A CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK: MANAGERIAL DECISION MAKING STYLES AND ORGANIZATIONAL EFFECTIVENESS AMONG DEANS OF MALAYSIAN PUBLIC UNIVERSITIES

Leele Susana Jamian, Gurnam Kaur Sidhu, and Parmjit Singh Aperapar

Abstract

Scholars in the area of management agree that decision making is both central and fundamental to any organization. This is because the quality of decisions made would influence the effectiveness of the managers and consequently, affect the success of the whole organization. Indeed, this also happens in the educational management setting. Drawing from an ongoing doctoral research which looked at the relationship between managerial decision making styles and organizational effectiveness among deans of Malaysian public universities, this article discusses the formulation of a conceptual framework. The framework put forward in this paper is based on both literature and a study investigating the relationship between managerial decision making styles and organizational effectiveness among deans of Malaysian public universities. Second, the paper also attempts to discuss the possible research issues that could justify the development of the conceptual framework of the topic. Literature reveals that there are potential links pointing to the relationships between the variables. However, as to date there is little empirical scholarly research conducted in the educational management and leadership setting concerning the variables discussed in this study.

Keywords: Decision making styles, decision making skills, organizational effectiveness, deans.

Introduction

Decision making is always central to any organisation. Numerous scholars in the area of management agree that decision making is one of the most pivotal elements in the administration of any organizations (Alqarni, 2003). In the same vein, Jones (2005) advocated that decision and its process are fundamental to all leadership and management processes. In the field of management, Drucker (with Maciariello, 2008) has placed decision making as the highest skill to be understood and acquired by managers. This is because decisions made have a significant impact on the performance of an organisation. Similarly, from the

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educational management perspective, decision making is seen as a major responsibility of all the academic administrators. In fact, it is a sine quo non of all formal educational administration since educational organisations are basically decision-making structured entities (Hoy and Miskel, 2007).

Thus, this paper aims to present a discussion on the formulation of a conceptual framework based on both literature and an on-going doctoral study investigating the relationship between managerial decision making styles and the multi dimensions of organizational effectiveness, among deans of Malaysian public universities. Secondly, it also aims to present discussion on the possible research problems that could justify the development of the conceptual framework of the topic. Nonetheless, literature reveals that there are potential links pointing to the relationship between these two variables. However, as to date there is little empirical scholarly research conducted pertaining to the topic in the area of educational administration, management and leadership setting especially among deans in Malaysian public universities. Along with the aims, three key words and definitions such as framework, concept and theory are presented below in order to facilitate understanding on the formulation of this concept paper.

Leadership and Decision Making

Numerous theories and explanations on leadership have been developed in order to investigate leadership effectiveness (Dubrin, Dalgish and Miller, 2006). Boulgarides and Cohen (2001) disclose that leadership style is defined as a consistency in pattern of behaviour showed by a leader over a period of time. Along with many researchers, they claimed leadership styles seem to be optimal depending on the situation. Similarly, a framework for understanding leadership by Robbin (1997) extends the model of situational perspective that leads to the leadership effectiveness study. According to him, leadership effectiveness is referred to obtaining desirable outcomes such as productivity, quality and satisfaction in a given situation. Nonetheless, he emphasizes whether or not a leader is effective would depend on key variables such as leader characteristics and traits, leader behaviours and style, group member characteristics, and both the internal and external environment. In light of the leadership study, Boulgarides and Cohen (2001) revealed in their study that the leadership style can be reflected and measured by using ones' decision making.

Harris (1998) defines decision making as a study of "identifying and choosing alternatives based on the values and preferences of the decision maker". Decision making implies some alternatives choices that need to be considered. In this situation, Harris clarifies that a person may not only want to identify as many alternatives as possible but above all, to choose the one best fits the specified goals, desires, lifestyles, values and so on. Secondly, decision making is defined by looking into the process itself. Harris (1998)

mentioned that decision making is the "process of sufficiently reducing uncertainty and doubt about alternatives to allow a reasonable choice to be made from among them." According to him, decision making emphasizes the information gathering function. It is where uncertainty is reduced rather than eliminated. In addition, very few decisions are made with "absolute certainty because complete knowledge about all the alternatives is seldom possible. Thus, every decision involves a certain amount of risk".

Goodman, Fandt, Michlitsch and Lewis (2006) state in their book entitled *Management - Challenges for Tomorrow's Leaders* that decision making is a process through which managers or leaders identify and resolve problems and capitalize on opportunities. Good decision making is paramount at all levels in organization. It starts with recognition of problems and opportunities and eventually concludes with assessment of the results of actions taken to solve those problems. A problem emerges when some aspect of organizational performance is less than desirable. When an unsatisfactory result occurs, a successful manager will both recognize the problem and search for solutions.

Based on the literature mentioned above it is important to note that many scholars in the area of leadership had conducted research on leader effectiveness by measuring one's decision style by using specific instrument. Nonetheless, scholars in the area of leadership always believe that rigour empirical researches on leadership need to be carried out in order to investigate academic excellence in the academic organisations. Zairi (2009) the writers of a book entitled the *Total Transformational Thinking in Academic Leadership - A New DNA* asserted that a new DNA is required in becoming a leader in the academic environment. They defend that it is crucial to understand what the key attributes of an effective leader in an academic setting. Figure 1 below illustrates the model of Becoming a Leader in an Academic Environment – the new DNA, put forward by Zairi (2008, cited in Zairi 2009). Based on the model below, Institutes of Higher Education (hereafter IHE) need to conduct investigation and determine the individual capacity as in "Who are they?" since this information would help to build the leadership of the academic leaders. In addition, other aspects of leaders are also included as part of the new DNA in search of the transformational leaders particularly in the era of 21st century such "Mainroad" or constancy of purpose, "Catalyst" or drivers of change, "Farmers" or distinctive culture and may other leadership aspects. As far as this paper is concerned, the conceptual framework developed for this paper focuses on the leadership style that is reflected in the deans' managerial decision styles. Hence, the introduction to decision making above is included in order to provide some perspectives of what decision making is all about.

The Significance of Decision Making
Why do many scholars think decision making is essential? Drucker, (1967, as cited in Harrison, 1999) emphasized what determines an effective organization will always fall back to an effective leader who is also an effective decision maker. Leonard, Scholl and Kowalski (1999) agreed that decision making is the fundamental function in any organizations. This is because the quality of decisions made would influence the effectiveness of the managers and consequently, affects the success of the whole organization. Similarly, Hammond (1999) advocated that the success in all the roles orchestrated by a manager in an organisation reflects the decisions that he or she made. Further, Rue and Byars (2000) stated that a manager must first be a good decision maker before he or she could be a good planner, organizer, staffer, leader, and controller (regardless in any organization). However, Jones (2005) emphasized that decision making is seen as one of the important competency components in leadership. He noted, both decisions and the process of decision-making are explicitly "fundamental to all leadership and management processes".
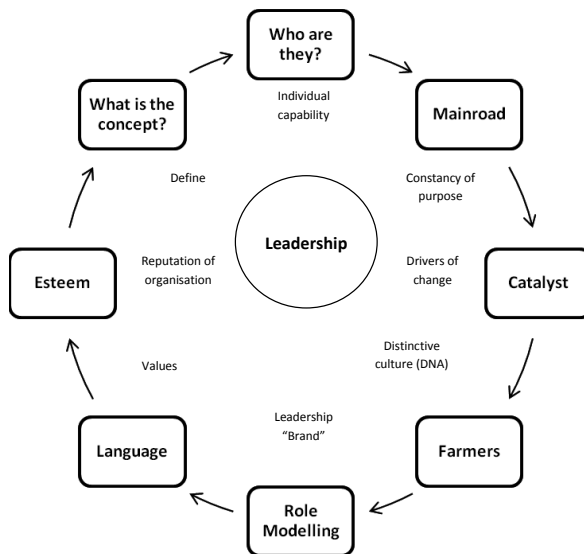

Figure 1:
Becoming a Leader in an Academic Environment – The New DNA
Zairi, ECTQM (2008, cited in Zairi, 2009)

Decision Making Styles
Rowe and Boulgarides (1992) affirmed that there is a need to measure decision making styles since "individual's decision styles form the backbone of effective decision making". Apart

from this, both scholars declared that investigation on leadership would include the study on decision making styles since how one's style relates to another's can be regarded as a person-to-person relationship or a manager-to-a-group relationship.

Drucker (1966, as cited in Rowe and Boulgarides, 1992) pointed out that effective executives concentrate only on essential matters that they do not actually "make a great many decisions". A few crucial decisions which impart the highest level of understanding, consistency in a situation, strategic and generic rather than problem solving are the criteria needed in a decision maker. Above all, the notion of style flexibility has the dominant effect rather than one best style only since a flexible style can be matched to suit the change in a specific situation, thus improving its effectiveness. Further, decision making styles help to probe the psychological structure of the mind and also they could clearly display how an individual thinks differently based on his or her perception and values. In addition to the above, decisions are built within ones' "unique frame of reference or psychological set of each individual" (Rowe and Boulgarides, 1992) and this would transcend their subjective reality.

Specifically, the decision making styles inventory that has been employed in the proposed study is based on four driving forces and situation confronting the decision-makers developed by Rowe and Boulgarides (1992). The scores derived from the inventory categorized a decision maker into four basic decision styles namely; directive, behavioural, analytical and conceptual. Having to measure an individual's style pattern is pivotal since this would predict how one will react to various situations. In an absolute sense, decision styles are the tabulated scores that one receives after answering a set of questions in the decision making styles inventory. However in a relative sense, decision style inventory is the "way" where style is utilized based on decision making situations. Based on these scholars, effective decision-makers are the ones whose style matches the requirements of the decision situations. In other words, decision style is referred as "the way in which a manager perceives information and mentally process that information to arrive at decisions" (pg. 28).

With this understanding, managerial decision making styles are seen as an important variable to be measured since this would reveal implication as to whether academic managers do have considerable flexibility or rigidity in changing their decision making styles based on situation warrants (Rowe and Boulgarides, 1992). Figure 2 shows the decision making style model which has two components such as cognitive complexity and values orientations. The lower half of figure 2 indicates the directive and behavioural styles prefer structure and the upper half prefer complexity. The cognitive complexity dimension separates the upper and the lower half as well as distinguishes managers from leaders (Zaleznick, 1970 as cited in Rowe and Boulgarides,

1992). Based on the figure too, the value dimensions separate the left and right halves and cover the task and people dimensions. The left half of the figure indicates the analytic and directive styles that prefer task. However, on the right half indicates the conceptual and behavioural styles that prefer people.
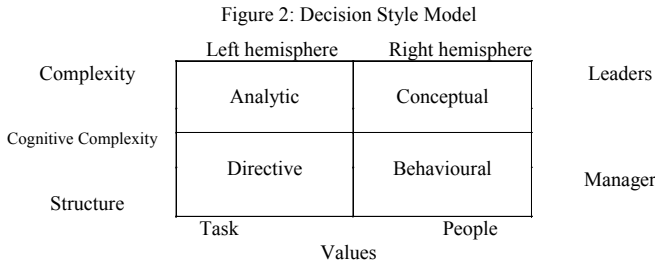
Figure 2: Decision Style Model

Figure 2. Decision Style Model

Further details of the four decision making styles postulated by Rowe and Boulgarides (1992) are as below.

Directive Style - This decision style is characterized by autocratic and internal orientation. Individuals with this style have low tolerance for ambiguity and low cognitive complexity. The focus is on technical decisions which involve a need for speed, efficiency and limited alternatives. At the same time, they prefer specific information to be given verbally. They are also focused, structured, aggressive, rigid, dominant and tight controlled individuals. They also have the drive to achieve results but on the other hand, they need security and status.

Analytical Style - This decision style is characterized by an autocratic bent. Individuals with this style have a much greater tolerance for ambiguity and more cognitive complex personality. They always need more information and consideration for alternatives since they focus on technical decisions. They are typified by the ability to cope with new situations. Therefore, they enjoy more problem solving and always strive to achieve for the maximum. Position and ego seem to be important characteristics and often reach the top posts in a company or start their own since they need more control. However, they are not rapid in decision making but enjoy variety and prefer written reports. They also welcome and enjoy challenges and examine every detail in a situation.

Conceptual Style - *This* style is characterized by high cognitive, a people orientation and typically be a thinker rather than doer. Hence, there is trust and openness in relations and shared goals with subordinates. They tend to be idealists and may emphasize more on ethics and values. They are also creative and can readily understand complex relationships. They tend to use data from numerous sources and consider many alternatives. They focus on long range with high organizational commitment. Above all, they are achievement-oriented, value praise, recognition and independence. They prefer loose control to power and

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exhibit participation.

Behavioural Style – This style is characterized by supportive and friendly orientation (concerned with subordinates' well being and people-oriented). Individuals with this style have low cognitive complexity scale but they have deep social concerns for organization and development for people. They normally provide counselling, receptive to suggestions, communicate easily, portray warmth, empathetic, persuasive, compromising and accept loose control. They focus on short term range and use meetings for communicating. They tend to avoid conflict, seek acceptance but sometimes are insecure.

Organizational Effectiveness

In relation to decision making variable, this current paper also attempts to relate and investigate whether decision making styles among deans influence the multi dimensions of organizational effectiveness in Malaysian public universities. Pertaining to the formulation of the conceptual framework, the multi dimensions of organizational effectiveness is established to be the dependent variable investigated.

So, why is organizational effectiveness the concern? In recent years, many institutions of higher education (IHE) organizations globally have been the subject of public scrutiny from varied constituencies such as stakeholders and societies to measure their own organizational effectiveness and performance. Pounder (1997) emphasized the importance of assessing organizational effectiveness in the Western IHE particularly in The United States of America and The United Kingdom. According to him assessing organizational effectiveness has gained much attention for the past few decades from researchers and scholars due to the worldwide pressure on the evidence of effective performance. However, as to date, the world class university rankings have put more pressure for many IHE globally, to compete and to be among the best top 200 universities in the world. Consequently, measuring the organizational effectiveness among IHE throughout the world has been the major and debatable issue. With this new world order phenomenon in IHE and coupled with various contemporary environmental changes such as globalization phenomenon, rapid changes in technology, accelerating development in knowledge and greater widening opportunities in education worldwide have resulted the government of Malaysia to re-look upon the status of its public universities and act upon immediate changes in tandem with the objective to be the regional centre of excellence in education.

Nonetheless, strong inertia effect that stems from the current and rapid global changes has somehow affected the current Malaysian educational landscape which requires urgent and robust educational transformation or also known as educational re-engineering towards better performance. In the light of this urgent transformation, The Higher Education Minister, Dato Sri Mustapa (The Star, 14th August 2008) stated that

it is crucial for local university deans to embark on leadership training as they make "universities tick". Further, the USM pro-chancellor Tan Sri Lin Sin Yan who attended the same academic discourse said "…people who run universities and departments must be subject to checks and balances" (The Star, 14th August 2008).

Zooming into one of the subtopics, the Checking Quality Effectiveness, Zairi, Marwa and Chowdhury (2009) accentuated that investigations over current performance levels, trends overtime and comparison data key measures and indicators purposes allow an organisation to evaluate what is working and what is not. Hence, some excellent universities would go all out to design audits with the aims to appraise activities, practices, records, or policies of the organisation in a well structured manner and determine whether an organisation has the ability to meet or exceed a standard. Further, by checking the quality effectiveness, this in turn could highly provide a number of benefits such as allowing the academic organisation to observe what is really taking place and later provide the insights to enable the organisation to take action prior to any potential serious problems or to assist certain necessary actions that need to be done in the organization. Lastly, by checking quality effectiveness, these scholars are of the opinion that the information gathered can be used to evaluate which processes, policies, procedures and practices are effective or vice-versa. They also addressed the predetermined areas highlighted

pertaining to the quality effectiveness. In particular, the areas of quality effectiveness should comply to the customer contract requirements or government regulations.

Many scholars agreed that IHE globally are facing significant challenges. Zairi, Marwa and Chowdhury (2009) added that excellent universities do play a role in addressing the challenges in the 21st century. This is because universities are the agents for both the development of knowledge-based economies and for thriving civil societies. As a result, the existence of viable IHE is necessary in any modern democratic society. They noted that basic educational programmes and courses have become important commodities globally particularly in developing countries since these countries have the advantage over the low-cost manufacturing and services. For instance, the availability of excellent staff that is one-fifth of the cost of a staff with the same academic level in a developed-country. These scholars further indicated that in order to be relevant and competitive, universities must provide high value services "by being immediate innovative, integrative, conceptual and multidisciplinary" to meet numerous changing and dynamic demands of the global corporations. Coupled with a number of justifications, Zairi (2008, as cited in Zairi, Marwa and Chowdhury, 2009) put forward The Academic Excellence Model with the intention to equip the needs of the different stakeholders as well as to realign activities into an integrative

rather than the centralised management and control structure behaviours.

The model displayed in Figure 3 below suggests a step-by-step approach in designing organisational structure and direction of leadership in a university with the aim to impart the truly unique and excellent business education programme. With the aim to drive the academic excellence in IHE, Zairi (2008, as cited in Zairi, 2009) has included the Checking on Quality Effectiveness as one of the highlights. By doing this, universities are hoped to extend the necessary capabilities in achieving excellence standards and to build a culture of continuous measurement and optimization.

In relation to the formulation of the conceptual framework, the organization effectiveness variable is adapted from the original work of Cameron (1978a). This instrument which is in a form of survey questionnaire was originally used to identify and assess the major characteristics of colleges and universities that are associated with effectiveness. Respondents were required to identify characteristics that are typical of effective institutions with which they were familiar. As a result, questionnaire items were identified and constructed to be included in the instrument. The original survey instrument consisted of 57 items investigating nine multi dimensions. However, in order to suit the local Malaysian universities setting, only five dimensions of organizational effectiveness were investigated. They are the:
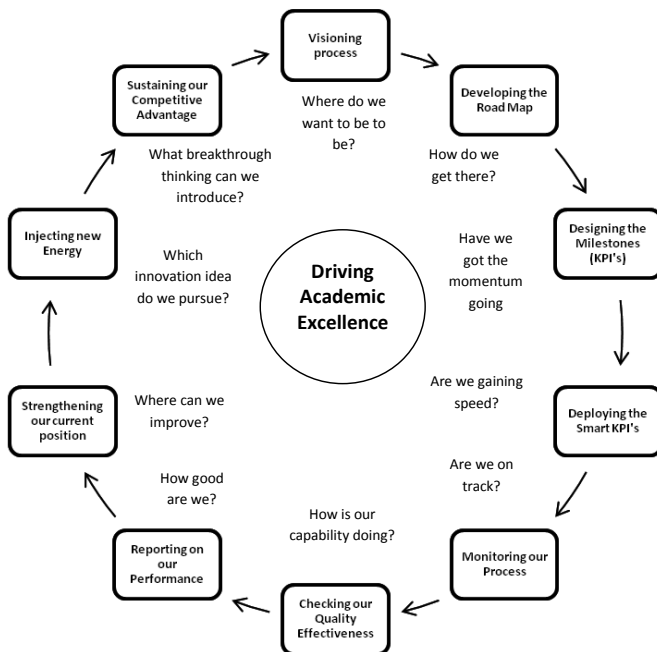

Figure 3
Driving Excellence in Academia. Zairi, ECTQM (2008, cited in Zairi, 2009)

1. student educational development
2. faculty and administrator employee satisfaction
3. professional development and quality of the faculty
4. system openness and community Interaction
5. organizational health.

Based on Cameron (1986) those items in the organizational effectiveness questionnaires asked individuals to provide "descriptive information" and not "evaluative judgments, regarding the extent to which their institution possessed certain characteristics". In addition, respondents were not instructed to rate effectiveness but most importantly, they will need to describe the characteristics that they possess. The emphasis is on description rather than evaluation. He added that this is essential to decrease the likelihood of providing "bias evaluations of their own organization's effectiveness in a positive direction" (in this case organization referred to faculty. A survey on organizational effectiveness will be conducted in order to explore the respondents' perceptions regarding their institutions through the use of seven Likert-type scales. The organizational effectiveness survey would measure the mean score for each dimension of higher institution effectiveness as mentioned above.

In view of the literature above, this current paper is presented with the aims to present the formulation of a conceptual framework and present issues pertaining to the relationship between managerial decision styles and organizational effectiveness among deans of Malaysian public universities.

The Relationship Between Decision Making Styles and Organizational Effectiveness

Realizing the strong global tidal wave that education is no longer for the elites but moving towards massification, the Ministry of Higher Education in Malaysia has leapfroged to implement a robust educational transformation especially in the internalization of university. The new globalization process eventually has transformed education from 'public goods' to a 'commodity' based on students' mobility, worldwide expertise and numerous new programmes. The call for massification is imperative especially in the effort to supply knowledge-workers who are skilful and intelligent. Due to this contemporary global trend, the effectiveness measures in Malaysian public IHE need to be constantly conducted (Ministry of Higher Education, 2007). Parallel to the above scenario; educational transformation, the massification of education and measures of effectiveness and performance, the fifth Malaysian Prime Minister of Malaysia, Dato Seri Abdullah bin Haji Ahmad Badawi stated:

...However, what we now have to ask ourselves is whether the quality of our education system has moved in tandem with its growth in quantity; whether the younger generation passing through our national education system is adequately equipped to

thrive in an increasingly global and competitive environment. I believe we will need nothing less than an 'education revolution' to ensure that our aspirations to instil a new performance culture in the public and private sectors are not crippled by our inability… . (p.4)

The Report by the Committee to Study, Review and Make Recommendations Concerning the Development and Direction of Higher Education in Malaysia (Ministry of Higher Education, 2006)

Based on the above statement, educational revolution is reckoned as urgent and timely due to the new performance culture. In line with this, the Government of Malaysia via The Ministry of Higher Education (MOHE) has taken quite a robust action in restructuring Malaysian public IHE. In doing so, three major reports on higher education have been produced as the genesis of the action plan. They are:

1. The Report by the Committee to Study, Review and Make Recommendations
    Concerning the Development and Direction of Higher Education in Malaysia
    (*Halatuju Report*) July 2005 (Ministry of Higher Education, 2006)
2. The Transformation of Higher Education Document, January 2007
3. The National Higher Education Strategic Plan, August 2007

MOHE's long term strategic plan which is also known as the National Higher Education Action Plan for 2007-2010 has eventually emerged in the effort to materialize the educational transformation. The prime objective of those documents is to strengthen and enhance the Malaysian public IHE. Parallel to the new performance culture, it is believed that effectiveness measure in IHE is highly needed and timely. Therefore, the conceptual framework is developed in the effort to assess the current status of organizational effectiveness in Malaysian public universities.

As to materialize the pronouncement, the initial step of restructuring the Ministry of Education by the Prime Minister was implemented in the year 2006. The Ministry of Education was soon restructured into the Ministry of Education (MoE) and the Ministry of Higher Education (MoHE). On top of that, the appointment of *The Committee to Study, Review and Make Recommendations Concerning the Development and Direction of Higher Education* in Malaysia which operating under the supervision of MoHE is another initiative to educational revolution. In line with this, the Committee has identified a number of critical aspects that need immediate action to advance IHE. In the effort to strengthen Malaysian public IHE, the Committee states that it:

…is strongly in favour that universities being managed as corporate organizations and not be micro-managed by MoHE. The Committee stands by its conviction that a corporate management style is a very important imperative

that should be operationalised if the Government is earnest in promoting the efficiency and effectiveness of the universities. Committee recommends the Board of Directors (in universities) be fully empowered to administer the universities, and that the Minister of Higher Education delegates to the Board of Directors the authority and responsibility to administer the universities, so that all operational and decision-making prerogatives are transferred from the MoHE to the universities. (p. xxxi)

The Committee to Study, Review and Make Recommendations Concerning the Development and Direction of Higher Education in Malaysia. (Ministry of Higher Education, 2006)

As evidenced by the literature above (MoHE, 2006), the statement has illustrated that the development of this conceptual framework on whether decision making styles of academic leaders such as deans influence the organizational effectiveness in Malaysian public universities is relevant and timely. The study which was initiated by the fifth Prime Minister and conducted by the appointed committee, suggested that if the government is serious in promoting efficiency and effectiveness in public IHE, these institutions should be managed as corporate organizations by the individual universities themselves (board of directors) and no longer by the Ministry of Higher Education (MoHE). By analyzing the statement critically, it can be implied that

somehow in order to improve efficiency and effectiveness, universities should be empowered to operate as individual corporate organization instead of being micro-managed by the stakeholders. In the same vein, the researchers are of the opinion that somehow there is a 'reasonable doubt' over the organizational effectiveness that propels such a major planning over the educational transformation in Malaysia. It is strongly felt that the analysis of this literature has revealed the concern over organizational effectiveness. Hence, it is paramount to measure the current status of the organizational effectiveness of the Malaysian public universities.

Pertaining to the above, although the Ministry of Higher Education suggested that measuring organizational effectiveness and performance is paramount, yet scant empirical research has been conducted. Based on literature, although there seems to be relationship between decision making prerogatives and educational organizational effectiveness and performance, little is known when Malaysian public universities are concerned. On top of that, measuring relationship between decision making related area and organizational effectiveness is rarely conducted in both local and international IHE settings.

In relation to the all the potential relationship among the variables suggested, literature revealed that there are potential links pointing to the relationships between the variables. Zairi (2009) mentioned that what the academic leaders must do in the 21st century is to attain and sustain the

commanding positions both in terms of performance and esteem. Hence, knowing what type of leadership universities must have is a central issue since this is what determines excellence in HEIs. They stated that excellence in IHE is being emphasized since it cannot happen by itself. Indeed excellence has to be obtained via visionary leadership and a continuous drive of value, high quality standards and superior performance outcomes. In fact, they mentioned that the role of leadership in the academic context has been the main focus and it is equally important to the role of leadership in both private and other public sectors' contexts. Both universities and other IHE are suggested to focus on identifying the critical factors that are required "for developing a vision for excellence, driving it and delivering its outcomes". Therefore, the creation of the continuum of leadership roles at various levels is highlighted to ensure a total engagement, alignment and high impact visionary effort are achieved.

A synthesis of all the information above indicates that leadership study in the area of managerial decision making style among academic leaders has a pertinent implication to organizational effectiveness and performance. Precisely, what has been mentioned earlier by management scholar; Drucker (1967, as cited in Harrison, 1999) is pivotal when he mentioned, what determines an effective organization will always fall back to an effective leader who is also an effective decision maker. In this respect, a conceptual framework is developed with the aim to explore and identify the decision making styles practiced among deans and their relationship to the multi dimensions of organizational effectiveness in Malaysian public universities. Based on evidence from various literatures, the researchers embark on the development of this conceptual paper. Figure 3 below displays the summary of the conceptual framework discussed for a proposed empirical research.
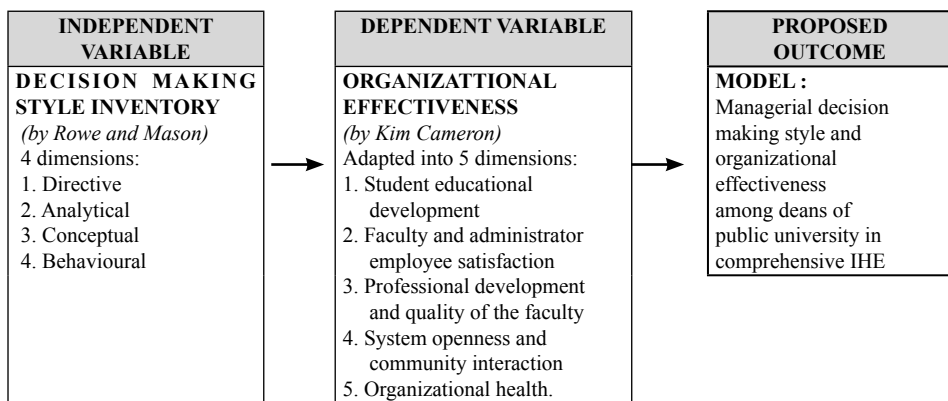
INDEPENDENT VARIABLE	DEPENDENT VARIABLE	PROPOSED OUTCOME
DECISION MAKING STYLE INVENTORY *(by Rowe and Mason)* 4 dimensions: 1. Directive 2. Analytical 3. Conceptual 4. Behavioural	**ORGANIZATTIONAL EFFECTIVENESS** *(by Kim Cameron)* Adapted into 5 dimensions: 1. Student educational development 2. Faculty and administrator employee satisfaction 3. Professional development and quality of the faculty 4. System openness and community interaction 5. Organizational health.	**MODEL :** Managerial decision making style and organizational effectiveness among deans of public university in comprehensive IHE

Figure 4

A conceptual Framwork: Managerial Decision Making Styles, and Organizational Effectiveness of Deans in Malaysian Public Universities

Based on discussion above, Figure 4 is put forward as the conceptual framework of a proposed empirical research. The managerial decision making style is set as the independent variable or the predictor whereas the organizational effectiveness is set as the dependent variable or the outcome. The managerial decision styles model which is adapted from Rowe and Boulgarides (1992) consists of four different styles namely; directive, analytical, conceptual and behavioural styles. Whereas, the organizational effectiveness model which is adapted from Cameron (1986) consists of five multi dimensions namely; the students educational development, faculty and administrator employee satisfaction, professional development and quality of the faculty system openness and community interaction and organizational health. Thus, the conceptual framework above is set as the groundwork of the empirical research that would statistically measure the relationship between managerial decision making styles and organizational effectiveness among deans of Malaysian public universities. In addition, a proposed model of relationship between these variables will be presented if findings transpire.

Issues Pertaining Decision Styles of Deans and Organizational Effectiveness Malaysian IHE
The duties of deans in IHE encompass a series of dynamic roles that stand both as managers and leaders. Bensimon & Neumann (1993, as cited in Wolverton *et al*., 2001) mentioned that external

changes which take place in the real world somehow affect the academic landscape and this gives impact to the roles of deans in IHE. Initially, deans are regarded as managers of academic institutions and their duties mainly focus on the administration of students which include managing, planning, budgeting, advocating, fundraising and cultural perspectives (Wolverton *et al*., 2001). However, in tandem with the new globalization era, the duties of deans in IHE are far more challenging that most of them are regarded both as managers and leaders of change.

So where do all these roles lead to? A synergy between these two roles; as a manager and a leader, has led deans to make various and continuous decision makings in the effort to make their academic organizations effective and thus, leads towards quality education. However, as to date little empirical research has been investigated concerning deans' management skills in the Malaysian IHE setting. So far, a few studies have investigated the deans' management skills and organizational effectiveness and performance, but none have investigated the managerial decision making styles and skills particularly among deans of public universities in Malaysia.

Among the studies conducted on deans is the *Profiles of Deanship in Malaysian Public Universities* (Parmjit, *et al*., 2009). The scholars stated that much literature agreed that deans should be able to lead and above all possess management skills in order to navigate effective

academic organizations. However, the study revealed that both groups of respondents consisting of deans and deputy deans along with heads of departments, ranked decision-making skills as the highest management competency required by deans. This is followed by other management skills such as communication skills, problem-solving skills, interpersonal skills, public relation skills, negotiation skills and lastly ICT skills (Parmjit *et al*., 2007). Even though this study managed to illuminate empirical data on the most needed management skills among deans and top administrators in local Malaysian universities, little is known about their managerial decision styles and decision making skills.

Besides the above, managerial decision making related area has so far been commonly investigated among corporate managers and leaders in private organizations worldwide. However, there are few studies that have been conducted among the local IHE settings particularly among deans of Malaysian public universities. Another local research which focuses on deans of public university was conducted by Zaharah Mokhtar (2002). Her study entitled *Managerial Practices of University Academic Administrators: A Case Study,* addresses the deans' managerial practices in one of the Malaysian public universities. The study touches only on aspects such as dean's decisional roles particularly as entrepreneur, disturbance handler, resource allocator and negotiator. On top of that, the study employs a qualitative research design which involves only six deans from six faculties. Consequently, the results only encapsulate the deans' experiences and feelings in search of meaning and understanding of the complexities of managing a faculty. In regards to the above studies on deans in Malaysian public IHE, none has actually investigated the deans' decision making styles and skills.

Hence, the formulation of this conceptual framework is timely since it not only helps to heighten understanding of both variables but more importantly hopes to narrow the gap of what is needed most in deans' management skills and leadership. On the one hand, a study on decision making styles would help imply as to whether deans do have considerable flexibility (Rowe and Boulgarides, 1992, pg. 28) or rigidity in changing their decision making styles based on situation warrants. On the other hand, results on decision making skills would reveal implication as to whether deans are effective decision makers that heighten the possibility of success. Subsequently, there is a need to explore and measure the current practices of deans' managerial decision making styles so that the exploration could be an impetus for further enhancement measures in their management skills and leadership.

Besides the above independent variable set as managerial decision styles, the need to measure organizational effectiveness as dependent variable in local universities is even greater and more pressing considering the new performance

culture in the era of globalization. In view of this, the demand for changes in the current environment has pressed Malaysian government, government agencies and institutions of higher education as a whole to improve strategy and approach to ensure quality (Ministry of Higher Education, 2006). Realizing these challenges, a concern for measuring organizational effectiveness and performance in local public universities tends to emerge directly from the current academic global environment. Unlike most of the developed countries that conducted high number of research in the area of organizational effectiveness, as to date only one empirical study was conducted in Malaysian public universities with the intention to assess the performance in terms of quality and how Malaysian public IHE stand among each other.

Academic Reputation Survey (ARES) or also known as *Percubaan Sistem Penarafan Akademik* (SETARA) was conducted by The Ministry of Higher Education in 2006 with the help of academicians from Malaysian local universities such as Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia and Universiti Malaya and other agencies such as the National Accreditation Division (LAN) and the Quality Assurance Division, Ministry of Higher Education (QAD) (Kajian Reputasi Akademik & Hasil Penarafan Institusi Pengajian Tinggi Awam by the Minister of Higher Education, Dato' Mustapa Mohamed, 2007). By measuring organizational effectiveness in terms of both strengths and weaknesses, Malaysian public universities could further strive

to improve quality and eventually forecast their way in the world rankings (Mohamed Khaled; Higher Education Minister, The Star, Saturday 17th May 2008).

The last pertinent question, do managerial decision making styles among deans in Malaysian public universities affect the multi dimensions of organizational effectiveness? Within the higher education setting, deans of faculties are considered as the most important and influential key persons who navigate and determine the success of the overall faculty administration and management. Ideally, many scholars in the area of management agreed that decision making gives impact to the success or failure of its organization (Leonard, Scholl and Kowalski, 1999 and Drucker, 1967, as cited in Harrison, 1999). However, realistically not many studies have been conducted to gauge the level of relationship between decision making related area of deans and organizational effectiveness. Thus, knowing and measuring what and how much the strength of managerial decision making factor influence the organizational effectiveness is pivotal in search of quality improvement. This in turn would provide some platform for the local public universities to improve management skills and performance particularly among the academic managers and leaders.

Conclusion

To date, literature has revealed that there are potential links pointing to the relationships between the variables formulated above; managerial decision

making styles and organizational effectiveness. However, there is hardly any empirical study conducted to statistically measure between decision making related area and organizational effectiveness among deans particularly in the Malaysian local public universities setting. Realizing this, the development of the conceptual framework is imperative as to set the groundwork of the proposed empirical study. In this respect, a conceptual framework to investigate the relationships of decision making styles and decision making skills towards organizational effectiveness among deans of public universities in Malaysia is formulated in order to shed some light pertaining to the educational management and leadership among deans particularly in the Malaysian higher learning institution context.

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