QUALITIES OF A GOOD UNIVERSITY LEADER

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Within the recent decades, the globalising world has witnessed a growing trend in the development of higher education. Universities have become a driving force to ensure the future of nations and the universe (Topal, 2009). Whether public or private, large or small, universities are contributing to the development of societies through nurturing knowledge that provides societies with intellectual and cultural capital (Safakhah & Vaghari, 2012).

Universities play a variety of roles and have many functions amongst which educating individuals, addressing social and economic needs of the communities, and creating research and development opportunities which help meeting the local needs of the communities and vis-à-vis the universities are the most important ones. This way, universities contribute to the development of the immediate region, and indirectly to that of the whole country and the world. Considering that remaining effective depends on the degree to which an organisation realises its goals (Zheng, Yang, & McLean, 2010), and that universities play a vital role in transforming and developing societies, it is necessary for them to pursue their organisational goals efficiently to be an effective organisation. Many universities, nowadays, are establishing systematic and strategic alliances with other higher education institutions located in other countries towards addressing international issues in the globalising world. Attracting international students, publications addressing global issues, and holding international conferences to exchange knowledge and experiences are some of the paths to widen the contribution of a university in a broader context. In order to pursue the aforementioned fundamental missions, universities need to provide quality, efficiency and effectiveness not merely to the national community which defines the legal and historic responsibilities of universities, but also to a broader range of stakeholders beyond its national borders.

Literature on pursuing organisational goals demonstrates that an organisation heavily depends on the skilful management of its resources. A good leader or a quality management team is imperative for any university in pursuing its roles and missions within its immediate society and the greater society at large, and eventually in the globalised world. It would be of significance to mention some of the characteristics of a good leader within an organisational setting.

Leadership refers to some personality traits interacted between an individual and a group which can have mutual influence on each other and improve personal, social and professional aspects of their lives (Northouse, 2012). Leadership skills are crucial for bringing special assets to organisations, and ultimately improve the bottom line (Northouse, 2012) - a responsibility which is clearly relevant to the three core functions of universities (teaching, research and community engagement) whether directly or indirectly. Considering that maintaining effectiveness of an organisation heavily depends on its management, it is worth mentioning some of the characteristics of a good leader within organisational settings. Bethel (2012) introduced 12 characteristics of a good leader; according to Bethel, a good leader:
1. Has a mission that matters
2. Has high ethics
3. Is a team builder
4. Is a big thinker
5. Masters change
6. Is sensitive
7. Communicates effectively
8. Is a risk taker
9. Is a decision maker
10. Uses power wisely
11. Is courageous
12. Is committed

Each of the twelve characteristics is necessary in a general sense for a good leader to have, yet some of them are more specifically important in the context of higher education. Within organisational settings, having a mission refers to a vision or goal that compels someone to go forward and influence the people around her or him. In our contemporary world, many universities have defined what their mission is and this makes a difference between these universities which set goals to be effective and those which did not. Pursuing the mission of a university requires a quality leader who is a big thinker and who communicates her/his thoughts with her/his team members in making the best decision s/he can. A university leader must be enthusiastic about the work required and the role as a university leader. S/he should be a source of inspiration for other administrators as well as her/his employees. Universities need a leader whose sincere commitment assigns her/him to a responsibility of taking necessary risks and being courageous enough when it is needed. However decisions made by a university leader have to be wisely considered, or else the organisation might face or cause some considerable problems within the society. It is important to note that problems which result from a bad decision can put a great pressure on the resources of the university which can and in due time will distract the system from its mission.

In fact, pursuing a mission and the organisational goals are considered as the qualities which differentiate between leaders and ordinary people; in this regard, Saaty referred to having a clearly defined goal as the core of successful statecraft which needs to be accompanied by 'persuasion' and 'support' as two other important attributes of a successful leader (Saaty, 2001). A university leader should own all the above-mentioned skills.

In addition, a university leader should be an academician who recognises the fundamental roles of a university, namely teaching, research, and community outreach. When an academic is able to embrace all the three roles of a university properly, and s/he is well equipped with the characteristics of a quality leader, one can say that the university led by her/him can successfully pursue its organisational goals and remain effective within the society.

Our world needs universities with best practice of the roles and functions. These are the universities which remain highly relevant in their functions to help with the development of the societies, nations, and eventually the world. To obtain this goal, universities need to have quality management team led by a good leader, and her/his immediate co-leaders. They must not just be outstanding academicians and master strategists but also equally importantly, have respectable humanistic values, to ensure that the university continues to effectively contribute to the transformation of the world in general.

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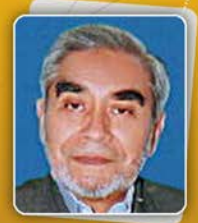**Prof. Dato' Dr. Hassan Said**
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