

Higher Education Leadership: Challenge of the 21st Century

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Abstract: In the 21st century, higher education (HE) will play a very crucial role; in spite of its limited resources, HE should be able to respond to the challenges caused by the very fast advancement of technology. For this purpose managers of HE should be professional, those who are prepared to become the managers, so that they reflect wide perspectives, good attitudes, and quality skills in managing the HE in such a competitive era. Higher education leadership is expected to make use of the system and opportunity to improve its performance.

Keywords: leadership, higher education.

The educational challenge of the 21st century has been described by Hallak (1995) and others. In his vision on quality of education, Hallak claims that in the global society the quality of education can no longer be defined only within the limits of the border lines of countries' own system of values, culture, traditions and social regulation. He states that education needs to take into account the concept of global village. Lientz and Rea (1995) summarize several trends in the 21st century; among others, they are global competition, rapid technological change, product obsolescence, organization downsizing, business reengineering, empowerment and quality and continuous improvement. European Commission (1996) mentions three factors of upheaval, namely internationalization of trade, the downing

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of the information society and the relentless march of science and technology. Reynold (1995) mentions about three challenges faced by educational system, namely curricular change that will prepare students to enter the age of technology, the scarce resources to sustain the change, and the provisions of educational opportunities for expanding population of students.

Higher education has special role in the transformation of society into the 21st century. It is expected that higher education system has a capacity to lead the change and development, since change and development are based on the science advancement and invention which are virtually the responsibility of higher education system. As one of the most important elements in the educational system, higher education should be able to respond to the challenge efficiently and effectively. As the higher education system operates with very limited resources, the importance of management and leadership to achieve goals and to respond to the challenges should become professional's concern.

It is indisputable that higher education is an expensive enterprise. It involves high qualified manpower, a huge material capital and a big amount of other resources to operate. The higher education, therefore, should be well-managed to achieve its mission. It is realized that many of higher education system managers are not prepared to work in the very fast changing world. Therefore, it is very important that they share experiences, explore possibilities and make reflection on what they have done. This paper is intended to explore the strategy of higher education management in responding to the challenges of the very fast accelerating process of change.

THE CHALLENGE OF INDONESIAN HIGHER EDUCATION

The history of Indonesian higher education system began right after Indonesian independence. In 1949 Gajah Mada University in Yogyakarta was established, followed by University of Indonesia in Jakarta in 1950. During 10 years, between 1951-1960, there was an increasing number of Higher Education Institutions (HEIs), namely 13 state universities and 3 institutes. In 1996, after 50 years of independence, there were 77 state and 1,228 private HEIs in the country. The very fast development of the number of HEIs was caused by the continuing increase of the social

demand for the higher education. However, with a significant development in the number of HEI, in 1996 the higher education could only house 2.2 million students or about 10% of the total number of the population aging 19-24. It can be predicted that the increase of the number of HEI is not always followed by the improvement of the quality, since the system faces the scarce resources, both human and financial. In many HEIs, the government financial support as well as HEI's self financing efforts are not sufficient to cover ever increasing expenditures both for maintenance and for doing innovative purposes in order to enhance teaching, research and community services.

The challenge facing higher education is enormous. UNESCO (1995) observed that the development of higher education and the increased awareness of its vital role for economic and social development are unprecedented. Higher education is in state of crisis, since the demands of its function to respond to the challenges are beyond its capacity to do. Higher education is responsible to produce high level of human expertise needed by development program in the economy and technology. Carnoy (1995) claims that higher education plays two level crucial roles in technology transfer; first, it has the capability to develop management skills required to utilize and organize the new technology, and second, with the spread of science based industries, the university is the site that can combine basic research needed for the advancement of such industries with the training of researchers and appliers of research for industries. Unfortunately many Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) have not had the capability to perform such roles. Carnoy observed that most universities in developing countries are not organized to combine research and training as required by their roles. Additionally, as it has been mentioned, the HEI cannot perform its roles effectively. The impact of technological development is that all countries are forced to produce both hardware and humanware that are globally accepted (UNESCO, 1995).

The challenges of higher education in the 21st century can be formulated in four things, quality and fitness, efficiency and effectiveness, equity, and management and leadership.

Quality and Fitness

The term educational quality has always become a central issue in education. In discussing the quality of education Hallak (1995) has raised

several important points. He states that quality is a concept affected by major changes, i.e. globalization of societies, globalization of economies, shifts in the task of protagonists of educational system, and scientific and technological development. In the globalization of societies a good education is education which can produce people who have capacity to share common value, or education which can mold student to live together (see UNESCO, 1995). Globalization of economies concerns the capacity of people to compete and collaborate to fulfill their economic needs. Globalization of economies makes natural resources less important compared to the human resources. It is not important anymore where the natural resources are located. The important matter is the capacity of people to interact with their environment. Since quality is not only determined by one protagonist of education, the meaning of quality can vary. Each protagonist has his own concept of educational quality. However, basically, only education that can produce people who can adjust to the fast changing society can be called high quality education. Education should be able to produce people who possess capacity and willingness to compete and in the same time to collaborate, are able to share common values, are economically productive and have high ability to adjust to their environment. The high quality of graduates means fitting to the needs of individual as well as society.

Indonesian higher education system faces several problems in relations to its quality and its fitness. Indonesian Long Range Plan in Higher Education (LPHE) issued by Directorate General of Higher Education (DGHE) in 1996 stated that quality problems in higher education system in Indonesia are, among others, imbalance between production and job opportunity for certain graduates, imbalance between the number of students studying natural science and social science, and poor laboratory facilities. UNESCO (1995) also observed this phenomena in other developing countries. It is argued that the expansion of student enrollment has been concentrated on the low spending study programs, which does not need much investment on equipment. The more resource-demanding fields of study such as the natural sciences and technology do not attract many students.

It is hoped that management of higher education, supported with strong leadership will be able to solve the problems and constitute what is called by UNESCO *a mass quality of higher education*.

Efficiency and Effectiveness

There are continuing efforts of educational system in Indonesia to improve its effectiveness and efficiency. It is observed that in Indonesian higher education system the time for students to complete their study is still longer than expected. Additionally, a lot of resources (including human resources) have not been used maximally. The carrier planning and implementation of professional development for academic staffs have been optimally implemented and continuously improved. Furthermore, there is a problem of reward to stimulate the best performance for teaching staff. The academic staff is underpaid. These conditions trigger disguise brain-drain from HEI. Many staffs have been working in various institutions both in other HEI or private sectors as their side jobs. The management of financial and material resources needs to be improved continuously. It is worth to mention that in many HEIs the management information system for decision-making purposes has not been thoroughly managed.

Equity

Equity is another challenge faced by HEI. As mentioned earlier, the proportions of population entering higher education system are still low. Indonesia, for instance, targets 25% participation rate in higher education in 2020, while in 1995 it was only 10%. Table 1 below is the target projection of enrollment in Indonesian higher education (DGHE, 1995).

Table 1 The Estimation of Indonesian Student Population 1995-2020

	1995	2000	2005	2020
Population (million)	194.8	209.5	222.8	254.2
Population 19-24 (million)	22.8	25.6	27.0	24.8
Crude Participation rate (%)	9.6	12.8	15.0	25.0
Student Population (million)	2.20	3.28	4.05	6.20

Source: Directorate General of Higher Education, 1996

The other aspect of equity in higher education is the distribution or placement of HEI within national geographical setting. The distribution of HEIs is shown in Table 2.

Table 2 The Distribution of HEIs and their Students in Indonesia

	Western Indonesia	Java	Eastern Indonesia	TOTAL
Population (million) in '94	39.38	112.40	37.89	189.67
State HEI	17(99.2)	29(211.3)	26 (125.45)	72(435.95)
Private HEI	279(213.4)	658(957.7)	231(215.2)	1168(1,386.0)
Total	296(608.6)	687(1,169)	257(340.65)	1,240(1,821.95)

Source: Directorate General of Higher Education, 1996. Number between bracket is in thousands

The problem of equity also includes problem of quality since, generally, the resources of HEIs in the Eastern Indonesia are less than those in Java or Western Indonesia.

Management and Leadership

Another significant problem of HEI is its management and leadership. Since there was a significant development on the resources spent in HEI, the management seems to be still in its old position. Tilaar (1995) claims that Indonesian educational management system has not developed yet, in spite of the fast development of the whole educational system. The centralized approach in management does not support innovative efforts in improving the conditions of higher education system. Rigid centralization approach seems to have several weaknesses. Since the centralization requires standardization, "pigeonholing" approach becomes very dominant. The allocation of resources, the curriculum, the human resource development should follow bureaucratic standard that has been set up beforehand, even though the fact shows clearly that Indonesia is a very diversified country, both physically and culturally. The heavy centralization can cause

the HEI paralyzed from innovative efforts. When Tilaar (1995) pinpointed the management in the micro level, he found that the critical point in developing HEI is the academic staff. Academic staff should be provided with avenue to develop their career and professional competency. Other components that should be given more considerations are curriculum and teaching-learning process, the fitness of the program, budget allocations and generating fund activities, building and equipment, and partnership.

In carrying out the management of HEI it is important to put serious attention on its leadership. As tradition goes, the appointment of HEI manager is not determined on the basis of his ability to manage as well as to lead. There is no such professional preparation for being an HEI manager. The leadership of HEI in the changing world should have a clear vision on where the HEI is going to go and on how the mission can be achieved based on the vision.

THE CONDITIONS OF HIGHER EDUCATION LEADERSHIP

Management refers to all efforts to maximize the use of resources to achieve organizational goal, while leadership refers to the quality of giving direction to and influencing upon people to achieve organizational goals. There are several problems faced by HEI management.

Because higher education system is run in a bureaucratic setting, it is understandable that influence of mechanistic bureaucratic practice is prevalent. Centralization, orientation toward rules more than objectives (goal replacement), focusing on routine work, unclear mission for all academic and administrative staff, and rigid decision making process could be very dominant in the centralized system. The followings are several factors that potentially relate to the inertial of the organization.

Centralization is closely related to standardization, which Mintzberg (1991) calls as the pigeonholing process. This process simplified procedures because it is standardized. However, if management relies on the process, he will treat all HEIs as the same. Individual autonomy of HEI tends to be overruled, and as a consequence, the HEI loses its freedom and creativity. Diversity among HEIs is an important asset to academic life that should not be discouraged.

At the present time, working in higher education is not materially rewarding, in comparison to working in the private sector. While the academic staff are relatively poorly paid, the opportunity to get a job in

private sector especially for bright academic staff is more widely open. Many teaching staff work part time in the private sector, and more or less lessen their attention to their main job. In micro level the flight of academic staff from their main duty could be considered as brain drain since the focus of their life is no longer at campus.

Because of the reward system, the academic staff are not attracted to take part fully in the decision making process within their own HEI. Meanwhile, the survival of HEI depends upon participation of its members, especially when the organization should run in an unstable condition because of the changing process.

In the globalization process, the quality of higher education can no longer be judged by criteria set within the border of its own country, own system of values, and own culture and regulations. The global advancement of knowledge that influences people's life all over the world should be taken into account. However, frequently, the enormous challenges for higher education can make HEI personnel frustrated and turn only into what they have already had. In maximizing their efforts, they use what has been accomplished in the past as the sole criteria and do not look at outside world.

The hardship of gaining enough money to support HEI efforts makes HEI unable to finance the innovative programs that become the characteristics of HEI. Additionally, as mentioned before, HEI cannot afford to challenge academic staff to concentrate on their main jobs: teaching, research and community services. In balancing the needs to fulfill individual and society, the management, once again, is limited by both human and material resources available. In this regard, priority setting is pivotal. The heavy orientation toward job market, to some extent, can dry out creativity that does not have direct benefit in terms of economics. On the other hand, if the programs being offered by HEI are not oriented toward employment, they will decrease the function of higher education as development agent.

The HEI should be able to ensure free inquiry. It is undeniable that frequently this principle is not in accordance with bureaucratic policy. The management should be able to surf-ride between academic freedom on the one hand and the public interest on the other.

The development of sciences requires multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary approach. This development demands a new curriculum and

other academic programs. These mean that all facilities, the teaching-learning process, and academic climate should be designed and constructed based on these needs. Since the development of science and technology is very fast, it will be difficult for HEI to keep up with the development. This is due to various factors, such as human resources, information flow, and budget.

NEW DIRECTION IN MANAGING HIGHER EDUCATION

Considering the existing conditions and the challenges faced, HEI should rethink and revisit the strategies it adopts for the coming years. The following are new directions that should be reconsidered by HEI management to respond to the challenges.

First, there should be preparation to be an HEI manager. The recruitment of the manager should start from good selection. The selection of a manager in an HEI should not only be based on "common sense" of senate members but more importantly should be based on objective factors as well as professional judgment. The objective factors concern the competencies as a leader that can be measured by valid and reliable instrument, while the subjective value is the result of colleague and professional judgment on the capability and integrity of the person. Additionally, there is a pressing need of in-service training for HEI managers on how to manage HEI in the very fast accelerating change.

Second, the decision making process in HEI should be more decentralized. The HEI should be given enough freedom to exercise its managerial business. The quality controlled could be exercised through accountability mechanism. The HEI should be given opportunity to experiment, not only academically, but also managerially. In managerial accountability, the HEI should be given freedom in using fund by *block grant* approach. The HEI should not be treated as other ordinary government agencies.

Third, in order to broaden the horizons of HEI managers it is important to do the bench-marking activities. The internationalization of HEI could not be avoided. The outward looking strategy should be done by expanding partnership, both in academic work and in managerial side of HEI. There should be a corporation and partnership in doing research, using facilities, and in developing concepts and ideas.

Fourth, the reward system should be designed in such a way that it stimulates academic staff to make academic adventures, to experiment, and to improve their teaching activities. The manager should be able to exercise his/her leadership so that the staff enthusiastically participate in doing the betterment of HEI. This participation will develop in the good academic and managerial climate. With the guidance and inspiration from the future oriented leader, the competitive as well as collaborative climate could be enhanced.

Fifth, even though not everything can be achieved by money, without money HEI cannot implement its mission. The management should be all out to generate fund to finance the programs. All possible resources through various means should be explored. It is time to assess and develop the capacity of HEI, to establish foundations or enterprises in order to generate fund for development purposes. In relation to what is mentioned, it is imperative to decentralize financial administration by giving more freedom to HEI to acquire as well as to spend money for development purposes.

Sixth, in responding to ever accelerating advancement of science and technology, the HEI should restructure its academic programs. The academic programs should be flexible, using multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary approach, and give opportunity to both academic staff and students to advance their professional expertise. The academic program should also give opportunity to students to prepare their lives in society. It means that HEI should have close relationships with the world of work. The programs also should enhance the entrepreneur attitude and ability.

Seventh, there should be efforts to build networks among HEIs in and out of the country. Research capability of the HEI should be promoted and wide partnership in research should be established. The corporation in research is directed toward developing science and technology, as well as generating fund for further development.

Eighth, the higher education should not only focus its effort on academic advancement. The important aspect of emotional intelligence should also become its concern. The graduates should have capability to live in the changing world, to relate them to their creator and to other people. They should be able to become world citizen without losing their national identity.

In order to achieve the mission, the strong and proactive leadership is needed. The management should be able to produce the kind of leadership which can stimulate participation of HEI personnel and motivate students to achieve their goals. Higher educational leaders should be able to inspire changes and to lead the changes toward accomplishment of the mission.

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