transfer copyright of his/her article to the publisher if and when the article is published. Authors who wish to send their articles to be published elsewhere should seek the written agreement of the publisher.
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