CHAPTER 6

Leadership Training and Succession Planning in Higher Education Institutions: Insights and Suggestions from Malaysia Academic Leaders

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6.1   INTRODUCTION

Higher education institutions (HEIs) have undergone tremendous changes in meeting today's complex demands for university graduates who are obliged to be both skilful and knowledgeable (Floyd, 2012; Vilkinas, 2011; Morris, 2016). Thus, many renowned HEIs are advancing towards a "managerialism and professional" approach (Hinings, 1999) which highly emphasizes aspects encompassing "productivity", "client service", and "marketing and growth strategies" (Boer, 2010; Deem, 2004) which can be considered as a commercial and corporate like approach (Hamlin, 2017). In Malaysia, the role of higher education has become more thought-provoking under the Higher Education Strategic Plan of 2007 based on the

objectives to establish Malaysia as an educational hub within the Asian region by the year 2020 (MOHE, 2007; MOHE, 2011; Ahmad, 2016) and to enhance the standing, quality, and ranking of local HEIs (Kamil, 2016). Malaysia's refined and impactful HE policy requires that all HEIs, regardless of their public or private-based status, to have multi-faceted functions (Floyd, 2016) and to transform their curricula.

With the rapidly changing higher education landscape, the role of academic leadership is also experiencing change from their previous roles in the traditional-based collegial administration, into a new managerial approach comprising financial and internationalization responsibilities, as well as the management of resource allocation based on the annual performance of staff (Floyd, 2016; Henkel, 2002; Ramsden, 1998). As such, (Ramsden, 1998) pointed out that academic leaders must generate an environment that develops and assists academics to become more effective (Whitchurch, 2013). In this sense, (Bolden, 2012) believe that academic leaders should play an active role as a source of inspiration, guidance, and support for academics. This has led academic leaders to experience more demanding situations and work under pressure as they are not only expected to have a wider range of skills and knowledge on their expertise, values and skills (Floyd, 2009; Knight, 2000; Cahill, 2015) but also be adaptable, "savvy", and cooperative (Kerr, 1984), capable to consult their fellow academic formal and informally (Morris, 2016) in addition to managing the "web of differences and supporting other academics to embrace change" (Ramsden, 1998).

In Malaysia, to ensure the growth and effectiveness of academic leadership the Malaysian Education Blueprint in Higher Education from 2015 to 2025 was strategically introduced by the Ministry of Higher Education to train and

prepare future academic leaders by identifying, screening and selecting potential academics using pertinent criteria such as leadership style, professional skills, reputation, integrity and patriotism with the support of the Higher Education Leadership Academy (AKEPT), which conducts academic leadership selection and training programs for the development of future academic leaders in Malaysian HEIs (Mohammad Jais, 2021; 2020). Within the Malaysian public universities' context, academic leaders play crucial roles in the transformation of HEIs based on their array of tasks such as managing and reviewing the curriculum, performing mentoring duties, promoting links with other faculties at the university, and fostering links with other universities with the intent of offering collaborative courses (Abdullah, 2009; Kamil, 2016)

6.2   THE RESEARCH PROBLEM

Academic leaders are administrators who are responsible for the effectiveness and performance of their respective HEIs (Bisbee, 2005; Kamil 2016). Moreover, as academic leaders, they are role models in accentuating the culture, mission, and adaptability of HEIs (Ramsden, 1998). Thus, they are expected to play a crucial role in sharing the vision of higher education, by aligning, motivating, inspiring, and elevating the mind-set of academics (Tahir, 2014).

However, many HEIs worldwide lack a proper process for succession planning (Klein, 2013; Spendlove, 2007), and leadership training. HEIs in the United States for instance, have poor methodical strategies for developing leadership potential (Klein, 2013). In another instance, (Spendlove, 2007) reported that HEIs in the United Kingdom were lacking a regular