

Organizational Strategy, Resource Management, Communication, Collaboration, Higher Education Advocacy, Professionalism and Effective Academic Leadership Styles in Malaysian RUs

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ABSTRACT

The importance of systematically developing human resources today is highly complex because globalization has had far-reaching implications for human resource development (HRD) through recognizing appropriate competencies for academic leaders. Leaders can be more effective based on leadership behaviors exhibited by academic leaders in the international environment. Leadership scholars have called for additional research on leadership competencies requirements and how those requirements vary according to effective leadership styles. The research question examined in the context of middle level academic leadership. The purpose of this research is to examine the relationship between six leadership competencies (organizational strategy, resource management, communication, collaboration, higher education advocacy, professionalism) and four Effective Academic Leadership Styles (EALS) in the present situation of globalization and academic excellence. The total number of respondents in this study was 183 academic leaders who hold administrative positions in Malaysian RUs. Based on the results using Structural Equation Modeling (SEM), contributions of leadership competencies depend on leadership styles in certain situations. Most of the competencies have a relationship to EALS, except two dimensions that include organizational strategy and communication. Finally, systematic leadership development programs should be developed to ensure that appropriate EALS utilized in RUs.

KEYWORDS: leadership competency, globalization, effective academic leadership styles.

INTRODUCTION

The most significant function of an institution of higher education is its leadership effectiveness in creating a pleasant environment for faculties with a good quality of education and for making this environment, leaders are required to know new knowledge, abilities and skills to effectively cope with the organizational changes (Drucker, 1999; Gilley, 2005; Howkins, 2001; Al-Shuaiby, 2009). This is because the behaviors of organizational leaders directly influence the actions in the work environment that enable changes (Drucker, 1999; Gilley, 2005; Howkins, 2001; Al-Shuaiby, 2009). Many studies have been conducted in the development of some important theories in organization leadership effectiveness (Yukl, 1989). Although, over the past ten years research in leadership effectiveness, has moved towards identifying the leadership competencies such as knowledge, skills, abilities and behaviors of individuals. A recent study indicated only a few studies have asked senior academic administrators about what they do, what they need to know, and what characteristics or attitudes they need to possess (Townsend & Bassoppo-Moyo, 1997:1; Mapp, 2008).

Focusing on leadership competencies is essential for at least two reasons. First, a focus on leadership competencies requirements emphasizes that academic leaders can become better leaders, because skills represent capabilities that can be developed. This complements other research that has helped understanding of fairly enduring abilities or personality characteristics of leaders (Bass, 1990). Second, by focusing on leadership competencies requirements, the focus shifted from the person holding the job as an academic leader to the job itself. Thus, instead of attempting to identify the characteristics of leaders, the focus is squarely on the job of the leader, and the specific competencies as fundamental skills it requires. In light of the dynamics, complexity and diversity, now characteristic of the global environment, inadequate leadership skills are the main gap in the public academic environment (Gregersen et al., 1998; Harvey and Buckley, 2002; Jokinen, 2004; Abu Daud Silong, 2005; Lee, 2009; Himanka, J,

2012), which is making increasing demands on leadership competencies for effective leadership styles at all organizational levels.

Therefore, increasing understanding of different aspects of academic excellence in research universities as international public sectors is important to fill the main gap. Such changes will help academic organizations to meet the new challenges brought about by globalization, whether their primary leadership styles can cope with the situation or will contribute the required competencies.

Jokinen (2004) asserted that the competency development process should start from an analysis of the dynamics of the global or international environment and the core competencies, continuing to identify the profiles of necessary human resources and ending with identification of necessary competencies for specific jobs or functions.

According to the Ministry of Higher Education (MOHE) (2007) in Malaysia, top universities must embrace some key elements to become World Class Universities with high academic effectiveness. These key elements are: the best leaders, the best faculties, the best students, and the best facilities. While some leadership problems such as inadequate leadership skills and leadership styles, lack of recognition and lack of training affect the leaders' effectiveness as community leaders (Abu DaudSilong, 2005) exist in Malaysian research universities the importance of academic leaders overcoming these obstacles by acquiring competencies with appropriate training must be emphasized.

Purpose of this Study

The role of academic leaders is highly crucial to face with a myriad of challenges in RUs as top universities. However, the aim of this paper is to identify significant relationship between six academic leadership competencies (organizational strategy, resource management, communication collaboration, higher education advocacy and professionalism) and four effective leadership styles such as telling, selling, participating, delegating style (Hersey & Blanchard, 2006).

Effective Academic Leadership Styles (EALS)

Based on the literature of Hovatter (2009), researchers have investigated leadership from a variety of perspectives; although, there is no universally accepted definition of leadership. Also, there are many theories and methods for depicting the right leadership styles for an organization. The Situational Leadership theory discusses that the best type of leadership determined by situational variables and no one style of leadership relates to all given academic workplace situations. Identifying the leadership style for an organization using this approach includes identification of the type of work, complexity of the organization, and qualifications of the followers (Taleo Research White Paper, 2010).

Situational theory formulated by Hersey and Blanchard (1993), and it utilized in this study in order to understand factors influencing leadership effectiveness of academic leaders. In this theory, four different leadership styles have classified that could be drawn to deal with different situations: (a) Telling, (high task/low relationship behavior); (b) Selling; (high task/high relationship behavior); (c) Participating; (low task/high relationship behavior); and (d) Delegating; (low task/low relationship behavior). Hersey and Blanchard (1993, 2006) indicated that the situational leadership based on the interplay among the following parts: (1) the amount of guidance and direction (task behavior) a leader gives; (2) the amount of socioeconomic support a leader provides; and (3) the readiness level that followers exhibit in performing a specific task, function or objective.

Hersey, Blanchard, and Johnson (1996), in addition, other leadership theories such as Fiedler (1997) and Blake and Mouton (1964), stressed that no single leadership style is appropriate for all situations. Effective leaders adjust their leadership behaviors to the readiness levels of subordinates. Leaders have to create an environment in which workers understand and believe in the causal relationship between effort, performance, satisfaction and reward. Organizations have to set up environments of expectancies which support the motivation to perform (Hampton, Summer and Webber, 1987). In addition, this study concentrates on contingency theory. The fundamental of this theory is that there is no one best way to lead. Contingency theory emphasizes that leader to be effective; he or she must apply different leadership principles or leadership styles in different situations (Bensimon, Neumann, & Birnbaum, 2000). Contingency leadership theory includes behavioral and situational variables simultaneously. Then, academic leaders need to know behavioral and situational variables for becoming as World Class Universities, hence this theory utilized in this study.

Competencies and Effective Academic Leadership Styles

Leaders in higher education institutions should improve their leadership competencies to enable their universities and colleges to survive and continually develop. These competencies include leadership skills, communication skills, persuasive skills and professional skills. In April 2005, AACC (Board of Directors)

unanimously approved a document entitled Competencies for Community College Leaders. In this study, these competencies or skills utilized for the academic sector like RUs. The competencies of academic leaders include;

(1) Organizational Strategy - the leaders should strategically improves quality of the institution, based on knowledge of the organization, its environment, and future trends.

(2) Resource Management - in this term effective academic leaders equitably and ethically sustains people, processes, and information as well as physical and financial assets to fulfill the mission, vision, and goals of the academic environment.

(3) Communication - An effective leader uses clear listening, speaking and writing skills to engage in honest, open dialogue at all levels of the university, to promote the success of all persons based on mission.

(4) Collaboration - this leader develops and maintains some abilities such as responsive, cooperative, mutually beneficial, and ethical internal and external relationships that nurture diversity, promote the success of all students, and sustain the academic environment mission.

(5) Community College Advocacy - to advocate as an effective academic leader he or she understands, commits to, and advocates for the mission, vision, and goals of the academic environment.

(6) Professionalism - an effective academic leader needs to work ethically to set high standards for self and others, continuously improves self and surroundings, demonstrates accountability to and for the institution and ensures the long-term viability of the academic environment.

Any improvements desired in the operations of quality and that required training by academic units would be left up to them to do as needed. This means that deans, heads of departments, professors, senior lecturers, program coordinators and others who have strategic roles in faculties through managing committees and courses would be required to interpret what competencies would be needed to inform their operational quality and so engage in self-development. So this research will attempt to explore which particular competencies need by the leaders in universities and utilizing these competencies for developing academic leaders through specific training. The main question of this paper is:

What is the relationship, if any, between competencies (organizational strategy, resource management, communication, collaboration, higher education advocacy, professionalism) and Effective Academic Leadership Styles (EALS) in RUs?

Based on this research question, we have six main hypotheses, and under each of them, there are four secondary hypotheses. All the hypotheses investigated in data analysis part in this paper.

PROCEDURE AND METHODOLOGY OF THE RESEARCH

This study carried out as a predictive and correlation research to examine whether, significant relationships exist between the dimensions of competencies, and EALS in academic public sectors “which are located in Klang Valley area” (such as UM, UKM, and UPM). The number of academicians in administrative positions as academic leaders in these three universities was 520.

According to the Cochran formula (1997), when the population size from “academic administrative position” is 520 and value of error equals .05, the sample size is equal to 220. Some of scholars such as Klien (2005) suggest that if sample size is < 100, it is small sample size. If the sample size is between 100 to 200, it is medium sample size and >200 is a large sample size in the SEM. Therefore, the sample size for this study is medium sample size and acceptable. The researchers selected three research universities among four RUs in Malaysia by two-stage involved proportional stratified and simple random sampling. After distribution of surveys among the respondents, the researchers tried to follow up through phone and email in several times, and finally around 183 surveys collected. As stated in Sekaran (2000), the closer Cronbach’s alpha is to 1, the higher the internal consistency reliability. The results show that Construct Reliability (CR) is between .813 and .891 in this research, then the reliability is high.

This study organized by survey instrument in three sections included: demographic information; leadership effectiveness; and competencies for academic leaders. The final data after doing pilot test, investigated the relationships between six leadership competencies, demographic information and Effective Academic Leadership Styles among Malaysian academic leaders in the current positions (Figure 1).

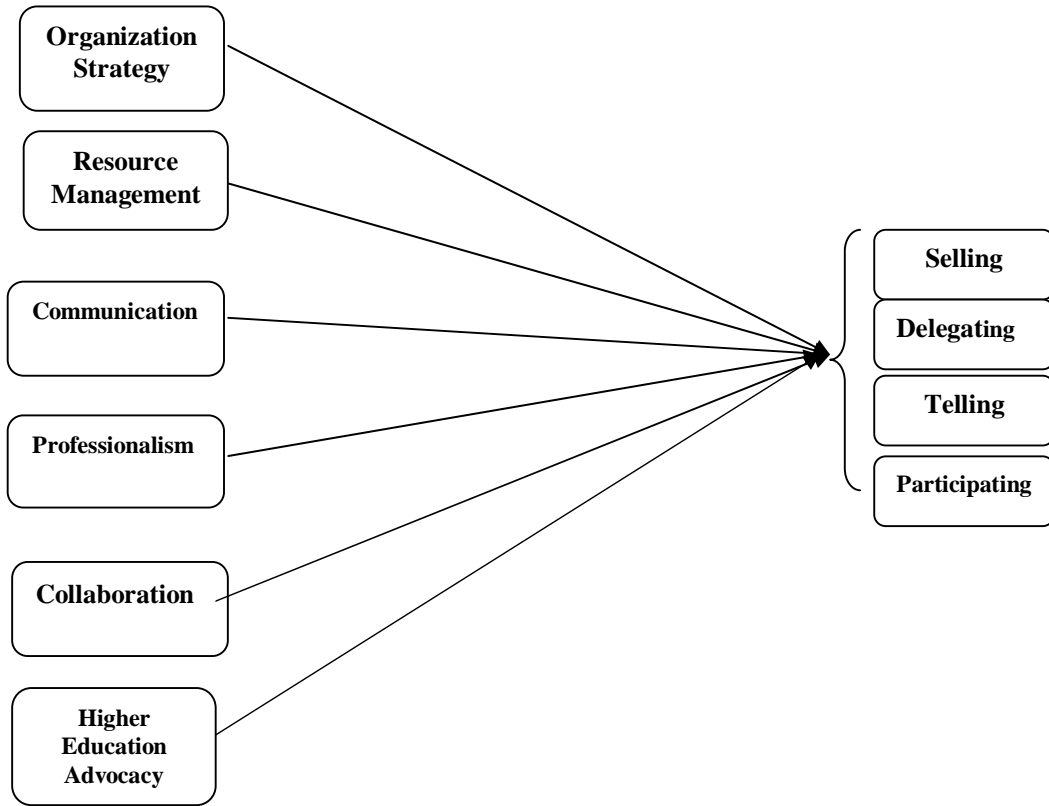


Figure 1. Research framework; relationship between six leadership competencies and leadership styles.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Certain quantitative methods and procedures utilized in order to examine the main relationship between predictors and factors.

The demographic characteristics of the respondents show that the most academic leaders female (57.9%) and the rest are male (41.5%). The most of the academic leaders in current position are head of departments (35.5%) and the rest of percentages associated to the deans, deputy deans, directors, deputy directors. Average of length of working experience in the leadership position is 3.6 and range between 1 to 5 years old. Finally, the maximum range of the highest educational level, associated to doctorate level (73.8%), the rest related to bachelors, and the others.

Path Model in SEM

Figure 1 presents the Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) to be tested. This model draw using the icons displayed in the toolbox of the AMOS 18 Graphics main window. This model evaluates how scores in the independent variables (six leadership competencies) related to dependent variables (four styles of the leadership effectiveness). As ‘it has not assumed that all the DVs perfectly predicted by a linear combination of the all of IVs or exogenous variables’. The single-headed arrows represent regression weights, and the double-headed arrows connecting the predictor variables suggest that these variables may be correlated with each other. The path coefficient is the single-headed arrows from each of IVs to every one of the DVs. Fixing the path coefficient to unity is necessary for the model to be identified.

This Figure provid a good fit of the whole model to the given data in terms of CMIN/DF (χ^2) = 1.331 Pvalue= .239, Df= 6, CFI= .998, TLI= .981, RMSEA= .043 (Table 1). As can be seen, the path standardized or path coefficients indicate positive or negative relationships between indicators and underlying factors (Table 2).

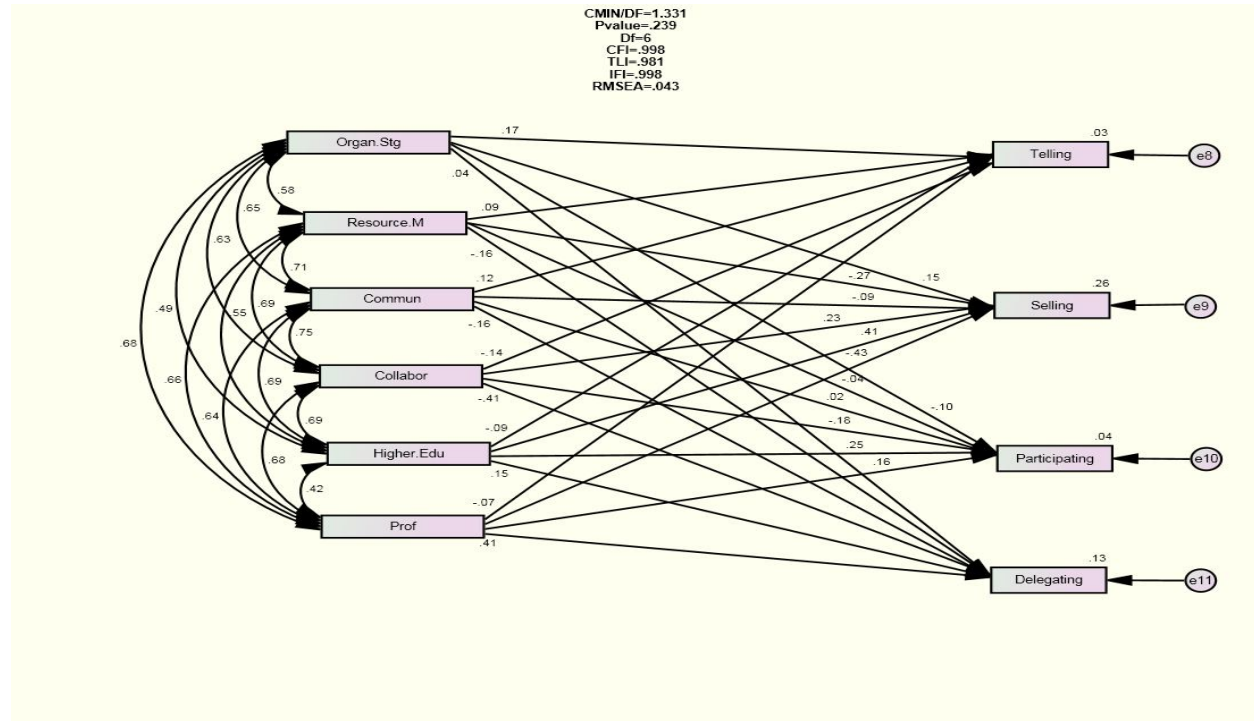


Figure 2. The path model, estimates factor loadings, linking indicators, and respective factors.

Table 1: Model Fit Summary in Path Model

Model	NFI Delta1	RFI rho1	IFI Delta2	TLI rho2	CFI	DF	P	CMIN/ DF	RMSEA
Default model	.991	.929	.998	.981	.998	6	.239	1.331	.043
Saturated model	1.000		1.000		1.000	0			
Independence model	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	66	.000	16.561	.000

Table 2 Unstandardized, Standardized Regression Weights and P value

		Unstandardized Estimate	Standardized Estimate	P
Telling	<--- Resource.M	.093	.082	.421
Telling	<--- Higher.Edu	-.092	-.081	.409
Telling	<--- Prof	-.068	-.066	.567
Delegating	<--- Resource.M	-.159	-.133	.145
Delegating	<--- Commun	-.160	-.143	.204
Selling	<--- Commun	-.086	-.080	.458
Delegating	<--- Collabor	-.408	-.363	.001
Selling	<--- Collabor	.230	.211	.051
Participating	<--- Higher.Edu	.247	.237	.026
Delegating	<--- Prof	.409	.374	***
Selling	<--- Prof	-.428	-.404	***
Telling	<--- Organ.Stg	.165	.150	.128
Selling	<--- Organ.Stg	.146	.129	.125
Delegating	<--- Organ.Stg	.038	.033	.709
Participating	<--- Organ.Stg	-.103	-.102	.342
Selling	<--- Resource.M	-.273	-.237	.007
Participating	<--- Resource.M	-.044	-.043	.699
Telling	<--- Commun	.118	.113	.374
Participating	<--- Commun	.019	.020	.885
Telling	<--- Collabor	-.140	-.133	.297
Participating	<--- Collabor	-.180	-.185	.181
Selling	<--- Higher.Edu	.410	.352	***
Delegating	<--- Higher.Edu	.152	.126	.149
Participating	<--- Prof	.162	.171	.172

Testing the Research Hypotheses

The research hypotheses formulated for the study examined in this part through the use of appropriate Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) procedures. In this study, the following hypotheses have tested.

Hypothesis 1

H1. There is a significant relationship between organizational strategy and Effective Academic Leadership Styles (EALS) (telling style, selling style, participating style, and delegating style).

The following measures considered when assessing the compatibility of theoretical factor and path model structures to the collected data. From Table 2, it can be seen that rating of the variable of OS positively related to telling, selling and delegating style ($\beta = .150$, $P = .128$; $\beta = .129$, $P = .125$; $\beta = .033$, $P = .709$ respectively) and negatively related to participating ($\beta = -.102$, $P = .342$). Based on Pvalue ($P \leq .05$), relationships between OS and four leadership styles are not significant (Table 3).

Hypothesis 2

H2) There is a significant relationship between resource management (RM) and EALS.

Through model fit in path model, relationship between resource management and telling style was positive and regression coefficients estimates were negative for selling, participating and delegating.

Standardized regression weights (β) that they are standardized coefficient estimates, which is present in Table 2, and it can be seen that rating of the variable of RM positively related to telling style ($\beta = .082$, $Pvalue = .421$) and negatively related to participating style ($\beta = -.043$, $Pvalue = .699$), selling style ($\beta = -.237$, $Pvalue = .007$) and delegating style ($\beta = -.159$, $Pvalue = .133$). Thus, it can be concluded that “for RM contribution” academic leaders prefer to utilize selling style rather than others. Overall, the statistical results supported the research hypothesis only for relationship between selling and RM (Table 3).

Hypothesis 3

H3) There is a significant relationship between communication and EALS.

This hypothesis predicted that communication related to dimensions of EALS through path model. Standardized regression weights (β) that they are standardized coefficient estimates, and it showed in Table 2, and it can be seen that rating of the variable of communication related to telling, selling, participating and delegating style ($\beta = .113$, $P = .374$; $\beta = -.080$, $P = .458$; $\beta = .020$, $P = .885$; $\beta = -.143$, $P = .204$ respectively) but they are not significant. The statistical findings do not support this research hypothesis (Table 3).

Hypothesis 4

H4) There is a significant relationship between collaboration and EALS.

The fourth secondary hypothesis suggested that collaboration related to four leadership styles. The findings show that standardized regression weights (β) that they are standardized coefficient estimates (Table 2), that the rating of the variable of collaboration positively related to selling ($\beta = .211$, $Pvalue = .051$) and negatively related to telling ($\beta = -.133$, $P = .297$), participating ($\beta = -.185$, $P = .181$) and delegating style ($\beta = -.363$, $P = .001$) but this relationship is significant only for delegating style because of P value $< .05$. Therefore, as a result, academic leaders prefer to make use of selling style for contribution of collaboration more than the other styles. Ultimately, the statistical results supported this research hypothesis for delegating style (Table 3).

Hypothesis 5

H5) There is a significant relationship between higher education advocacy (HEA) and EALS.

The fifth secondary hypothesis suggested that HEA related to leadership style. The findings show that standardized regression weights (β) based on the Table 2, that the rating of the HEA negatively related to telling ($\beta = -.081$, $P = .409$) and positively related to selling, participating and delegating style ($\beta = .352$, $P = .000$; $\beta = .237$, $P = .026$; $\beta = .126$, $P = .149$ respectively) (Table 2). As a result, for increasing higher education advocacy as one of the leadership competencies academic leaders prefer to apply selling style more than the others. The statistical findings supported this research hypothesis because of the significant relationship between HEA and selling, participating styles ($P \leq .05$) (Table 3).

Hypothesis 6

H6) There is a significant relationship between professionalism and EALS (telling style, selling style, participating style, and delegating style).

Standardized regression weights (β) showed in Table 2, and it can be seen that rating of the variable of professionalism that it negatively related to telling, selling ($\beta = -.066$, $P = .567$; $\beta = -.404$, $P = .000$ respectively) and positively related to participating and delegating style ($\beta = .171$, $P = .172$; $\beta = .374$, $P = .000$ in that order). The statistical finding supported this research hypothesis and accepted that in two styles included of selling and delegating styles (Table 3).

Table 3 Relationship between Organizational Strategy, Resource Management, Communication Collaboration, Higher Education Advocacy and Professionalism and Effective Leadership Styles.

Exogenous Variables(IVs) (Competencies)	Endogenous variables (IVs) (Preferable to make use of Leadership Styles)			
	Telling	Selling	Participating	Delegating
Organizational Strategy	More likely to use (+)	More likely to use (+)	Less likely to use (-)	More likely to use (+)
Resource Management	More likely to use (+)	Less likely to use (-) & Significant*	Less likely to use (-)	Less likely to use (-)
Communication	More likely to use (+)	Less likely to use (-)	More likely to use (+)	Less likely to use (-)
Collaboration	Less likely to use (-)	More likely to use (+)	Less likely to use (-)	Less likely to use (-) & Significant*
Higher Education Advocacy	Less likely to use (-)	More likely to use (+) & Significant*	More likely to use (+) & Significant*	More likely to use (+)
Professionalism	Less likely to use (-)	Less likely to use (-) & Significant*	More likely to use (+)	More likely to use (+) & Significant*

DISCUSSION

1. Academic leaders have more favor to make use of telling/directing, selling/coaching and delegating/monitoring approaches styles and less favor to approach participating/supporting style for contribution of organizational strategy competency (Table 3).

2. Those academic leaders who found themselves to be more effective by using more telling/directing, participating/supporting and less selling/coaching and delegating/monitoring approaches to contribute resource management in RUs.

3. Academic leaders are more likely to make use of the telling/directing and less likely to approach selling/coaching, participating/supporting and delegating/monitoring approaches to leadership effectiveness for contribution of communication competency because of negative relationships but not significantly (Table 3).

4. These results indicate that academic leaders with more collaboration competency are more likely to approach selling/coaching and less likely to approach telling/directing, participating/supporting, delegating/monitoring approaches to leadership effectiveness (Table 3).

5. The findings indicate that academic leaders with HEA competency are more likely to approach the selling/coaching, participating/supporting and delegating/monitoring and less likely to approach telling/directing approaches to leadership effectiveness.

6. Ultimately, for utilizing professionalism as last leadership competency, academic leaders choose two different leadership styles such as delegating and selling styles rather than telling and participating styles because of a significant relationship (Table 3).

Loh, F.(2005) mentioned that compared to senior academics again, many are not imbued with the academic culture to conduct serious research and to challenge and debate the given wisdom. Also, most of them are not very effective transmitters of knowledge either. Management of public universities in Malaysia is in accordance with the dictates of the government, and that means embedding the corporate bureaucratic culture in the universities. It means an imbalance of authority versus responsibility due to lack of adequate resources and lack of sufficient time to manage many overwhelming responsibilities with limited authority; disagreement with the direction taken by upper level administration; being challenged by both lower and upper levels of administration for making unpopular decisions; being forced to implement some old and inappropriate policies and procedures that are not in the best interests of the higher education institutions they manage.

Therefore, academic leaders do not have enough authority to choose appropriate leadership styles for application of leadership competencies dimensions. The government and Ministry of Higher Education (MOHE) have to pay more attention to effective leading and to efforts in decreasing the bureaucratic system which is not necessary in the research universities.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

Based on the findings derived from the six research hypothesis, it can be concluded that a majority of the academic leaders has selected different leadership styles for utilizing six dimensions of the leadership competencies to leadership effectiveness in the RUs, but organization strategy, communication don't have significant relationship with ELS. Therefore, one of the major conclusions of this study is that, academic leaders need to know the obstacles

in order to be able to make use of competencies by choosing the best leadership styles based on leaders situation and readiness of the followers. Also they have to increase their abilities and skills to manage higher education institutions. The important part about being an academic leader is not to stick to one style, but leaders have to find the own style for a particular situation. Then, suggested solutions by the academic leaders to this kind of barrier were to make competencies with appropriate training and try to convince them to catch essential competencies.

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