

Profiles of Deanship in Malaysian Public Universities

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ABSTRACT

Today institutions of higher learning all around the globe are undergoing rapid transformation as they compete to survive in the ever changing global demands as a result of globalisation and internationalization. In such a scenario, there is a critical demand for heads of schools and faculties in higher education to establish a strong academic reputation and become sense makers of their organizations. The roles of deans as academic leaders encompass areas such as research, academia and administration. Realizing deans as pillars of academic scholarship, this study investigated the academic and scholarly leadership profiles of deans in Malaysian public universities. The study involved 348 randomly selected deans and senior academic administrative staff from nine public universities. Data was collected via questionnaire and semi structured interviews. The findings indicated that a majority of the respondents agreed that deans should have a good academic

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standing and research profile possessing at least a PhD. to act as a role model for the faculty staff. Besides that respondents indicated that research and publication should be one of the most important criteria in the selection of a dean. Results indicated that on the average, deans in Malaysia conducted at least one research project and wrote approximately 1.67 papers per year. Deans also highlighted that as academic leaders they had insufficient time to pursue their academic scholarship due to increased administrative duties; hence, they found it difficult to balance their leadership and scholarship responsibilities. More importantly this study indicated that deans as academic leaders left much to be desired.

Keywords: *KPI, deans, academic scholarship, academic leadership, management skills*

Introduction

The imposition of performance models on institutions of higher education in Malaysia has become a wide spread practice during the past few years especially after a study conducted by The Times Higher Education Supplement (THES) on the ranking of universities. The study revealed that University Malaya, the premier university of the nation dropped from the rank of 89 to 169 (New Strait Times, 20 Nov 2005) and then from 169 to 192 (The Star, Fri 6 October 2006). This surprising ranking output from the study generated uproar from the public concerning the quality of Malaysian universities (New Strait Times, 20 Nov 2005). Then, crept the issue of unemployability among local graduates. As clichéd as it may sound, and no matter how much the universities concerned may denounce these claims, the fact remains that the majority of employers decry the quality of the graduates who appear before them as potential employees, particularly in the area of soft skills (Morshidi Sirat et al., 2008; Cheong, 2005; Shuib, 2005; Ambigapathy & Suthagar, 2004).

The rising spectre of unemployed graduates and the fall in the ranking of public universities in international surveys have created some disquiet about the state of public universities (Ministry of Higher Education Report (MoHE), 2006; Navaratnam, 2006). With the current climate of uncertainty about the questionable quality of education in Malaysia, accountability, transparency and quality assurance in universities are being thoroughly scrutinized by the Higher Education Ministry and the public.

Intertwined with the advent of globalization and internationalization of higher education, the whole landscape of higher education all around the globe is witnessing waves of change that have brought about a repositioning and reengineering of higher education policies. In order to fulfill these requirements and to cope with these challenges, universities need to function as “quality engines”. There is a close and inescapable relationship between the quality engines of the university and the quality of effective and democratic governance, on the other.

Realizing that a strong foundation in higher education is critical in the development of quality human capital needed for the development of Malaysia as a developed nation come 2020, in September 2007, Malaysia launched the National Higher Education Strategy Plan (NHESP) that highlighted the transformation of higher education in Malaysia. The NHESP also highlighted strategies that have been put into place to create a higher education environment that will foster academic and institutional excellence and help Malaysia in its goal to be a regional hub for higher education. To fulfill such noble aspirations laid out, university leaders at all levels must fully understand their institutional roles and responsibilities to guide excellence among all university academia in their respective facilities (MOHE, 2007).

According to Kälve mark and van der Wende (1997), requirements and challenges related to quality concerns:

The level and content of academic and research programmes, the level and profile of graduates (especially their abilities to perform in an international and multi-cultural context), the profile of staff, the leadership, the way in which an institution is organised, its partnerships, etc. (p. 19)

At the end of the day, these requirements and challenges are for the pursuit of international recognition. Azmi (in The Star 11th March 2006) has nobly delineated five meanings of an international recognition of a university:

- Graduates who are employable, not only here but also abroad;
- Academic staff who are respected worldwide;
- Research and publications that are recognised by reputable international journals/publishers;
- An academic programme that is recognised worldwide;
- An academic atmosphere that can attract quality national and foreign students and staff.

This was echoed by the former vice chancellor of University Malaya when she said:

...to compete with the best in the world, and hence be recognised as world class, universities must establish a strong academic reputation. University leaders must therefore ensure that their institutions uphold the academic tradition to “publish or perish” and pursue excellence in teaching, learning and research (Rafiah Salim, 2007, p. 1).

One of the desired outcomes by the NHESP is to get Malaysian academics to publish regularly in recognized international high impact and refereed journals so that the profile of Malaysian universities can be seen in international university ratings and hopefully, Malaysia will be respected internationally as an education hub in the Asian region. According to the National Higher Education Action Plan (2007-2010), this can be achieved through the increased prominence of its academic research, publication and teaching endeavours (Ministry of Higher Education, 2007).

In attaining the meanings of international recognition, “governance” is required to be efficient, forward thinking, transparent and proactive. A growing body of literature demonstrates that governance structures influence the performance of public universities. In order to ensure the effectiveness and efficiency of the administration of public universities in Malaysia, those who are involved in the administration must be the right persons at the right place and at the right time.

In these viewpoints, addressing quality governance is therefore imperative in tandem with the government’s aspirations to make Malaysia a center of excellence for education. Based on the imperatives outlined by the Malaysian Higher Education Strategic Plan, the excellence of HEIs (Higher Education Institutions) lies in the hands of both leadership and the academic staff. Wolverson et al. (2001) state that “the leadership linchpin that holds an organization together lies midway between those perceived as leaders and those upon whose work the reputation of the organization rests. In universities today, academic deans fill this role” (p. 5). With these requirements and challenges, deans as institutional heads must realize their shifting importance and new roles in such challenging and changing environments. Henceforth, deans as academic leaders need to build the right culture of academic scholarship which includes uplifting the profession by providing professional training and development and training opportunities and “celebrating achievements with awards and

recognition” (Ministry of Higher Education, 2007, p. 24). To meet the expectation, deans must ensure that their faculties are in awareness of the university’s mission in terms of instruction and research.

Roles and Responsibilities of Deans

When leadership is considered as a function, it is an important dimension of management whose presence and existence depends on several skills which can be taken as methods or styles of leadership and guidance on the part of a group of people in order to achieve a certain goal (Bennett and Anderson, 2003). The multifaceted academic leadership roles of deans can succinctly be divided into three primary areas namely research, educational, and administrative, with some positions combining two or all three types (Ostendorf et al., 2005). Leadership in research can be seen as an important factor as the contribution to the academic tradition which was eloquently put by Rabiah Salim (2007), “publish or perish” (p. 1). This simply means that a dean needs to have the ability to do research, a vision of building team effort in research collaboration and creating a research culture in the faculty. Leadership in education generally deals with activities involving the teaching and learning process in enhancing quality education and innovation among the programs at the faculty. Administrative leadership includes a variety of positions that involve managing groups of various sizes and compositions such as department heads, coordinators, and academic and non-academic faculty members. The responsibilities involve hiring, issuing warning, resource allocation, alumni engagement and managing the changing and complex roles of faculty, staff and students. Administrative leadership is critically important because of the impact it has on academic program, faculty, staff, and student body

The dean, who is the highest ranking administrator of a faculty, carries a significant torch in a university. The difficulty of a dean’s multitudinous responsibilities is apparent in modern day educational settings. The dean must adhere to a set of responsibilities such as “assuming leadership responsibility, curriculum planning and development, staffing, evaluation, and budgetary administration” (Robillard, 2000 p. 4). Another listed duty is program assessment, development of partnerships among internal and external constituents, and conflict management skills (Robillard, 2000). Their roles and responsibilities have changed overtime and this was highlighted by Wolverson et al. (2001) who claim that a dean’s duties

have changed from being “almost exclusively student focused to include a multifaceted array of roles, such as budgeting and fundraising, personnel and work environment management, program oversight, and external public relations” (p. 6). These findings were somewhat echoed by deans in Universiti Teknologi MARA (UiTM) – a local public university in Malaysia. One dean said that “the challenges we are facing are understanding the administrative procedures, budget procedures, procurement, recruitment of staff, admission of students, management of the faculty and staff and the infrastructure of the faculty” (Personal conversation, 2008a). Another dean from the same university added that, “we are required to make tough decisions and to attend various meetings that acquire more than seventy percent of our time ... as academicians and leaders of faculty, we are expected to be an exemplary model on research and publication” (Personal conversation, 2008b). These sentiments are also in accordance with the findings by Griffiths and McCarthy (1980) who reported that deans felt that they were less productive in the area of personal scholarship since entering the deanship, where less than half of them were engaged in any research. The responsibilities also deprived them from pursuing personal and professional activities. The nature of academic scholarship of deanship has been affected by these “external challenges” that evolve around the academics and will continue doing so as time progresses (Bensimon & Neumann, 1993). With the statement remark of “publish or you perish” among academician and the multifaceted task in administering the faculty, are they supposed to lead the academic scholarship or the academic administration of the faculty?

In the current scenario, the job descriptions of a dean are usually derived from their predecessors and are usually designed without any clear understanding of what someone in that position will be required to do or what criteria or skills he or she will need to possess to carry out the responsibilities. From the statements above, it is clear that the role of the academic dean is one that is multifaceted, challenging and often ambiguous in an ever changing paradigm in higher education in today’s setting. They, without doubt, form the pillars of institutions of higher learning and are often given the responsibilities in directing the institution to the desired goals and direction especially in enhancing the environment of academic scholarship in their faculty. With this in mind, the authors seek to provide an accurate picture of the profiles of deans in public universities in Malaysia especially in terms of their academic standing, research endeavours, and management skills.

The Study

Strong scholarly credentials are significant achievements that distinguish the deans from the subordinates. As the torch bearer of the faculty, they play a crucial role in developing research activities among faculty members, strengthening the faculty's and university's research link and improving research competitiveness to support quality developments in the educational programmes of a university. Measuring the quantity and the quality of a dean's academic background, research activity and management skills is an appropriate exercise in order to address the intellectual impact of the faculties. While it is impossible to come up with a single metric that adequately measures all aspects of the multitask activities of a dean, it is possible to use multiple measures in an attempt to capture different dimensions of the academic scholarship process. Three areas of scholarly outputs discussed in this tightly constrained space are on research and publication, background information and management skills.

This study was conducted to investigate the academic and scholarly leadership profiles of deans in Malaysian public universities. We embarked on a mission to gauge a snapshot view of deans and senior academic administrative staff of nine public universities in Malaysia on the ideal criteria of selecting deans, their KPIs, roles and responsibilities and the adequacy of their academic and leadership qualities.

Methodology

This research utilized both quantitative and qualitative approaches. A questionnaire and semi-structured interviews were administered on two groups of respondents namely Deans and Senior Academic Administrative Staff such as Deputy Deans, Heads of Department and Programme Coordinators. A total sample of 348 randomly selected respondents from nine (9) public universities in Malaysia was involved in this study. Out of these 348 respondents, 72 were Deans while the remaining 276 consisted of Senior Administrative Faculty members. Two sets of questionnaires (based on a 4-point Likert scale), Set A and Set B, were constructed for the two groups of respondents. Set A was for Deanship whilst Set B was for Senior Academic Administrative Faculty Staff.

The questionnaire consisted of the following seven (7) sections:

- Demographic Background
- Teaching and Supervision
- Benchmarking Activities
- Internationalization
- Research and Publication
- Management Skills
- Characteristics of Deanship

The semi-structured interview guide consisted of three main sections, i.e. the Key Performance Indicators for Deanship, the characteristics of deanship and the selection of Deans. A total of 13 deans which account for 18% of the total population sample were interviewed. The interview protocols were transcribed and analyzed qualitatively to triangulate quantitative data collected from the 348 respondents.

Demographic Data

The demographic data indicated that from the 72 deans, a total 76.4% were males whilst the remaining 23.6% were females. On the other hand, the Senior Academic Administrative Staff (n = 276) comprised of 64.5% males and 35.5% females. Given below are other relevant demographic data pertinent to the respondents involved in this study.

The results in Table 1 indicated that on an average, the current Deans had working experience in various administrative posts before they became deans. On the average, a Dean had approximately 5.7 years of working experience as a Department Head / Coordinator and an estimated 3.3 years as a Deputy Dean before moving on to their current position. A similar trend was also observed in the second group of respondents. Results exhibited that they had an average working experience of 3.8 years as a Department Head, 3.5 years as a Programme Coordinator and 3.3 years as a Deputy Dean.

Table 2 shows that both the Deans and the Senior Academic Administrative Staff had academic working experience at the tertiary level for approximately a total of 16.9 years and 13.3 years respectively.

Table 1: Demographic Data of Respondents

Average Age of Respondents	Deans	Ethnicity	Highest Qualification	Average Working Experience (in years)
Deans				
Below 40 years = 5.6%	Malays = 95.8%	PhD = 88.9%	Dean = 3.8	
40 – 45 years = 22.8%	Chinese = 1.4%	Masters = 11.1%	Dep. Dean = 3.3	
46 – 49 years = 40.3%	Indians = 1.4%		Dept. Head = 5.7	
Above 50 years = 31.9%	Others = 1.4%			
Senior Academic Administrative Staff				
Below 40 years = 29.7%	Malays = 88.7%	PhD = 76.7%	Dep. Dean = 3.3	
40 – 45 years = 24.6%	Chinese = 3.6%	Masters = 23.3%	Coordinator = 3.5	
46 – 49 years = 28.3%	Indians = 2.6%		Dept. Head = 3.8	
Above 50 years = 17.4%	Others = 5.9%			

Table 2: Working Experience at Tertiary Level

Respondents	Experience as Lecturers
Deans	16.9 Years
Senior Academic Administrative Staff	13.3 Years

Findings

The first aspect investigated was the academic standing of deans in their respective institutions of higher learning. Deans as faculty heads are expected to have an academic standing in the faculty as a role model for others to emulate. This stance was strongly agreed by both groups of the study, i.e. the deans (94.3%) and the senior administrative team comprising of deputy deans and heads of departments (97.4%). The results are displayed in Table 3 below.

This was further reiterated by a number of respondents in the interview sessions. For instance, a deputy dean from the University of Science Malaysia (USM) highlighted that all academic administrators must “maintain their research activities and if possible write on the average one to two articles every year”. This was also agreed upon by another Dean from the faculty of science in USM who added that one’s accomplishments in “both research and publication should be one of the most important criteria” in the selection of a dean. A dean from Universiti

Table 3: Academic Standing of Deans

Item	Deans		Deputy Deans & Heads of Department	
	Agree (%)	Disagree (%)	Agree (%)	Disagree (%)
A Dean should have sufficient academic standing and research profile to act as a role model for the faculty staff	94.3	5.7	97.4	2.6

Malaysia Sabah (UMS) pointed out that deans should continue conducting scholarly activities to upgrade their scholarship so that they can be role models for their subordinates. His colleague added that it was also important to take into consideration that those academicians chosen as deans should have publications in international refereed journals and have the ability to secure research grants from both local and international bodies. A rather similar stance was also adopted by another dean from Universiti Malaysia Sarawak (UNIMAS) who emphasized that besides research and publications, a dean should also be a good role model in teaching. She also added that the chosen person should also have some experience in administration. Only then will the person look “credible in the eyes of his staff, so choose someone who is a researcher and a good teacher”. On the other hand, a dean from Universiti Teknologi MARA (UiTM) in Shah Alam drew attention to the fact that research and publication alone should not be the one and only criteria because he felt that deans who were too engrossed in such academic activities were “often rather individualistic people who liked working on their own and had little time for administrative duties”. Therefore, he felt a balance should be maintained and stressed that management qualities like effective communication skills and decision making abilities were equally important in deanship.

Research Endeavours

The study also investigated the research endeavours of current deans in Malaysian public universities. The following section provides both quantitative and qualitative snapshots of the research activities of the deans during the past three years (2005 to 2007). The measures of

research activity utilized included quantifying the number of research projects completed, collaborative research projects undertaken, and consultancy activities. The results are presented in Table 4.

Table 4: Quantity and Quality of Research

Items	Mean	SD	Median
Number of Research Projects completed during the past 3 years	4.65	3.93	3.0
Number of National Collaborative research projects completed during the past 3 years	3.00	4.08	1.00
Number of International Collaborative research projects completed during the past 3 years	1.82	2.17	1.00
Number of National Consultancy projects obtained during the past 3 years	3.03	2.23	3.00
Number of National Consultancy projects completed during the past 3 years	2.88	1.90	2.00
Number of International Consultancy projects obtained during the past 3 years	1.46	0.52	1.00
Number of International Consultancy projects completed during the past 3 years	1.56	1.01	1.00

Data analysis indicated that the data obtained for these items in Table 4 was skewed. In view of this, both the central location value of mean and median is provided for interpretation of the results. Due to the data being skewed, the descriptive measure of median score will be used in discussing the findings. Results indicated that the average number of research projects completed during the past 3 years is 3 for each dean. This simply means that they have an average of one research per year. The average number of national and international collaborative research projects completed during the past 3 years stood at 1 for each category. In terms of National Consultancy projects obtained and completed during the past 3 years, they were 3 and 2 respectively. The data also revealed that the number of International Consultancy projects obtained and completed during the same period was 1 for each category.

Publications

The following section gives an overview of the deans' scholarly publications output for the past 3 years. A useful byproduct of the

measurement quantity for publication was the generation of a list of papers published in both local and international journals, number of books, monographs, chapters in books and paper presentations. The findings are displayed in Table 5 below.

Table 5: Quantity and Quality of Publications

No	Items	Mean	SD	Median
1	Number of papers published in local refereed journals for the past 3 years	3.81	2.70	3.0
2	Number of papers published in international refereed journals for the past 3 years	3.70	2.77	2.0
3	Number of books published in related field with national/local publishers for the past 3 years	3.16	3.74	1.0
4	Number of books published in related field with international publishers for the past 3 years	1.70	1.06	1.0
5	Number of monographs published in related field for the past 3 years	2.17	1.64	1.0
6	Number of chapters in books published in related field for the past 3 years	3.59	2.80	2.0
7	Number of papers presented at National conferences during the past 3 years	7.54	5.26	6.0
8	Number of papers presented at International conferences during the past 3 years	5.52	3.61	5.0

The numbers of papers published in both local and international refereed journals in the past 3 years were 3 and 2 respectively. This indicated that on the average, a dean was able to write 1.67 papers per year. Looking into the publication of books with local and international publishers, the data indicated that there was one book for each category for the last 3 years. In terms of monographs and chapters in books, results indicated that deans were able to publish 1 monograph and 2 chapters during the last 3 years. An average number of 11 papers were presented at national and international conferences with 6 in the former and 5 in the latter category.

Interview sessions carried out with deans indicated that a large majority of them felt that they were less productive in the area of personal scholarship since their appointment as deans of their faculties. They acknowledged the fact that they hardly had time to engage in any scholarship work when compared to their research and publication activities prior to holding the post. A majority of the respondents in this

study posed the question, “Are deans supposed to lead the academic scholarship or the academic administration of the faculty?”

A dean from UNIMAS highlighted that being a dean “restricts me from pursuing my personal academic scholarship activities” and he went on to state that “I became a dean because of my success in scholarship work but now because of all these meetings and management issues, I am being sidelined from my research community ... there needs to be a clear guideline on the balance between academic scholarship and administrative responsibilities”. Another respondent from UiTM stated that “maybe the position of the dean should only be awarded to professors because they have reached a certain standard of scholarship work and in this case they can focus more on administrative responsibilities”.

Academic and Professional Qualification of Deans

Another aspect examined in this study was respondents’ views on the criteria used in selecting a Dean. For this, the respondents were asked to indicate their level of agreement based on a 4-point Likert scale ranging from 1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Agree and 4 = Strongly Disagree. The data from this 4-point scale was further condensed into 2 dichotomous categories, namely agree and disagree. The results are displayed in Table 6 given below.

Table 6: Perception on Academic Ranks of Deans

Item	Deans		Deputy Deans & Heads of Department	
	Agree (%)	Disagree (%)	Agree (%)	Disagree (%)
The academic qualification for a Deanship should be Doctor of Philosophy	85.9	14.1	87.5	12.5
The professional requirement for Deanship should be a Professor	74.7	25.3	70.7	29.3

The results indicated that both these groups of respondents had a rather similar stance on all the questions posed. More than 85% of the respondents felt that a Dean should possess a Doctorate degree and more than 70% of them agreed that the professional qualification for Deanship should be a professor.

Through the interviews, respondents were asked whether the professional requirement for deanship should be raised to that of a professor. A number of mixed responses were received. According to a dean from UiTM who is also a Professor, it would be good if a dean is a professor because then, he would not be seen as competing with his colleagues. He pointed out that in the current situation when a dean is not a professor, everything that a dean does is looked upon suspiciously by his subordinates. In fact every move is seen “as a means of paving his way to advance his own career and making his CV look good”. On the other hand, “if the dean were a professor, he would have the time to serve his ‘*rakyat*’ (meaning people) and his colleagues would not look upon his every move with suspicion”. This professor highlighted that as a dean and a professor, he did not need anything more as he had achieved his ambition and now it was ‘time to help others.’

Similar sentiments were also echoed by a few other respondents. For instance, a dean from UNIMAS felt that professors as deans would not only provide a good image to the faculty but more importantly, portray a good public image of academics leading faculties in higher institutions. He however stressed that “it should not be the main criteria”. A dean from UMS also added that having a professor as a dean “helps to build the image and having a dean with a strong research background, publication, are all in line with the government’s vision of having excellent academia leading local public universities”.

Nevertheless, a dean from Universiti Utara Malaysia (UUM) felt that it is not necessary for faculties to be headed by professors because based on his experience “some professors can be very, very bad managers”. He elaborated, “I’m not saying this because I’m not a professor. I’ve seen a lot of professors who have messed things up so badly that the whole faculty’s spirit goes down”. He added that being a dean also means having people skills and a dean requires both; who is a good scholar and skillful in managing people. His opinion was also shared by another dean from UUM who felt that it is not necessary that faculties have to be headed by professors. She highlighted that deans just require a minimum experience in management, and be of “some standard of academic scholarship’ and is knowledgeable and aware of the need to develop quality human capital. She added that a dean could be an Associate Professor and what was more important possessed the “maturity to take on the role”.

Table 7 details the current numbers of deans in Malaysian universities with the academic rank of a professor.

Table 7: Deans Qualifications in Accordance with Universities in Malaysia

Universities	Professorship	
	Yes	No
Universiti Teknologi MARA	6 (26.1%)	17 (73.9%)
Universiti Malaya	11 (91.7%)	1 (8.33%)
Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia	10 (90.0%)	1 (9.1%)
Universiti Putra Malaysia	10 (66.7%)	5 (33.3%)
Universiti Sains Malaysia	8 (33.3%)	16 (66.7%)
Universiti Utara Malaysia	1 (8.3%)	11 (91.7%)
Universiti Teknologi Malaysia	7 (77.8%)	2 (22.2%)
Universiti Malaysia Sarawak	5 (41.7%)	7 (68.3%)
Universiti Perguruan Sultan Idris	1 (14.3%)	6 (85.7%)
Universiti Malaysia Sabah	2 (18.2%)	9 (81.8%)
Universiti Islam Antarabangsa	7 (68.3%)	5 (41.7%)

*Webometric search in 2008

The results indicated that the majority of the deans of the research universities in Malaysia namely Universiti Malaya (91.7%), Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia (90.0%), Universiti Putra Malaysia (66.7%) with the exception of Universiti Teknologi Malaysia (77.8%) have a higher percentage of deans with professorship as compared with other universities. It is also interesting to note that recent established universities like UiTM, UMS, UNIMAS and UPSI are also slowly following the trend towards having qualified academics like professors as Deans to lead their various faculties. This perhaps lends to the notion that having qualified academics with established credentials in academic scholarship is the way forward for Malaysian public universities if they hope to make an impact as a regional hub of higher education in the Asian region.

Key Performance Indicators for Deanship

Based on readings from the literature on effective deanship, five main key performances indicators (KPIs) were identified and the respondents were asked to give a weightage for these KPIs. The results are presented in Table 8 below.

The findings indicated that the weightage in terms of importance given to all the five components was rather similar for both groups of respondents. From the mean of both these groups, the data revealed that they gave a weightage of 30.7% to Academic Leadership which was

Table 8: Weightage for Key Performance Indicators for Deanship

No.	Items	Deans		Deputy Dean & Heads of Programme		Average Mean (%)	Rank
		Mean (%)	SD	Mean (%)	SD		
1	Academic Leadership (Teaching and Supervision)	32.5	12.5	29.0	11.7	30.7	1
2	Academic Scholarship (Research & Publications)	24.8	9.7	26.3	11.5	25.6	2
3	Internationalization (Networking & Linkages)	14.1	7.5	15.9	11.0	15.0	3
4	Academic Economics (Financial Management)	14.7	7.5	14.8	7.6	14.7	4
5	Academic Enterprise (Income Generation)	13.9	7.3	14.0	7.1	14.0	5

viewed as the most important KPI for deanship. This was followed by a weightage of 25.6% to Academic Scholarship, 15% to Internationalization, 14.7% to Academic Economics and 14% to Academic Enterprise.

Data obtained from interviews protocols on key performance indicators for deanship indicated similar findings. A large majority from the qualitative sample viewed the following as the five (5) main KPIs:

- Research
- Publications
- Internationalization / Networking & Linkages
- Teaching & Supervision
- Leadership

The KPI of research and publication as viewed by the qualitative samples can be categorized as academic scholarship as stated in the quantitative data analysis. Similarly, teaching and supervision from the qualitative analysis can be categorized as academic leadership from the quantitative analysis. The qualitative analysis also revealed Internationalization and Leadership as a KPI. However, the latter was not viewed as a KPI in the quantitative data. In lieu of this, Academic Enterprise and Academic Economics were not seen as KPIs for effective deanship by the respondents. A large majority of those interviewed felt

that these two components could be handled by the administrative staff such as the assistant registrar at their respective faculties.

Leadership (Management) Skills

The dean's leadership is often seen as significant to the success and performance of a faculty. Effective deans should work towards getting the vision and mission of their faculty accomplished through inspiring and influencing their staff to share the vision and mission of the university. The common characteristic of an academic leader is the ability to inspire and stimulate others to achieve worthwhile goals. Literature (e.g. Wolverson et al., 2001; Bennett and Anderson, 2003; Robillard, 2000) indicates that a good leader must not only be able to lead through their scholarship advances but more importantly, must possess the skills needed for effective management.

Management skills are seen as an important indicator for an effective dean. The questionnaire used in this study required respondents (deans and deputy deans and heads of department) to rank the importance of key management skills identified from literature as the important indicator for an effective dean. The skills that were identified from the literature are shown in Table 9.

Results indicated that the ranking provided by both groups of respondents were identical. Both groups ranked decision-making skills as the most critical skill needed from the given list. This was followed by communication skills, problem-solving skills, interpersonal skills, public relations skills, negotiation skills, networking skills and finally, ICT skills.

Table 9: Ranking of Management Skills Required for Effective Deanship

No	Items	Deans		Deputy Deans & Heads of Department	
		%	Frequency	%	Frequency
1	Decision Making Skills	38.9	26	39.3	90
2	Communication Skills	20.9	14	18.3	42
3	Problem Solving Skills	14.9	10	12.2	28
4	Interpersonal Skills	10.4	7	10.5	24
5	Public Relations Skills	6.0	4	9.6	22
6	Negotiation Skills	5.9	4	3.9	9
7	Networking Skills	3.0	2	3.9	9
8	ICT Skills	-	-	2.3	5

In other words, they opined that decision making skills and problem solving skills were the top two most important management skills required to be an effective dean while networking skills and ICT skills were the least most important skills.

Deans' Self Evaluation in Various Aspects of Management

Further questions were posed to deans as to how they rated themselves in a number of important criteria for effective deanship such as management skills, leadership, management, financial management and human resource. They rated their ability based on a 5-point Likert scale of 1= Very poor, 2 = Poor, 3 = Average, 4 = Good, 5 = Excellent. The data from this 5-point scale was further condensed into 2 dichotomous categories where the scales of 1, 2 and 3 were categorized as average while the scales of 4 and 5 were categorized as good. The rationale behind this categorization is due to the fact that only a negligible number of respondents ranked themselves on a scale of 2 (poor) and none of them ranked on a scale of 1 (very poor). The results of the respondents' feedback which is presented in percentage scores are displayed in the respective tables (Table 10 to Table 14) given below. The discussion of the findings is based on the premise that a percentage score of 80 and above is considered as being competent in the respective aspect of management.

Table 10: Dean's Ability in Management Skills

No	Items	Average (%)	Good (%)
1	Management Skills		
a	Communication Skills	17.1	82.9
b	Public Relations Skills	18.6	81.4
c	Negotiation Skills	20.0	80.0
d	Interpersonal Skills	14.3	85.7
e	Networking Skills	40.0	60.0
f	ICT Skills	52.9	47.1
g	Problem Solving Skills	11.4	88.6
h	Decision making Skills	15.7	84.3

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With regards to the eight items posed under the category of Management Skills (as in Table 10), respondents indicated low confidence in 3 items, i.e. ICT Skills, Networking skills and Negotiation skills. From the data, it can be concluded that approximately 50% of the deans lacked confidence in ICT Skills and Networking Skills.

Table 11: Dean's Ability in Leadership

No	Items	Average (%)	Good (%)
2	Leadership		
a	Academic Leadership (Teaching & Learning)	8.6	91.4
b	Scholarship Leadership (Research & Publication)	24.3	75.7
c	Visionary Leadership	14.3	85.7

In terms of leadership (as in Table 11), three items were posed. The deans showed great confidence in Academic Leadership (91.4%) and Visionary Leadership (85.7%). However, they showed a comparatively lower level of confidence in scholarship leadership which encompasses research and publications (75.7%).

Table 12: Dean's Ability in Management

No	Items	Average (%)	Good (%)
3	Management		
a	Managing Change	15.7	84.3
b	Managing Diversity	18.6	81.4
c	Managing Crisis	18.6	81.4
d	Managing Risk	25.7	74.3

Under the category of management (as in Table 12), four items were posed and the data revealed that the deans possessed more than 80% confidence level at managing change, managing diversity and managing crisis. Nevertheless, approximately 26% of them exhibited only an average level of confidence in Risk Management.

In Financial Management as shown in Table 13, three items were asked. Findings showed that the respondents had a lack of confidence in all three aspects, i.e. Budget Planning, Budget Development and Budget Management. Nearly 45% of them showed a lack of confidence in Budget

Table 13: Dean's Ability in Financial Management

No	Items	Average (%)	Good (%)
4	Financial Management		
a	Budget Planning	22.9	77.1
b	Budget Development (capacity to generate income)	44.9	55.1
c	Budget Management	25.7	74.3

Table 14: Dean's Ability in Human Resource

No	Items	Average (%)	Good (%)
5	Human Resource		
a	Recruitment of Quality Staff	20.3	79.7
b	Professional Development of staff	20.0	80.0
c	Staff Appraisal	22.9	77.1
d	Recruitment of International Teaching Staff	52.2	47.8

Development which included an important aspect of Deanship, i.e. Income Generation.

A similar lack of confidence was also seen in the category of Human Resource Development (Table 14). This perspective includes recruitment of quality staff, professional development of staff, staff appraisal and recruitment of international teaching staff. More than 50% of them revealed a lack of confidence in the recruitment of international teaching staff.

Conclusion

This study embarked on a mission to gauge a snapshot view of deans and senior academic administrative staff of nine public universities in Malaysia on the criteria for selecting deans, their KPIs, their roles and responsibilities and the adequacy of their academic and leadership qualities. It utilized both quantitative and qualitative methodologies in gauging the opinions of 72 deans and 276 Senior Academic Administrative Staff which comprised deputy deans, head of programs and coordinators. The findings of this study are as follow:

Firstly, findings revealed that deans in this study possessed an academic working experience of approximately 16.9 years at the tertiary

level before being appointed as a dean. These deans also had held various academic administrative posts such as Head of Department/ Programme Coordinator for approximately 5.7 years and Deputy Deans for 3.3 years. On the other hand, the Senior Academic Administrative Staff held the position of Heads of Department and Coordinators for 3.8 and 3.5 years respectively before moving on to the position of Deputy Dean. Hence, it is recommended that the appointment of a Dean should take into consideration the years of service as a lecturer and the years of service in academic administrative positions.

Secondly, more than 85% of the respondents felt that a dean should possess a doctorate degree and more than 70% of them agreed that the professional qualification for Deanship should be a professor. Thus, it is strongly recommended that academic leaders spearheading faculties should be professors.

Thirdly, in terms of their scholarship production, the numbers of papers published in local and international refereed journals are three and two respectively for the past three years. This indicates that on average, a dean is able to write approximately 1.67 papers per year. It is recommended that Deans should have at least two refereed publications in a year and should strive to be involved in at least one national and one international research project per year.

Fourthly, readings from literature indicated that the five main Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) for effective Deanship are Academic Leadership (Teaching and Supervision), Academic Scholarship (Research & Publications), Internationalization (Networking & Linkages), Academic Economics (Financial Management) and Academic Enterprise (Income Generation). Respondents in this study gave the highest weightage (30.7%) to Academic Leadership. This was followed by a weightage of 25.6% to Academic Scholarship, 15% to Internationalization, 14.7% to Academic Economics and 14% to Academic Enterprise.

Finally, the study indicates that in terms of their management skills, they need to work on their networking skills, ICT skills, Budget Development (capacity to generate income) and Recruitment of International Teaching Staff. It is recommended that these skills be emphasized by the universities through their staff development programs.

As stated in the early part of this paper, the nature of academic deanship has been affected by the external changes that evolve around the academic and will continue doing so as time progresses (Bensimon & Neumann, 1993). They were selected based on their academic profiles but were now required to manage the faculty and at the same time be

active in their scholarly production. Though they are competent in the latter, they do faced difficulties in the former and the university ought to play a major role in helping deans become more effective and adaptive managers.

The imperatives outlined in the National Higher Education Action Plan (2007) under the institutional pillars of leadership and university academia highlight that deans must be individuals of impeccable academic credentials with credible research profiles so that they can be role models to their subordinates. The role of efficient or grand planning plays an important role in the running of the faculty. Having a plan is one thing but implementing it is another. For Rafiah Salim (2007), how the plan is to be implemented must be addressed and monitored. “A fish rots from the head”, she notes. “A leader makes or breaks an organisation. If you don’t have the right leadership, your organisation will collapse”, she adds. Effective leadership, in other words, is fundamental to strategic higher education outcomes (p. 2).

The results of this study however indicated that such a demand is perhaps at the moment a very challenging task for most deans in Malaysian public universities. The results revealed that the deans have insufficient time to stay current in their scholarship work or make progress in their academic career and often find it difficult to balance their leadership and scholarship responsibilities. Furthermore, deans have little time to engage in the kind of research that commands disciplinary respect. Nevertheless, they still perceived that academic scholarship criteria required them to continue publishing in order to sustain the respect and credibility as head of the faculty in general and research community in particular. These low levels of scholarship activities are definitely not an appropriate exercise if one wishes to address the academic intellectual impact on faculty members.

There is no doubt that the respondents faced great challenge in balancing their time between their academic scholarship (which they have shown their prowess) and their new role such as management skills, budget development, budget management, networking skills, ICT skills, managing risks and recruitment of teaching staff especially international staff. They are required to make tough decisions, manage change, manage risk and attend meetings after meetings that acquire a major portion of their time. At the same time as academicians and leaders of faculty, they are expected to be an exemplary models to their fellow faculty members in research and publication. To do their job effectively as opined by McAllaster (2006), deans must influence many activities of

which they do not have direct control. They must rely on cooperation and persuasion of others to meet responsibilities that come with diffused authority, if any.

Prior research done by Griffiths and McCarthy (1980) reported that Deans felt that they were less productive in the area of personal scholarship since entering the Deanship, where less than half of them were engaged in any research and after 29 years, this scenario is somewhat similar to our Malaysia settings. The responsibilities also deprived them from pursuing personal and professional activities. The present statistics in this study show that the percentage of Dean's involvement in research and publication is very small in number. This has an impact on the academic scholarship and academic leadership of the deans.

Nevertheless, it cannot be denied that being deans, both academic and scholarly leadership qualities are of utmost importance and it is essential for deans to have the required knowledge base, skills and abilities to perform effectively in this demanding role. Some of the best attributes a dean can possess are the constant thirst for knowledge, commitment to lifelong learning, and the courage to embrace change in the ever-evolving world of higher education (Findlen, 2000). As such, they must strive to do their best to be role models to their subordinates and win the respect of the academia in their institutions. These chosen leaders must be able to garner the support of their academia through a shared vision and mission so that together they can develop an excellent culture in teaching, learning, research and publication in their respective faculty.

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