

***Culture and Leadership: How Indonesian Culture Influences Leadership Practice:
A Case Study in Uin Malang***

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Abstract

The study was intended to know the leadership style that was practiced by the rector of UIN Malang, Indonesia and how Indonesian culture influences his leadership practice to lead the university. The study was a qualitative study and designed as a case study. The subject of the study included some lecturers of UIN Malang, Indonesia. The data were gained from interview. The findings show that leadership practice by the rector of UIN Malang reflected transformational leadership style according to the perception of the lecturers. In light of this, the data show that transformational leadership practice by the rector of UIN Malang covers some dimensions as follows: intellectual stimulation, promoting professionalism, individualized support, and highly expectation of the university goal. And, the data show that some aspects of Indonesian culture such as collectiveness, communication strategy, and valuing the lecturer's different potential and positive contribution to the university enable the rector apply transformational leadership style to lead UIN Malang better.

Keywords: transformational leadership style, Indonesian culture

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Introduction

The Indonesian National Constitution defines the national goals as follows: to preserve the interest of all Indonesian citizens, promote human's well being of Indonesian society, develop human resources of Indonesia through education, and highly support the world's peace. In light of this, the constitution strongly orders the Indonesian government to build national education system that allows all Indonesian achieve their full potential to support themselves and contribute positively to the process of national development in order to realize the national goals. Indonesian government never stops developing national education system to catch up with the advance of science and technology and the modern level of other countries to equip Indonesian young generation with knowledge and skill for their future role to lead the country and support the world's peace.

However, Indonesia still faces some serious educational problems like educational quality improvement and equality of educational quality throughout the country. Indonesian education achieves lower rank among other countries in Asia, even in ASEAN countries (Tilaar, 2000). This problem also happens to higher education of Indonesia. Most of Indonesian universities have some crucial problems such as accountability, relevance, quality, autonomy, and international networking (Tilaar, 2000). Most of Indonesian universities are difficult to determine the best strategy to define the vision and manage academic activity that is able to answer the problem of Indonesian society. There is a significant number of jobless from university graduates. The graduates of Indonesian university are still difficult to compete with other competitors to get a job. Thus, it arouses more complicated social problem to Indonesian society. Indonesian university is actually expected to manage academic programs that are relevant with job market and the progress of the national development. In fact, most of them are difficult to realize it. Then, productivity of Indonesian universities is still low. There is few number of research products that are published internationally by Indonesian universities, and none of them is included as the top 10 university in ASEAN anymore. Lower productivity of Indonesian university is also the result of being less active of Indonesian universities to manage international cooperation with overseas universities. This situation makes the lectures are difficult to conduct joined research with their counterparts from overseas universities, and it results in low productivity in research activity.

Indeed, the crucial problems above need good university leader who is able to apply the best leadership strategy to lead the university to improve educational quality of the university. The leader is the key to promote the change in an educational organization. The leader is vital for educational institution to achieve better in both academic and non academic activities (Leithwood, Chapman, Corson, Hallinger, & Hart, 1996).

Morrison (2002), and Kohler and Pankowski (1997) state that leadership strategy is now moving from traditional to the most popularly called transformational leadership. Parry (1996) stated that leadership itself is a transformation. In this case, leader transforms the organization from one of stability to one of enthusiasm for challenge, change, and progress. Sagnak (2010) says that transformational leadership style emphasizes innovation and concern for people. In this case, the leader has to inspire the members to make innovation for educational quality improvement of educational

organization and build trust relationship to motivate them to do beyond the expectation to realize the organizational goals.

But, the leader, in particular the university leader, cannot ignore the values of the cultural context of the society in which the university operates. This strategy is intended to lead the university in line with the progress of the society and define the best university policy to answer the society's problems. The next, the university leader can determine the learning program that is relevant to the need of the society and equip the students with knowledge and skill for their future role in the society. Fiedler (1967) argues that leader's effectiveness in a given situation depends on the fit between the style and task, authority level and the nature of the group (Cunningham&Cordeiro, 2009). Cultural values affect the life and management of educational organization (Hallinger&Leithwood, 1998). Getzels et al. (1968) stated that cultural values influence the educational organization to define the policy (Hallinger&Leithwood, 1988). Then, Gerstner and O'Day (1994) said that leadership is a cultural phenomenon so that it is linked to the values and customs of a group of people (Hallinger&Leithwood, 1998). Further, Hallinger and Leithwood (1998) described that the studies on educational leadership and cultural values have been done by some experts like Getzels et al. (1968), Hofstede (1976), Bossert et al. (1982), Hallinger and Heck (1996), Cheng (1995), and Cheng and Wong (1996).

In this global era, there is a strong argument to conduct the study on leadership that is grounded to non western cultural values. Bajunid (1996), Cheng (1995), and Wong (1996) said that few modern discussion of leadership or administration grounded in non western cultural contexts can be found (Hallinger&Leithwood, 1998). Further, Bajunid (1996) argued that western educational philosophy is not relevant to the educational system of Southeast Asian countries anymore (Hallinger&Leithwood, 1998). Accordingly, to conduct the study on leadership practice and Indonesian cultural value is needed to advance the science of educational leadership in Indonesian context. Thus, this study aims to investigate leadership style that was practiced by the rector of UIN Malang and how Indonesian culture influenced the leadership practice by the rector to lead the university.

Research Methodology

The study is a case study to investigate leadership style that was practiced by the rector of UIN Malang and how Indonesian culture influenced the leadership practice by the rector to lead the university. The respondents of the research are the lecturers of UIN Malang, and the data are gained from interview. The interview data are analyzed according to the theme.

Transformational Leadership

Burns (1978) initially develops the concept of transformational leadership (Bass&Riggio, 2006). Transformational leadership encourages the individuals of the organization to do more than expected, empower themselves to achieve full potential, build mutual cooperation, place the organizational goal before the individual's interest. The individuals have to increase the awareness of the organizational vision and eagerly strive for realizing the organizational vision and goal. Transformational leadership emphasizes moral values and motivation (Day, Harris, Hadfield, Tolley&Beresford, 2003). Burns (1978) connected transformational leadership to transactional leadership (Marturano&Gosling, 2008). Transactional leadership suggests the leader gives the reward to the followers allowing for the job accomplishment by the followers to achieve the organizational goal. In the light of this, Hicks and price (1999) quote the idea of Burns that transactional leadership is merely directed by human desire and neglects interpersonal relationship as well as mutual cooperation among human beings (Marturano&Gosling, 2008).

Further, Bass and Riggio (2006) identify four components to constitute transformational leadership: idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration (Bass & Riggio, 2006). Idealized influence means the leader behaves in the proper manner and is highly committed to moral values so that he becomes the role model for the followers. Inspirational motivation means the leader always motivates and inspires the individuals by providing stimulus, ideas, and challenges to them. Intellectual stimulation means the leader encourages the followers to be creative and innovative to find the way to solve the problem. Individualized consideration means the leader has to give attention to each individual's need and develop each individual's potential by acting as mentor and coach. The leader not only trains the follower to be skillful to accomplish the job but also develops the mature of the members' emotion.

Then, Coleman (1999) quotes the idea of Leithwood, Jantzi, and Steinbach (1998) that transformational leadership in education institution is intended to facilitate the institution achieve the goal in accordance with the challenge the institution faces (Bundret, Burton&Smith, 2003). Leithwood (1994) develop transformational leadership in education into some components as follows:

1. Setting directions (includes vision building, goal consensus, and development of high-performance expectations).
2. Developing people (includes the provision of individualized support, intellectual stimulation and the modeling of values and practices important to the mission of the school).
3. Organizing (culture building in which colleagues are motivated by moral imperatives and structuring, fostering shared decision-making process and problem-solving capacities)
4. Building relationship with the school community.

(Day et al., 2003:15)

According to Hallinger (2003), transformational leadership is the most suitable leadership style in education institution. Leithwood, Tomlinson, and Genge (1996) explain that transformational leadership in education is a process to influence all individuals of the educational institution to do more than the expectation (Abdullah

Sani, Abdul Rashid Mohammed & Abdul Ghani Abdullah, 2007). Leithwood (1994) suggests that transformational leaders in the educational institution context have to do the following activities: a) support teachers in developing and sustaining a professional school culture; b) promote the professional development of teachers; c) improve problem-solving process (Morrison, 2002). Leithwood and Jantzi (2000) suggest six dimensions of transformational leadership in educational organization as follows: building the vision and goals of the educational institution, providing intellectual stimulation, offering individualized support, symbolizing professional practices and values, having highly expectations, and developing structures to promote participation in the institution decisions (Morrison, 2002). Lambert (2002) states that transformational leadership in educational institution enables the leader to work together with teachers and other staffs, know what the teachers and staffs need and conform their need to the institution goal. The studies on educational leadership have been done by the experts to explore the positive contribution of leadership practice to the educational quality improvement. Hallinger and Heck (1996) have done 40 studies on the impact of educational leadership to students' learning activity. Leithwood and Jantzi (2005) have done 32 studies to investigate the positive contribution of educational leadership to the students' learning achievement.

Indonesian Culture

Education is considered as vital means to transmit cross cultural values among nations in the world (Hallinger&Leithwood, 1998). The students understand the values of other societies, and other persons behave according to their own social norms from the learning materials they have to study in the educational institution. Durkheim (1947) defined culture as the values that guide, inspire, and motivate a certain group of people to make a better progress in any aspect of life. Lewis (2000) described that culture is a programming of mind that distinguishes a certain group of people from other communities. Then, Lewis (2000) said that social behavior of people in a certain group reflects culture. Kluckhorn and Kroeberg (1952) explained that culture is a patterned behavior of a certain group of people that is transferred from old generation to young generation (Hallinger&Leithwood, 1998). Whereas, Koentjaraningrat (2002) identified culture as values, a patterned behavior, and cultural products like folklore, novel, film, and others.

Indonesian society already developed its own culture long time ago. Abdur Rahman Wahid (2001) said that the essence of Indonesian culture is promoting collaboration, tolerance, and democracy in religious society. It means that Indonesian people are free to express their ideas, follow their different beliefs, and naturally different in race and language, but live in harmony as Indonesian family. Bowen (1986) stated that the main value of Indonesian culture is collectiveness and collaboration among people within Indonesian society. In light of this, Indonesian people cannot live alone and have to work together to achieve better life. Indonesian people are dependable at each other and have to keep harmonious life to promote Indonesian society's well being. Then, Geertz (1960) explained that Indonesian culture promotes harmony among people within Indonesian society. Indonesian people highly promote indirectness to communicate with others. Indirectness is intended to respect others. To criticize someone else directly means to denigrate him, and it is able to break the harmony of Indonesian social life. Accordingly, Indonesian leader especially university leader has

to do heart to heart communication and build trustful relationship with the members in order to motivate them to do beyond the expectation to realize the university goal.

In Indonesian cultural context, the first Indonesian Minister of National Education, Ki Hajar Dewantara, proposed the concept to lead the Indonesian educational institution (Soeratman, 1985; Surjomihardjo, 1986). The leadership concept by the first Indonesian Minister of National Education covers some points as follows:

a. Modelling Dimension of Leadership

Leaders should give the example, determine and communicate vision to the members, and behave properly in accordance with the legitimate social norms. The leader has the authority to direct, properly give positive or negative reinforcements to the members. The sense of love by the leader underlies the implementation of reinforcements. Positive or negative reinforcement (reward and punishment) is not merely transactional; it is not an exchange to what the members have done to the organization. Instead, they are intended to nurture and improve the potential of the members. This concept is in line with idealized influence and leading by example in the concept of transformational leadership.

b. Participative Dimension of Leadership

Leaders should be involved in the work of the members within the organization and be aware of individual problems among the members. Every individual has his own potential and preference, and the leaders should treat every individual differently. This concept is in line to individualized consideration of transformational leadership.

c. Motivational Dimension of Leadership

Leaders should encourage and motivate the members to continuously learn, to be creative to solve problems, and to collaborate with other members within the organization. This concept is related to intellectual stimulation and inspirational motivation of transformational leadership.

Geertz and Frans Magnis Suseno stated that Indonesian cultural context strongly emphasizes harmonious life among the community members (Firdaus Syam, 2003). In light of this, every individual not only relies on logical thinking but also takes emotion and human's feeling into consideration in the social interaction. A managerial procedure is not the single factor to lead and direct the organization but the leadership success needs love, sympathy, empathy, and feeling secure among the members within the organization.

Research Findings and Discussion

The researcher conducted the study in UIN Maulana Malik Ibrahim Malang, Indonesia from December 2012 until March 2013. The study was intended to investigate how the rector applied leadership strategy and how Indonesian culture influenced the leadership practice by the rector to lead the university. UIN Malang is under the supervision of the Indonesian Ministry of Religious Affairs. It is recognized as the early Islamic university in East Java Province, Indonesia. Now, UIN Malang has 350 permanent lecturers and around 40% of them hold Ph.D degree. UIN Malang publisher was established in 2009, but it successfully published more than 500 book titles. The Indonesian Ministry of Religious Affairs recognized UIN Malang as the top university among Islamic universities in Indonesia in 2011, and the Indonesian Ministry of National Education recognized UIN Malang as the top 20 university in Indonesia in 2012. This achievement was the result of the highly struggle and serious efforts of the rector along with all university members.

The researcher interviewed some lecturers to collect the data. The researcher classified and analyzed the data according to the theme as follows:

a. How the rector defined the university policy

The rector considered lecturers as his partner to run the university program in order to realize the goals better. He often delegated some responsibilities to lecturers to develop their professionalism to manage the university program. And, he often handled informal discussion with lecturers to talk about the problem of university and invited their ideas to find the best strategy to tackle the problem. He always welcome any idea and criticism from lecturers to improve the performance of university. He often brought the ideas from lecturers to the official forum of university senate as the positive input to decide the policy. Even, the rector often sent the lecturers to visit other universities to know the progress of the world outside and the advance of science and technology. The awareness of lecturers on the progress of the global era and the very tight competition era made them more motivated to work hard together to improve their professionalism and educational quality of the university in order to win the competition with other universities. Lecturer A stated that *“the rector often sits together with lecturers to discuss any problems inside the university. This relaxed situation makes teachers happy and free to express the idea to find the solution for the good of the university and all staffs”*. Then, Lecturer B said that *“I was sent by the rector to make a comparative study to a Catholic university in west Java, it makes me aware of our current position and the progress of others in both academic and non academic aspects”*.

b. How the rector deal with academic affairs

The rector often shared educational information with lecturers at any time. The rector highly supported lecturers to update their knowledge and skill to manage academic activity. He emphasized the university as the learning organization. In light of this, he promoted long life learning among lecturers to make them more motivated and competent to manage teaching and research activity in order to reach better achievement for themselves and the university. He motivated lecturers to collaborate at each other to improve the professionalism in teaching activity and conducting research project. The rector also decided the policy to support the study of lecturers for higher degree with the university budget. Lecturer C said that *“the rector strongly suggested the lecturers to hold focus group discussion for lecturers in the same field to share information for professional improvement in academic activity”*. Then,

Lecturer D explained that *“when I was on study, the government less supported lecturers with the budget to continue the study. The rector decided the policy to tackle this problem”*.

c. How the rector supervised lecturers

The rector promoted fairness and honesty to supervise lecturers. He followed the rule of university to evaluate the achievement by the lecturers. He rewarded lecturers according to their achievement regardless of sex and race. But, he never criticized lecturers directly, he talked together with lecturer in a relaxed situation to discuss the problem and offered some alternatives to lecturers to solve the problem. He said something in a proper language to correct the mistake by lecturers, it made them feel valued, respected, and more motivated to do better for the best of the university. Lectures E stated that *“the rector always talked something to lecturers in a relaxed situation and used proper language to criticize lecturers, it made us happy and more motivated to do the job. Supervision was not intended to kill lecturers’ career but to improve their professionalism”*. Then, Lecturer F said that *“the way he communicated with lecturers made us happy and respected so that we never felt reluctant to consult any problem to him”*.

d. How the rector managed social life with lecturers

He led the university in democratic way. He was close and open to all lecturers. He spent the time to discuss the university program, daily life, family, and others with lecturers and defined together the best strategy to tackle those problems. He was hardworking, discipline, and outgoing leader. He led the members by example. He came first to the university to check the readiness of the university to conduct learning process for students and he left the university late at night. He strongly suggested all the university members to build solidarity among them and live as one unified family of UIN Malang through social activity like family gathering, touring, religious activities and others. Lecturer G said that *“he was the example for all university members to work hard for the success of the university, he never led the members by words only”*. Then, Lecturer H said that *“he strongly suggested all lecturers care and collaborate at each other to build the strong solidarity as one unified family of UIN Malang”*.

The interview data show that the rector already implemented transformational leadership strategy to lead the university. He emphasizes innovation and concern for people to improve professionalism among lecturers and educational quality of the university. He always stimulates and inspires lecturers to update their knowledge and skill, and find various alternatives to solve the problem. He does this by involving lecturers in any programs, sending them to visit other universities, delegating the job according to their competence, and welcoming their ideas to develop the university.

Further, the rector always motivates lecturers to improve their professionalism to conduct the job. He holds seminar, workshop, focus group discussion for lecturers to make them more competent to manage learning process and academic research, and provide financial support for the lecturers to continue their study. Professionalism among lectures is the key to achieve the qualified university.

The interview data also indicate that the rector highly supports the lecturers in any aspects of life. He was open to lecturers to consult any problems. He promotes solidarity among lecturers and builds trustful relationship with them to create conducive atmosphere inside the university to run the programs better. He cares to the

lecturers and knows their need. He respects different potential of each lecturer and asks the lecturers to collaborate at each other for the good of themselves and the university. Then, the interview data show that the rector motivates lecturers to work hard and collaborate at each other to reach better achievement of the university goal. He is the example for the lecturers to work hard for the success of the university. He leads the members by example, not by words to realize the university goal.

It can be inferred from the data that transformational leadership practice by the rector of UIN Malang covers four dimensions as follows: intellectual stimulation, promoting professionalism, individualized support, and highly expectation of the university goal. The rector highly respects Indonesian cultural values to apply transformational leadership strategy to lead the university to achieve the goal better. He promotes indirectness and uses proper language to supervise lecturers and correct the mistake by the lecturers. He doesn't want to offend others' feeling when he criticizes lecturers. He builds harmonious life and trustful relationship with all university members to run the university program in order to achieve better productivity of the university. In other words, he applies culturally relevant strategy to communicate with all university members. He emphasizes collectiveness and collaboration among the university members to realize the university goal. He doesn't want to be the superman, but he wants to have the super team for the success of the university.

Conclusion

Indonesian education especially Indonesian higher education faces some crucial problems like educational quality, accountability, relevance, networking, and equality of educational quality throughout the country. Indonesian university has to work hard and do serious effort to win the competition with overseas universities in the global era. Indonesia now belongs to ASEAN economic community, it means that anyone from ASEAN countries is free to run business activity in Indonesia. It is the challenge for all Indonesians especially Indonesian universities to develop themselves to be more professional to win the competition in the very tight competition era. This situation needs a good university leader to lead the university better for the success of the university. The data show that the rector of UIN Malang already implemented transformational leadership strategy to lead the university. Transformational leadership practice by the rector of UIN Malang covers four dimensions such as intellectual stimulation, promoting professionalism, individualized support, and highly expectation of the university goal. The rector highly respects Indonesian cultural values to apply transformational leadership strategy such as using proper language, promoting indirectness, collectiveness, and collaboration to lead the university.

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