

## **A Proposed Effective Leadership Model for the Malaysian Higher Educational Institutions of Majlis Amanah Rakyat**

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Effective institutional leadership is the crucial player to the successful or failure of an educational institution. However, the expectation to own an effective leader often in vain. The reason is because leaders lack of a standard guideline that based on the local context. Therefore, this study is to develop a proposed model of effective leadership for Malaysian higher educational institutions, in particular, higher educational institutions which are owned by Majlis Amanah Rakyat (MARA). To achieve the research purpose, the questionnaires instrument were distributed to 240 academic staff from the selected higher educational institutions of Majlis Amanah Rakyat (MARA) in northern Perak, Malaysia. The data were analysed using a statistical method called Partial Least Square (PLS) to develop a proposed model of effective leadership. The effective leadership design model can provide guidelines and encourage leaders to enhance and bring positive change that helps educational institutions succeed and be effective.

**Keywords:** higher education institutions, effective leadership, model, Majlis Amanah rakyat, perak,

The success of an academic institution, organization, group or society depends greatly on the effectiveness of leadership itself. Effective leaders with the necessary characteristics become the most important part in leading higher educational institutions to achieve their goals. Nowadays, many factors lead to the success of higher learning institutions. The major factor for success or failure in higher institutions is effective leadership. Therefore, effective leaders play an important role and must be in a position to respond effectively and productively

to the institutions. In support of this fact, Ganta and Manakonda (2014) stressed that leadership is a process whereby an individual has an ability to influence others to make changes in his or her values, beliefs, behavior and attitudes. In other words, it is a need to have a leader who is to motivate followers and mobilize resources towards the fulfillment of the organization's goal in order to make organizational innovation, adaptation, and performance. In fact, some studies found that leadership matters for countries, organizations, and teams (Crossan & Apaydin, 2010; Flynn & Staw, 2004; House, Spangler, & Woycke, 1991; Jones & Olken, 2005; Waldman & Yammarino, 1999; Yulk, 2008). The necessity of having effective leadership has been proven through previous research such as Edmonds (1979). The research found that effective leaders are individuals who understand their responsibilities in enhancing organizational accomplishment. In short, continuous efforts have to be made by stakeholders to create an outstanding leader for educational institutes from primary to higher education (Razak, 2010; Fullan, 2011; Harris, 2005; Parise & Spillance, 2010). To imply this expectation, this research was carried out to develop effective leadership characteristics for the Malaysian higher educational institutions of Majlis Amanah Rakyat (MARA). The finding is to provide a good guidance for persons interested in education, especially educational leaders.

### **Problem Statement**

Leadership is a process to influence followers to achieve an organization's goal. This relates to satisfying the desires of followers (Daft, 2004). Therefore, having an effective leader is a factor contributing to the successful and effectiveness of educational institutions. This is because part of leader's role is to develop workforce's competency to the competitive global level (Razak, 2010; Apdal, 2013). To achieve this, it is a need to identify the best leadership characteristics in order to improve leader effectiveness and organizational performance. However, Yulk (2008) pointed out that the process is very slow.

In Malaysian context concerning Majlis Amanah Rakyat (MARA), there is a problem on serving education to Malay ethnic. In other words, MARA that was established on March 1, 1996, under an Act of Parliament, is to serve the quality education to the ethnic by preparing higher educational institutions. Yet, the goal has not yet been achieved due to the weakness of the leadership in some MARA higher education institutions. This is supported by the study of Norashdimah Misdi et al., (2019) that reported some leaders' leadership in Majlis Amanah Rakyat colleges was at a moderate level. Wasim and Imran (2010) supported the finding by stating that community will respond to the leader. Similarly with the success of an organization, the community will also

refer to the leaders of the MARA higher education institutions if the achievement of the institutes decline. Therefore, this study was aimed at identifying characteristics of effective leadership for leaders with a focus on Majlis Amanah Rakyat. The findings will be the basis for guidelines for effective leadership, especially in selected Higher Educational Institutions.

### **Research Objective**

This study is to identify the characteristics of effective leadership for Majlis Amanah Rakyat leaders in higher educational institutions.

### **Literature Review**

#### **Effective Leadership**

The conceptualization of leader effectiveness nowadays is very challenging. Therefore, a leader in the field of education must be more competent and effective in ensuring the excellence of staff and institutions. Among researchers, many arguments are focused on determining out what leader effectiveness is, how it should be measured (Yulk, 2008) and what are the effective leader characteristics. Leaders are in dire need of expertise as well as the characteristics of their specific leadership role in order to more effectively guarantee the excellence of the institution. Within the organization or educational institution, effective leadership could be the basis for the success and the collapse of an institution.

Thus, for targeting achievement through the members of an organization at high and low levels, the emotional and cognitive qualities of the organization's members are a challenge that must be addressed by effective leaders in order to manage effectively. This statement is supported by Yulk (2008), who found that leadership effectiveness is an outcome when the individuals in the positions of leadership are able to impact the group in order to perform their roles with excellence and positive organizational outcomes. Durie and Baeshir (2016) strengthen this finding; effective leadership is the cornerstone to the success of an organization.

Earlier, Mohamad et al., (2009) mentioned that effective leaders would help the organization to achieve its organizational objectives. This statement is supported by Wasim and Imran (2010), who argue that characteristics of effective leaders include the fact that leaders give a clear direction to their subordinates and also lead their subordinates to commit to their jobs and to work as a group to achieve the organization's goals and objectives. In conclusion, effective leadership is able to help leaders in Majlis Amanah Rakyat (MARA) higher educational institutions to meet the need to be effective.

**Perspectives of Various Researchers on Effective Leadership**

The diversity of perspective on effective leadership stems from contextual aspects. For example, at the beginning of the industrial era, the definition of an effective leadership referred more to a leader in a technical field in an industrial plant. Furthermore, when the field of management is introduced in the world of careers, effective leaders are more focused on the leader's caring attitude towards employee welfare.

Table 1 explains the concept of effective leadership from the various perspectives of the researchers.

**Table 1**

*Viewpoints of Various Researchers on Effective Leadership*

Key Features of Effective Leadership	<b>Spendlove (2002)</b>	<b>Sousa (2003)</b>	<b>Harris (2004)</b>	<b>Dubrin (2004)</b>
Leaders Who Care	Taking Attention/ Taking Care	—	—	Taking Attention/ Taking Care
A Leader Who Has A Clear Vision	Clear direction of the Strategic Goal/Vision	Clear Strategic Goals/Vision	Clear Strategic Goals/Vision	—
Leader Who Knows His/Her Goal	Ensure staff get support from the institution in terms of teaching, research and work	—	Ensure staff get support from the institution in terms of teaching, research and work.	Ensure staff get support from the institution in terms of teaching, research and work
Concerned Leader	Creating positive relationships in the workplace	Creating positive relationships in the workplace	—	Creating positive relationships in the workplace
Leader as the Best Liaison	—	—	Communicate in the best way about the direction and goals of the institution	Communicate in the best way about the direction and goals of the institution
A Wise Leader	—	Make advance and detailed planning for the department as well as lead the direction of the institution's goals	—	Make advance and detailed planning for the department as well as lead the direction of the institution's goals
A Competent Leader	Always move forward on problems that arise in the organization whether internal/external and always proactive in dealing with them	Always move forward on problems that arise in the organization whether internal/external and always proactive in dealing with	Always move forward on problems that arise in the organization whether internal/external and always proactive in dealing with them	—

### **Research Conceptual Framework**

The conceptual framework of this study is based on the models of Hannafin and Peck(1988), Hoy and Miskel(2007) and finally on characteristics of effective leadership established by previous researchers. The model has identified several main variables, which are input, process, and output or findings. Input is the process by which the leadership characteristics of the higher education institutions of the public trust council are identified. Followed by prepares, designs, collects and analyzes all the data obtained from the previous process called process. Input is followed by preparation, design, collection and analysis of all data obtained from the previous process. Last is the outcome or findings that have been successfully generated after all the procedures mentioned.

## **Method**

### **Research Design**

The research design of this study is a survey method. Using the method, the perception of participants can be widely collected about the role of an effective leadership characteristics with regard to the MARA leader in higher educational institutions. A questionnaire was used to collect data and for each item, participants could state their answer in the form of a five-point Likert scale that reflected their perceptions of an effective leadership model in their own higher educational institutions of Majlis Amanah Rakyat (MARA): either totally agree, agree, disagree, do not agree or totally disagree. The study was conducted among four higher educational institutions of Majlis Amanah Rakyat (MARA) in northern Perak, Malaysia. For the research location in Malaysia, these four higher educational institutions were selected based on the number of people in the academic staff.

### **Research Sample**

The selection of the participants in this study was done through random selection and purposive sampling. A total of 240 participants from among staff members in four higher educational institutions of Majlis Amanah Rakyat (MARA) were selected. The selection of the appropriate sample size was in line with Roscoe's view (1975) that the ideal sample size for the study of human behavior (social science) is in the range from 30 to more than 500 people. Before the study started, authorization had to be requested from respondents. Participants willingly agreed to participate in the study until its completion.

**Table 2**

*A Summary Of Population And Sample Sizes*

MARA Institution	Population of Academic Staff	Sample of Academic Staff
MARA Institution 1	110	60
MARA Institution 2	130	60
MARA Institution 3	100	60
MARA Institution 4	100	60
<b>Total</b>	<b>440</b>	<b>240</b>

**Table 3***Research Respondent Profile*

Research Respondent Profile	MARA	MARA	MARA	MARA	Total	
	Int 1	Int 2	Int 3	Int 4	(Persons)	(%)
<b>Gender</b>						
Male	40	30	30	38	138	57.5
Female	20	30	30	22	102	42.5
<b>Total</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>240</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>Age (Year)</b>						
Less than 25	-	-	-	-	-	-
26-35	5	25	20	26	76	31.7
36-45	25	25	30	24	104	43.3
More than 45	30	10	10	10	60	25
<b>Total</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>240</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>Lecturer Position Experience</b>						
Less than 5 years	2	-	2	-	4	1.7
6-10 years	20	28	28	26	97	40.4
11-15 years	12	15	15	14	56	23.3
16-20 years	16	7	10	10	48	20
More than 20 years	10	10	5	10	35	14.6
<b>Total</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>240</b>	<b>100</b>

**Instrument**

This study used a questionnaire instrument that was developed by the researcher. The development of the instrument using a Delphi study involving 15 leaders of Majlis Amanah Rakyat higher education institutions. The study aimed to obtain expert consensus on the components and elements of effective leadership in the field of Majlis Amanah Rakyat higher education. The study, which involved 4 round sessions to obtain a high level of accuracy on the components and elements of effective leadership, produced 67 items for specific components.

Thus, the instrument developed by the researcher has high validity and reliability. To illustrate respondents' agreement with the items, a 5 -point Likert scale was used.

**Reliability and Validity**

A pilot test was conducted in a higher educational institution of Majlis Amanah Rakyat (MARA) in Northern Perak, Malaysia, to determine the reliability of the instrument. Reliability was determined by the reliability coefficient, Cronbach alpha. Cronbach alpha values for each item in this .questionnaire showed a range between 0.90-0.98. The validity of the instrument in this study was obtained through an assessment run by two experts in the field of study.

**Data Collection and Analysis Procedures**

In this study, the data obtained were analyzed using descriptive statistics for finding the mean and standard deviation. Data collected from respondents also were analyzed using PLS Smart version 2.0 for the purpose of establishing an effective leadership model in the higher educational institution, Majlis Amanah Rakyat (MARA). Kruskall Wallis statistical inferential was used to derive a population summary based on the study sample information to determine if there was a statistically significant relationship between two or more dependent variables. Normality tests were also performed and showed that the results were significant with a reading of 0.000. Analysis of normality test between main themes is shown in Table 4.

**Table 4**

*Analysis of significant values for main themes of effective leadership in higher educational institutions Majlis Amanah Rakyat (MARA).*

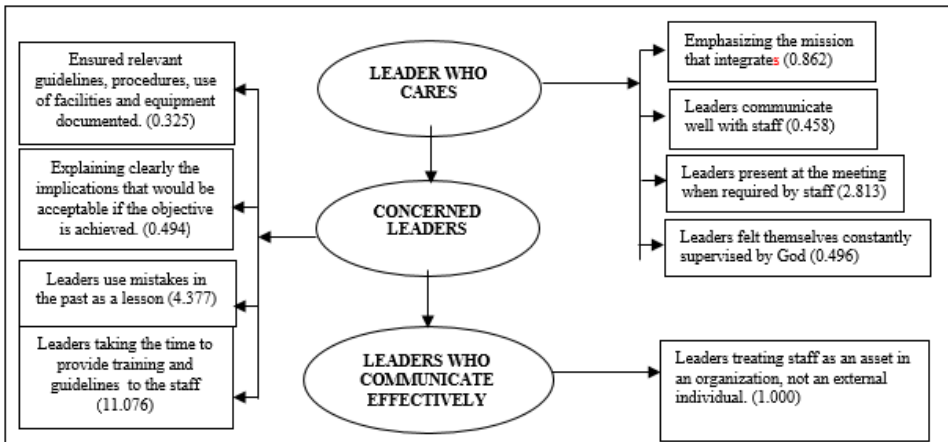
<i>Main Themes Effective Leadership</i>	<i>P value</i>
Concerned Leader	0.000
Leader Who Communicate Effectively	0.000
Leaders Who Cares	0.000

**Research Findings**

The analysis of survey data by using Partial Least Square (PLS) successfully produced three major themes of effective leadership with nine criteria for effective leaders. The three major themes of effective leadership with the nine criteria for effective leaders are listed below:

1. Main theme *Leader Who is Concerned*– 4 criteria of effective leader item
2. Main theme *Leader Who Cares* - 4 criteria of effective leader item

3. Main theme *LeaderWho communicates effectively* – 1 criteria of effective leader item.



**Figure 1:** Three major themes and characteristics of effective leadership model in Higher

Educational Institutions Majlis Amanah Rakyat.

Table5shows three major themes of the effective leadership model as well as nine characteristics of effective leadershipthat includes concerned leaders, leaders who care and leaders who communicate effectively.

**Table 5**

*Nine effective leadership characteristics of strong values reading and strong justification within every three main themes.*

Main theme and effective characteristics	Reading values	Justification
<b>Concerned Leaders</b>		
* Leaders taking the time to provide training and guidelines to the staff.	11.076	Strong
* Leaders usemistakes in the past as a lesson	4.377	Strong
* Explaining clearly the implications of the achieved objectives.	0.494	Strong
* Ensured relevant guidelines, procedures, use of facilities and equipment documented.	0.325	Strong
<b>Leaders Who Care</b>		
* Leaders present at meetings when requestedby staff	2.183	Strong
* Emphasizing the mission that are allocated from vision	0.862	Strong
* Leaders felt themselves constantly supervised by God	0.496	Strong
* Leaders: communicate well with staff	0.458	Strong



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## *Leaders Who Communicate Effectively*

* Leaders treating staff as members of an organization, not as external individuals.	1.000	Strong
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The main theme under *Concerned Leaders* was about reading habit development which included four characteristics of effective leadership. This is supported by Watkin (2001): concern for people is one of the four main leadership behavior styles. These four characteristics show that the highest ranking goes to leaders taking the time to provide training and guidance to staff with score values of 11.076. The second ranking with values of 4.377 was attained by some leaders who use mistakes in the past as a lesson. Third, shows reading with scores of 0.494 was explaining clearly the implications if the objective was achieved. Lastly, leaders are ensured relevant guidelines procedures, use of facilities and equipment documented showed scores of 0.325.

Next, characteristics of effective leadership under *Leader Who Cares* listed four characteristics of effective leadership and the reading values proved high and strong. Hardie (2012) that a caring leader is someone who has a genuine interest in others. Leaders have the desire to better know the people working with them and encourage people to be the best they can be. Score values of 2.813 show the highest ranking for leaders who are present at meetings when required by staff. This is followed by the second ranking with values of 0.862, and this characteristic is emphasizing on a mission that is integrated. Values of 0.496 were third, relating to the characteristics of leaders who felt themselves constantly supervised by God. Lastly, high and strong reading values of 0.458 were found for leaders who communicate well with staff.

*Leaders Who Communicate Effectively* listed one characteristic of effective leadership and showed a very strong relationship through resulting of 1.000 for leaders who treat staff as members in an organization, not an external individuals. Communication involves active participation or interaction between leader and employee to ensure the information is shared, objectives are met and problems are solved (Johansson, 2015).

## **Discussion**

The above shows nine leadership characteristics with strong values illustrated through Partial Least Square (PLS) which has become a tool of choice in the social sciences as a multivariate technique for non-experimental and experimental data alike (e.g., neuroimaging, see McIntosh & Lobaugh, 2004; Worsley, 1997). These characteristics can contribute to the effectiveness of leaders in higher educational institutions.

Effective characteristics under Concerned Leaders listed four characteristics and this is supported by Leithwood, Louis, Anderson, and Wahlsstrom (2009) who stated that one indication of how successful leadership affected followers' achievement is the leader paying more attention to their followers, given the role of distance education leaders in designing innovative courses and presentation processes, the use of appropriate technology for providing training, and preparing faculty for their new role as facilitators (Moore & Kaersley, 1996). Supported by Day et al., (2016) leaders are likely to influence subordinates and affect student outcomes if they focus on their influence, coaching and their connections or relationships with followers. In line with this statement, leadership seems to be the first part of improving organizational effectiveness. The opposite situation if the organization that involves human beings especially leaders pay less attention to its communities. A study by Shagufta and Nazir (2021) found that one of the educational institute communities, namely, students, will experience a decline in self-esteem which results in them being antisocial.

Leaders taking the time to provide training and guidance to the staff placed the first ranking which the highest value is recorded in the first ranking with the highest value recorded (11.076). Using mistakes in the past as a lesson placed in the second ranking value of 4.377. This is followed by explaining clearly the implications that would be acceptable if the objective is achieved with values of (0.494). This statement is strongly supported by Covey (2007): if people are involved in the process, they psychologically own it and you create a situation where people are on the same page about what is really important—mission, vision, values and goals. Lastly, leaders who ensure relevant guidelines procedures, use of facilities and documented (0.325) placed in the fourth ranking under the main theme of *Concerned Leaders*. Supported by Silva (2016), leadership is a developing concept that is very complex to define but it can be defined as a process of interactive control from the authority to followers in achieving common goals.

A Value of 2.813 for when leaders are present at meetings when requested by staff represents the highest score and shows strong dependency with the main theme *Leader Who Cares*. This is supported by Horton (2001) leaders are responsible and care for their actions and the action of their followers. Followed by leaders who emphasize a mission that is integrated with a high reading the high reading of 0.862. This is supported by and agrees with Farrell (2011), who states that great leaders know where they are going and have a strong sense of mission and if you are going to lead others, you need to know where you are

going yourself. One of the main visions of an educational institution is to develop the destiny of society, especially SES, which is to improve the level of poverty in society. The description of this view is in line with the findings of a study by Rad et al., (2020) that one of the responsibilities of a higher education institution such as a university is to improve the living standards of society. The reason is because in the university there are many experts in various fields who can apply knowledge and skills to improve the living standards of the people (Khan et al., 2020). Next, leaders who feel constantly monitored by God show scores of 0.496. Lastly, strong values of 0.458 for leaders who communicate well with staff prove to be one of the effective characteristics in higher education institutions of Majlis Amanah Rakyat. Effective communication with the leaders stimulates employees to stay engaged and to perform their duties efficiently (Clement, 2008).

Next, characteristics of effective leadership under the main theme of *Leaders Who Communicate Effectively*, show strong values of 1.000. This proves that leaders treating staff as members. Involved in the organization not as external individuals, contribute to the effectiveness of leaders in the higher education institution of Majlis Amanah Rakyat. This is strongly agreed to by Wilhelm (2011); communication is an important facet of life- it is an essential part of human interaction. The benefits of effective communication enhance all aspects of our personal and professional lives. Wilhelm adds that the inability to be an effective communicator in our personal lives may cause problems or embarrassment but in our professional lives, the result of miscommunication may have much more serious results.

To conclude, scores with high values from data analysis answered by 240 respondents proved that higher educational institutions urgently require these nine of characteristics of effectiveness under these three main themes for leaders' effectiveness. By adopting these characteristics of effective leadership and skills for effective leadership leaders are expected to be able to generate an institution as well as high quality and excellent leaders and staff in the future.

### **Conclusions**

In conclusion, this study has found that the excellence and effectiveness of an institution of higher learning are entirely dependent on the ability of leaders to achieve the goals and objectives of the organization. Therefore, appropriate leaders always review and explore the best leadership qualities from time to time. An effective leader can make a success of a weak business plan, but a bad leader can destroy even the best plan. Therefore, developing effective leadership by applying and practicing effective leadership characteristics at all levels can return the most positive significant outcomes. Thus, this article has

discussed what leadership effectiveness is, and the effective leadership design model that is suitable for leaders in higher educational institutions.

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