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## AREA STUDIES | RESEARCH ARTICLE

# The complexity of leadership competence in universities in the 21st century

Zahara Tussoleha Rony<sup>1\*</sup>, Tyastuti Sri Lestari<sup>1</sup>, Ismaniah<sup>1</sup>, Mahmuddin Yasin<sup>2</sup> and Fatimah Malini Lubis<sup>3</sup>

**Abstract:** In 21st-century higher education, effective managerial skills are crucial for quality assessment. ABC University aims to be an Excellent University by 2047, but leadership competence remains a barrier to this goal. This study focuses on the managerial abilities of the rector and vice-rector in managing higher education operations. The Research paradigm used is constructivist paradigm utilizing qualitative research methods. The study adopts a case study approach, investigating a specific context where the phenomenon of interest is occurring and holds significance for examination. The research commenced by gathering secondary data through preliminary key informant interviews, engaging with 12 former deans and vice deans. The researcher determined the focus and sub-focus of the research followed by collecting observation data and semi-structured interviews with informants consisting of 7 deans, 6 vice deans, 2 heads of departments, and 2 heads of institutions. The sampling method used was purposive and snowball sampling. The data undergoes analysis via the Manual Data Analysis Procedure, employing a thematic inductive approach to generate memos and ultimately construct

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a conceptual framework of managerial competency. The study reveals that the competency standards for rectorate leaders during the period 2020–2022 are inadequate, encompassing areas such as adaptive leadership, comprehensive managerial proficiency, and intelligent collegial relationships. This lack of effective communication and collaboration has an impact on the process of propelling ABC University towards excellence.

**Subjects:** Human Resource Management; Organizational Studies; Leadership

**Keywords:** academic leaders; managerial competencies; building competencies; succession planning

### 1. Introduction

Higher education encompasses an educational establishment responsible for overseeing advanced educational tiers, where those engaged in the pursuit of knowledge are recognized as students, and those imparting instruction are identified as lecturers. Higher Education, which includes the University, is a type of educational organization. An organization is a consciously coordinated social unit, consisting of two or more people functioning on a continuous basis to achieve a common goal or set of goals (Abrantes & Figueiredo, 2021). Every organization is steered by an individual entrusted with the role of guiding and supervising its operations, commonly referred to as a leader. In tertiary education, leadership roles are often designated as “university rector”, “high school head”, or “academy director”. Within educational management, the role of a leader stands as a crucial component. The principal objective of educational leadership is to offer direction and guidance, ensuring that the institution’s educational goals are effectively met (Haider et al., 2022). To achieve success, an organization must possess various managerial competencies, including the capacity to formulate a visionary plan, characterized by effective communication and collaboration within its team members. However, it is the leader’s directives that ultimately determine the organization’s direction and objectives (Meraku, 2017).

In other words, the functioning of an organization is inherently intertwined with leadership skills, particularly in sizable entities like universities, where leaders serve as the vanguard shaping the trajectory of the organization’s success (Rony et al., 2020; Young, 2023). Leadership in higher education institutions plays a pivotal role. Leadership is more than just a position; it is fully responsible for the institution’s success or failure in improving the quality of higher education in a sustainable manner. For this reason, leadership in higher education equipped with 21st-century skills is believed to be one of the factors determining the quality of a higher education institution (Day et al., 2021).

According to Day, the challenge of management in the 21st century is related to the “knowledge worker.” Leaders are anticipated to comprehend emerging management paradigms, novel strategies, change leadership, information dynamics, knowledge-driven employee productivity, and self-management prowess (Day et al., 2021). This 21st-century perspective on leadership asserts that leaders could comprehend themselves holistically, grasp the perspectives of those they lead, heed the aspirations of their teams, and discern the evolutions and environmental challenges encountered across diverse domains of life. This encompasses the organizational and management systems within which they are involved (Bashori, 2019). Beyond the capacity to judiciously perform leadership responsibilities and exercise authority over diverse challenges characteristic of their era, leaders must also harness a suite of competencies and qualifications. These attributes are pivotal for adeptly steering through the intricate developments and ever-shifting dynamics of 21st-century transformations. In this evolving landscape, it is imperative for a leader not merely to adapt, but to fluidly navigate the transition from mere complexity to dynamic complexity (Hazy, 2018; Rony, 2019).

Universities in Indonesia, both public and private, are expected to be able to compete at the national, regional, and international levels (Miotto et al., 2020). This competition can be carried out if each tertiary institution is able to respond to rapid environmental changes and satisfy customer desires. This shift, oriented towards achieving sustainable competitive advantage, necessitates individuals who possess strength, potential, or resources either independently or within an organization. These individuals should be capable and willing to perform tasks intelligently, competitively, and collaboratively, all for the advancement and prosperity of the organization (Jameson et al., 2022). Social challenges, culture, the world of work, and rapid technological advances leaders also ensure that all elements of the institution encourage student competency to meet the needs of today (Crosthwaite, 2018). The link and match should not only pertain to the realm of industry and the world of work but also extend to the swiftly evolving future. Higher education institutions must possess the capability to devise and execute innovative learning procedures that enable students to attain optimal and perpetually pertinent learning outcomes encompassing attitudes, knowledge, and skills.

Leaders must have leadership skills by the twenty-first century, according to the description above. Numerous qualifications, competencies, and a profound commitment stand as prerequisites for leaders to effectively respond to rapid changes. This pertains to leaders including the rector and vice rector of ABC University, a private-public institution based in Jakarta, which holds B-accredited status and aspires to attain excellence by 2047. Since its establishment in 1995, ABC University has not possessed an excellent accredited study program. The leadership aspires that within the upcoming 5 years, a total of five study programs will attain the title of excellence.

In pursuit of excellence, ABC University has undertaken numerous initiatives to bolster its human resources, ranging from hiring top-notch lecturers to investing in extensive employee training and development. The university is progressively integrating and fine-tuning digital systems. Additionally, there's been a notable rise in publications and community outreach. These concerted efforts have borne fruit, propelling ABC University to a commendable 175th rank among 4,631 Indonesian universities in just five years. However, this alone is insufficient; it demands a considerable amount of additional effort, particularly in response to governmental policies and requirements, as well as the endeavors of leaders to enhance and proficiently apply their managerial competencies.

At ABC University, the leadership team comprises one rector and four vice-rectors. Remarkably, four of the five leaders are from the baby boomer generation, born before 1965. Consequently, one significant challenge they face is guiding a diverse workforce spanning Generation X, Generation Y, and Generation Z. Each of these cohorts brings its distinct strengths, characteristics, and peculiarities. Without astute management, these differences can brew "generational tension" that detrimentally affects team dynamics. This discrepancy in mindset, work habits, and communication styles has been notably evident between the rectorate's leadership and the deans and deputy deans, leading to sluggish coordination, as identified by Tabassi et al. (2019) Frustrations have been palpable, with vice-rectors and staff voicing complaints about each other. Many in the work unit feel that the rectorate's leadership frequently diverts its focus away from its primary responsibilities, often shifting directives. Conversely, the leadership laments about delayed tasks, unfinished projects, and the need for constant oversight, suggesting a lack of autonomy and initiative from the work units". All these labels originate from the leadership, despite the work unit's meticulous approach to task execution; in fact, they are hesitant to engage in trial and error. This has resulted in delays in meeting work targets.

At ABC University, from 2019 to 2022, issues surrounding managerial competence have frequently captured the attention of scholars, including those (Bucur, 2013; Chong, 2013; de Villiers, 2013). These studies emphasize that for universities aiming for excellence, managerial competence remains paramount. Hence, the researchers addresses the concerns and challenges related to managerial competence at ABC University, aiming to elucidate the components of managerial

proficiency exhibited by rectorate leaders that hinder the university's advancement towards excellence and establish a foundation for 21st-century leadership within ABC University's higher education development

To fulfill the research objectives, this paper will specifically investigate the following research questions:

- (1) Which managerial competencies have the most significant impact on propelling this university towards excellence?
- (2) Which competencies have not been carried out effectively by leaders at ABC University?
- (3) How do the leaders (rector and vice-rector) build their managerial competencies?
- (4) How does the Human Resources Department design leadership succession planning?

## 2. Literature review

### 2.1. Academic leaders today

In the globalization era, new paradigms are continuously emerging, which includes the evolution of leadership competencies in higher education. Tertiary institutions worldwide now face heightened demands, spurred by the rise of the knowledge economy, economic fluctuations, rapid advancements in information and communication technologies (Nermend et al., 2022). Current academic leaders must possess a diverse range of leadership skills to thrive in such organizations (Jamali et al., 2022). Research has indicated that efficacious leadership in education hinges on multiple factors like the ability to lead a university effectively and fostering critical thinking skills (Haslam, 2012). For the rector and vice rector, choosing an adaptable leadership style is vital to guide their respective teams effectively (Nunn, 2008). As further emphasizes (Packard, 2008), a primary challenge for contemporary leaders is to navigate the ever-changing global milieu, all while maintaining an organization's intrinsic motivation. Thus, the discernment of an appropriate leadership style is pivotal for academic leaders to significantly impact their institution's overall performance.

Job success hinges on the amalgamation of specific behaviours, skills, and knowledge (Prahalad & Hamid, 2007). According to Hwang et al. (2015), effective leaders advocate, must foster a blend of both managerial and leadership attributes. Competency theory delves into understanding successful leaders by dissecting their attitudes, skills, and behaviours into measurable elements, with the aim of synergizing these traits to cultivate high-performing individuals (Mitchelmore & Rowley, 2010). As managerial competencies are increasingly recognized as essential for business longevity and economic growth (Konigova et al., 2012; Rambe & Makhalemele, 2015), the literature has expanded to discuss the intricate ties between these competencies (Turner & Müller, 2005). However, the research landscape lacks a structured analysis linking distinct managerial competencies with institutional or managerial efficiency (Wahab & Tyasari, 2020).

### 2.2. Managerial competency

According to some experts, different eras and situations require different leadership styles (Turner & Müller, 2005). Primmer (2017) argued that all organizational functions need a specific set of managerial, general, and functional competencies to be carried out effectively. They believed that while generic abilities are vital for all workers, regardless of function or level, managerial competencies are crucial for managers with supervisory responsibilities in any service.

To perform any job in the organization within a defined technical or functional work area, specific competencies are required. Similarly, Misra and Ghosh (2022) a conceptual model has been proposed to gauge general managerial competencies pertinent to various work scenarios, encompassing areas such as task direction, supervising others, strategic planning, coordination, oversight, innovation, information management, and fostering relations both internally with personnel and externally with clients. Within diverse cultural contexts, the significance of managerial competence remains largely

consistent. However, the nuances of these competences become evident in distinct work environments. Evaluating competencies in planning, organization, and the motivation of others is instrumental in pinpointing managers poised for career advancement, irrespective of cultural or work context (Chong, 2013). Their skillfulness affected how well an institution performed (Bucur, 2013). It implies that each management organization is a creative leader (Mainemelis et al., 2015). Vice rectors, deans, and heads of academic programs are examples of university executives who play important roles in the academic divisions that make up universities. They manage day-to-day operations, employ qualified personnel, and collaborate closely with senior university executives (Goodall et al., 2014). Due to the evolving nature of tertiary education leadership in response to sector-wide concerns, there has been an increase in interest in the positions of leaders within tertiary education institutions in recent years (Bagherpour & Jahanian, 2017). A university president has a sizable, complicated, and frequently ambiguous job (Cardno & Owen, 2014).

### **2.3. How to build managerial competence effectively**

Competencies stand as a cornerstone of competitive advantage for all organizations. In an intensely competitive landscape, enterprises, irrespective of size, must incessantly refine their products, methodologies, and human resources (Saputra, 2023). Continuous learning emerges as a key strategy in this endeavor. Past studies indicate that competencies are cultivated both within and outside organizational learning frameworks. These studies delve into the managerial competence prevalent in management institutions. Management development, seen as a structured progression, enables leaders to hone their managerial capacities. Beyond mere performance enhancement, it also paves the way for holistic growth and personal development (Chong, 2013).

There are two ways for leaders to improve their knowledge and skills. The first is through formal training, and the second is through on-the-job training. Training and feedback from the management institution can help to improve it (de Villiers, 2013). It can concentrate on formal and informal training to improve management (Obrecht et al., 2022). On-the-job training is paramount as genuine learning manifests when one applies acquired knowledge in real-world scenarios. Such training involves trainees transitioning between various roles to amass diverse knowledge and experience. Methods encompass project assignments, job shadowing, job enlargement, and job enrichment, each offering unique perspectives and learning opportunities within the job spectrum (Škrinjarić, 2022).

### **2.4. Building a succession of academic leaders**

The breadth, variation, and narrowing of leadership skills required to develop and exploit an organization's capacity for this newer economy in today's digital transformation economy (Bican & Brem, 2020). Part of this transformation is the speed with which organizations and their leaders organize and align talent to enable the exploitation of core competencies while also developing the innovations required in this newer economy.

Aside from technology, HR executives must identify and address the development of skills required to manage and drive disruption in this new economy. Leadership succession planning is an essential human resource function for sustaining and aligning organizations in today's digital transformation economy (Jackson & Dunn-Jensen, 2021).

Leadership succession planning plays a pivotal role in ensuring an organization's continuity and resilience. Historically, these planning models have been crafted to safeguard the seamless linkage between various units and individuals. Their intent has primarily been to preserve existing hierarchies and the embedded forms of power and control. Regarded as a meta-routine, the very essence of succession planning lies in its capacity to bolster organizations in effectively managing and nurturing their talent pipeline. This pipeline, a reservoir of potential future leaders, is crucial for an organization's sustainability and growth. However, for this pipeline to truly resonate with an organization's objectives and future aspirations, the approach to leadership succession planning needs to be anticipatory in nature. A proactive approach to succession planning becomes indispensable. It mandates organizations to meticulously align and adjust their talent development

practices and processes with the broader strategic vision. In doing so, organizations not only ensure a smooth transition of leadership roles but also position themselves to thrive in an ever-evolving business landscape (Trepanier & Crenshaw, 2013). With increased globalization and the rapid pace of technological advancement, there is a greater need for developing leaders capable of navigating the real-time drivers of market-based innovation and digital transformation (Lubis et al., 2019).

As the global economy progressively shifts towards digital transformation, there emerges a pronounced gap in leadership succession planning. Addressing this disparity is imperative for businesses aiming to remain competitive and adaptive. Traditional leadership models often overlook the dynamism required in the digital era. Today's challenges call for more than just C-Level adaptability; they demand a systemic transformation permeating every echelon of an organization. To effectively navigate this transition, businesses should invest in transformative and iterative learning models. Such models should not only focus on the top-tier leadership but should also emphasize the development of everyday leaders. The essence of this approach lies in its continuous cycle of auditing, ideating, and prototyping, ensuring that adaptability becomes a hallmark, not just at the strategic level, but in everyday operations and behaviours. By ingraining these iterative models, organizations can cultivate a culture where every employee, regardless of rank or role, embodies the principles necessary for thriving in the digital economy. This holistic approach ensures that businesses are not just digitally compliant on paper but are agile, responsive, and innovative in practice (Jackson & Dunn-Jensen, 2021).

### 3. Method

This study uses a qualitative research method with a case study approach (Yin, 2014) and describes a leadership phenomenon at a private university in Jakarta, Indonesia, from 2020 to 2022 that has aspirations to excel. This study describes competencies that have been and have not been implemented optimally. How leaders improve their competence how is succession planning at the university? To obtain a comprehensive portrayal of this research and to acquire broader and more profound insights, the researcher is actively seeking pertinent research and studying literature to bolster the robustness of this study. The selected sampling methods are purposeful sampling and quota sampling. The selected informants are those who are directly involved, namely the deans, vice deans, and unit heads. Data disbursement was carried out through interviews, observations, and group discussions (Kandasamy & Ancheri, 2009). The number of informants involved in the study consisted of eight women and nine men. ABC University has seven deans, six vice deans, and two unit heads.

#### 3.1. Research procedure

The research procedure in Figure 1 explains the conceptual framework and research stages covering the research period. These stages include: 1) identifying problems related to leadership

Figure 1. Research procedures and stages



competencies at ABC University 2) reading and selecting literature related to current leadership issues and competencies, 3) determining research focus and sub-focus 4) conducting initial semi-structured interviews with informants, 5) ensuring the completeness of the results of the interviews; each interview was recorded with audio and video with the permission of the informant, 6) The results of field notes and interviews as well as observations related to leadership process activities are compiled and made into transcripts. 7) Scrutinizing the results of the transcripts and observing the video recordings properly 8) Data analysis was carried out using MDAP (Manual Data Analysis Procedure).

### **3.2. Interview guidelines**

Concise interview questions were formulated to facilitate the work of field researchers. Nevertheless, the abundance of responses from diverse informants led to the development of several semi-structured questions in the field, consequently generating numerous new inquiries. These questions include: 1) Which managerial competencies have the most impact on this university's pursuit of excellence? 2) Which competencies have not been carried out effectively by leaders at ABC University? 3) How do the leaders (the rector and vice rector) build their competencies? 4) How does the Human Resources Department design a leadership succession plan? In qualitative research, the process of identifying and selecting informants or respondents differs from quantitative methods. In the current study's qualitative approach, the number of informants needed diverges from the approach suggested by Corbin and Strauss (1990). The initial phase involved conducting interviews with 12 key informants, who were former deans and deputy deans with direct experience in leadership roles under the Rector's guidance. Informant selection followed a combined approach of purposive and snowball sampling. Purposive sampling was employed to select informants who had worked collaboratively in tertiary institutions, leveraging their familiarity with one another's roles and responsibilities. This approach was effective in engaging informants who were initially challenging to identify. Through a chain of referrals, the identification process evolved, eventually reaching a saturation point where new informants provided redundant insights

### **3.3. Data analysis**

In order to analyze qualitative data carefully, researchers must understand the measuring instruments used to produce research in accordance with research objectives. Data analysis was carried out using MDAP (Manual Data Analysis Procedure) (Bungin, 2011). This method is carried out by constructing a reality based on interpretation according to the data obtained from the field so that the research results are of the researcher's abstraction (Rony, 2017). Categorizing the similarities and differences of the codes into an abstraction of the entire leadership activity. The codes were then reviewed to derive categories (constructs) and were analyzed for themes and manually charted. The researchers then met to discuss and arrived at consensus on the independently developed inductive themes to obtained themes. Each researchers maintained a reflexive journal and audit trail, consistent with good practice. The researchers review transcripts to confirm reliability over time, collecting themes and turning them into memos so that they become a collection of draft research reports. Each of these processes was executed meticulously, particularly given the utilization of the case study approach. The qualitative methodology employed was subjective and emic in nature. Prior to composing the preliminary research report, the validation of findings was ensured through focus group discussions involving both informants and key informants.

### **3.4. Data validation**

Triangulation was employed to enhance the validity of the data. Findings from interviews and observations were cross-referenced with outcomes from group discussions, as suggested by (Corbin & A, 2008) and informants were given the opportunity to review the themes that emerged from the interviews. Informants were given specific questions regarding their perceptions of future leadership styles; all interview data were coded manually by the researcher. The outcomes of the validation process have been synthesized into abstract constructs. All identified findings have been



corroborated by preexisting theoretical underpinnings. Moreover, a cognitive framework, in the shape of the conceptualization of requisite managerial competencies tailored to the context of ABC University, has been formulated. This framework is informed by the conclusions drawn from the research, with the overarching objective of facilitating the University’s journey towards achieving excellence (Figure 2).

**4. Result and discussion**

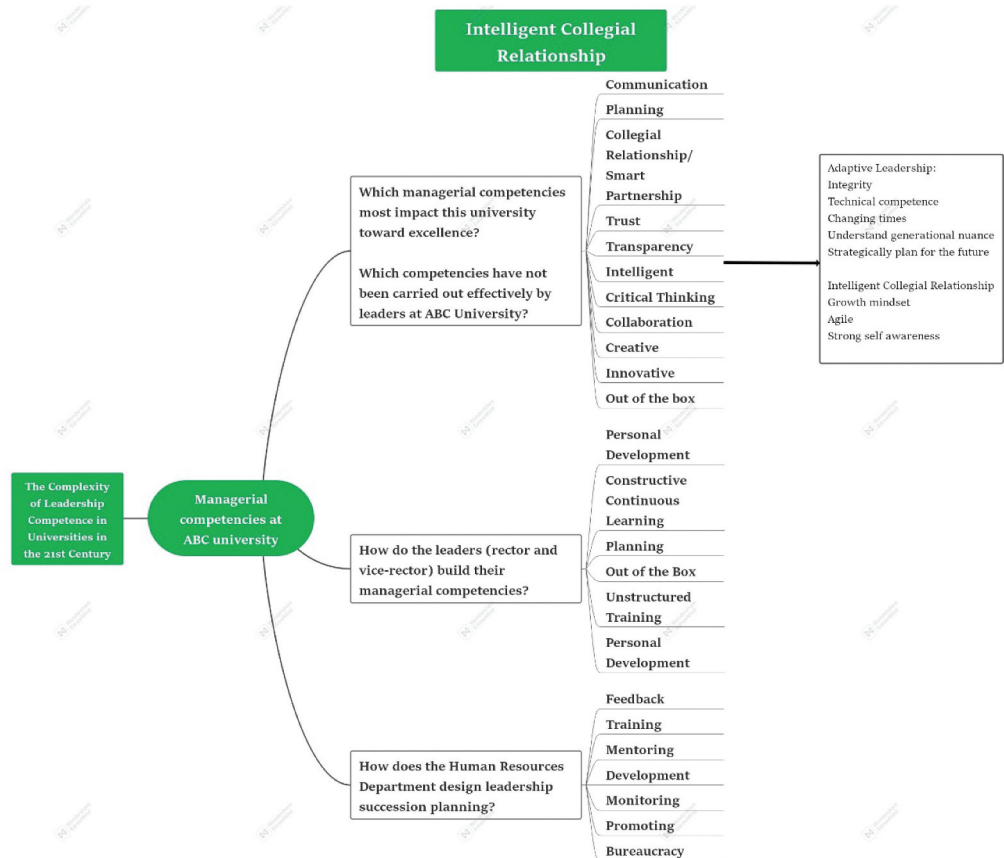
The demands of globalization in the twenty-first century encourage all organizations and tertiary institutions to be no exception to the obligation to improve tertiary institution quality in order to compete with other tertiary institutions (Rony et al., 2021). The quality process is work that always requires a high level of precision and is not “perfunctory.” This situation encourages tertiary institutions to compete during rapidly changing developments. Intense competition between tertiary institutions is accompanied by efforts to improve the quality of higher education in the 21st century, one of which lies in the important role of higher education leadership (Phonsa et al., 2019) state that to make tertiary institutions face the challenges of the 21st century in the field of higher education, several competencies are needed, including management skills, technology, and communication skills, thinking skills, participation, and teamwork skills, as well as self-development skills and the development of others.

**5. Result**

**5.1. Managerial competencies that exert the most impact and have not been effectively implemented within this university hinder its path towards excellence**

ABC’s top management is renowned for its unparalleled integrity and expertise. Their unwavering commitment to upholding and exemplifying integrity is evident in every aspect of the college’s operations. Throughout its operational history, the college has never wavered from its foundational

**Figure 2. University Excellence Framework**



values. The leadership's ethos revolves around a strict adherence to integrity and proficiency. There is an unwavering stance against any forms of discrepancies or fraud within ABC University, extending from the top management to the staff and faculty. A significant incident in late 2021 serves as a testament to this commitment. A highly regarded lecturer, despite being young and showing immense potential, committed an egregious error by inflating research costs unjustifiably. Faced with this breach of trust, the management, though regretfully, asked the lecturer to step down. This difficult decision underscored the leadership's willingness to prioritize integrity over even the most promising human capital.

In relation to institutional planning, the interviews revealed that it is primarily driven by the university's overarching vision and mission. While many leaders employ the SWOT analysis for planning, a few lean towards extending the previous year's strategic agenda. Such provisional planning tends to focus heavily on internal needs, often overlooking external threats and long-term institutional opportunities. Consequently, there is often a mismatch between the goals articulated by the rectorate and the practical necessities of the institution given the prevailing circumstances. The planning revision process, furthermore, often misses out on engaging some crucial stakeholders. This omission leads to an incomplete data pool, rendering the resultant strategic plan less holistic and comprehensive than desired. Furthermore, the process of revising the work plan did not engage several relevant stakeholders. As a result, the information gathered was incomplete, leading to a lack of comprehensiveness in the executed planning.

Another noteworthy finding is that communication competence is frequently employed during work-related interactions. The way the leadership communicated in problem-solving was emphasized by most of the informants. When faced with a considerably intricate issue, the leader assembles personnel deemed pertinent to gather information and data. Occasionally, challenges remain unresolved as each party upholds their perspective, leading to a need for confrontational measures. Historically, the university's top leadership has attempted to address problems by involving numerous parties, often resulting in the dissemination of incomplete information that subsequently contributes to a state of uncertainty.

At ABC University, a recurrent issue is the passive acceptance of information without rigorous scrutiny. Consequently, the university often finds itself working with data that's either inaccurate or incomplete. Certain parties, fearing the onset of potential conflicts, opt for reticence over truth. However, silence should not be misconstrued as acquiescence. The pervasive communication gap amongst the majority of ABC University's leadership has inevitably hampered collaboration, both within leadership tiers and between leaders and various university departments.

It's evident that most leaders harbour a genuine intent to collaborate effectively. Yet, it's disheartening that such intent often lacks the backing of proactive initiatives and competent execution. This disconnect between intention and skill has inhibited the realization of true collaborative competence. Leaders demonstrate a commendable aspiration for high-performance outputs. However, many currently operate in silos, which diminishes the prospects of collective achievements. The challenge lies not just in fostering individual prowess but also in orchestrating synergized team efforts. A quintessential competency that ABC University's leadership is yet to fully harness is effective team-building. This ability to galvanize diverse individuals into cohesive units remains a pressing need for the institution's leadership.

### **5.2. How do the leaders (rector and vice rector) build their managerial competencies**

Based on in-depth interviews with the vice-rector and the Human Resources Department at ABCs University, they actively engage in a myriad of professional development activities. Both online and offline leadership trainings are regularly attended, complemented by various workshops they participate in. YouTube serves as a notable source of learning for them, with many resorting to it, in addition to reading pertinent articles on leadership.

Every Wednesday, the university convenes regular meetings. While these meetings primarily address pressing university issues, they also double as a platform for leaders to exchange insights and experiences from their diverse undertakings. On occasions, these leaders embark on comparative studies, interacting with their counterparts from other universities. Such interactions enrich their leadership perspectives and provide fresh insights. Furthermore, they often take on roles outside their primary responsibilities to bolster their managerial competencies. This includes leading significant projects like crafting university blueprints or overseeing state events. Interestingly, some vice-rectors are even entrusted with assignments that diverge entirely from their primary roles, demonstrating their multifaceted skills and the trust the institution places in them.

### **5.3. How does the human resources department design a leadership succession planning**

From the results of interviews and observations with various informants, the vice rector and HRD manager at ABC University admitted that this university did not yet have a planned plan for leadership succession. When there are vacant positions due to officials resigning or retiring, these positions are often vacant for quite a long time and automatically hinder productivity yet have a planned plan for leadership succession. When there are vacant positions due to officials resigning or retiring, these positions are often vacant for quite a long time and automatically hinder productivity. Sometimes it is filled with substitutes who are not ready to carry out the mandate, so the work results are not optimal. The fact is that several HRD managers appointed at ABC University do not have the technical competency to manage human resources. There is no integrated system for recruiting, training and development, promotion, or performance appraisal yet. So that this fact—that problems related to managerial competence at ABC University are ongoing—is true. This interim management selects officials based on references and their actions and work results at previous companies or institutions. There has never been a structured assessment and interview, so management often feels regret over the selection of structural officials because they cannot contribute optimally according to the targets to be achieved by ABC University.

## **6. Discussion**

The importance of integrity in the professional realm is undeniable, as it serves as the cornerstone for achieving noteworthy results and good work. Integrity is intrinsically intertwined with the various qualities and competencies that one should embody, especially if in a leadership position. Its significance lies in ensuring that the outcomes of one's efforts are meaningful and reflective of commendable work. It is pertinent to mention that integrity encompasses more than just ethical behavior, as argued by (Cui & Jiao, 2019).

At ABC University, the essence of integrity is deeply ingrained. The institution stands on a robust foundation, primarily due to its leadership that upholds and exemplifies high levels of integrity. Such a virtue not only establishes trust among the university members but also ensures a transparent and efficient system. It is worth noting how some of the leaders at ABC University have consistently demonstrated transparency, clarity, and openness in their roles, as highlighted by (Dumulescu & Muțiu, 2021). The power of trust, fostered by integrity, acts as a catalyst in guiding the actions and decisions of the deans, heads of institutions, study programs, and other work units. When trust is established, it becomes easier to ensure that everyone adheres to their designated duties and responsibilities, underline the pivotal role of integrity in preserving and enhancing organizational performance (Maguad & Krone, 2009). Furthermore, Lee (2008) encapsulates the essence of integrity by describing it as the embodiment of moral values, the preservation of dignity, and the core of effective leadership. It's worth emphasizing how ABC University's leadership has incorporated these principles into their operational framework. Because of this, the university has been successful in fostering a robust academic culture that thrives on integrity.

Institutional planning serves as the compass for a university, establishing its philosophy, vision, and mission. Such planning provides direction and oversight for the university's endeavors,

ensuring coherence with its core principles (Saputra et al., 2022). However, the implementation of these plans often hinges on the commitment and understanding of the leadership. Recently, concerns have arisen about the inadequate commitment from some vice rectors leaders, even though these plans were crafted under their supervision As (Sonmez Cakir & Adiguzel, 2020) assert, planning signifies an enduring responsibility (Saputra et al., 2021). When understood and internalized by all stakeholders, planning engenders a collective commitment, propelling the institution towards its goals, as (DeNisi & Kluger, 2000) have emphasized.

Yet, a troubling trend is emerging. Several leaders have settled into their comfort zones, causing their activities to deviate from the university's predefined vision and mission (Kraus et al., 2018). This misalignment often results in endeavors being swayed by short-term, pragmatic interests rather than aligning with long-term institutional goals, a phenomenon noted by Kelly and Cordeiro (2020).

For universities to stay true to their mission, leaders must engage in continuous introspection. They need to constantly question: "Is my personal mission in alignment with that of the university?" Such alignment is not a mere luxury but an imperative. As Carbery and Garavan (2012), attention, energy, and resources to achieve the university's vision. As a leader, it is hoped that it will inspire all of its members to be proud of their institution by producing products of excellence that are recognized not only by the academic community within the university, but also by the larger community (Sara et al., 2023).

An institution that becomes an oasis for academic activities, the development of academic traditions, the development of academic culture, the improvement of administrative service standards, and the ability to encourage intelligent collegial relationships (Marginson, 2008), perspective that a thriving institution serves as a hub for academic pursuits, fostering a rich academic tradition and culture (Saputra et al., 2021). This includes enhancing administrative service standards and nurturing intellectually stimulating collegial relationships. It is through such an approach that universities can truly stand as paragons of academic excellence.

As a result, planning ability is required to ensure that work results are completed on time. Inappropriate planning due to the leader's inability to analyze and ensure strategy indirectly reduces the value of team performance. Because the leader does not monitor and has a desire for good work results, the team was given a bad label. Good and mature planning does not necessarily produce satisfactory work results without coordination between members and leaders (Elbanna et al., 2016). Responsible leaders will carry out their promises to their institutions. Integrated planning and transparency in determining budgets, activity plans, and missions, compiling policies and work plans, as well as conducting coaching to improve members' capabilities and want to achieve joint success, can foster confidence in the ability of university leaders (Kraus et al., 2018). Successfully building trust ultimately fosters work loyalty among all employees. Employee loyalty has a great impact on institutional performance and can accelerate the achievement of organizational goals (Ravet-Brown et al., 2023). In other words, bad and non-implemented planning has a very broad negative impact and is detrimental to the university (Bryson et al., 2009).

The patterns of problem-solving and communication carried out by the vice-rector are mostly "one-way," and sometimes these methods of communication are not compatible with certain conditions (Rony et al., 2021). Apart from that, times have changed. Various generations, namely baby boomers, X, Y, and Z, have different ways and styles. This also becomes an obstacle when the leadership insists that all members of the university are expected to understand and follow their way. Likewise, their ability to hear is still limited to hearing from one side, thereby limiting the vice-rector's ability to find the root of the problem, even though leaders ideally have sensitivity and receptivity to various psychological climates and try to act as human thermostats that are able to maintain a stable human temperature constant and guarantee a stable human climate (Bacon &

Williams, 2022). Group psychology at a healthy and conducive level (Sijbom et al., 2015). Ineffective communication unknowingly affects collaboration between the vice-rector and other work units. In other words, higher education leaders need to improve their ability to communicate with various generations to make the right decisions and be able to manage change to balance the demands of internal and public accountability with the educational needs of all students (Holmes et al., 2013).

Collaboration is pivotal for the success of university rectorate leaders in managing institutions. At ABC University, rectorate leaders are encouraged to embody responsible collaboration characterized by respect, collegiality, and commitment. These values, combined with determination, progressiveness, and adaptability, are essential for fostering internal academic traditions and cultures. Furthermore, these leaders are also expected to forge “smart partnerships” with external institutions, aligning with the university’s vision as stated (Kareem & Kin, 2018).

Higher education institutions’ success hinges on acknowledging the primacy of collaborative endeavors over solitary pursuits in improving institutional effectiveness (Pulido-Martos et al., 2023). Such collaboration becomes imperative as universities navigate challenges, notably the intricate dynamics of change and complexity ushered in by globalization. In this context, leadership emerges as a pivotal determinant influencing the realization of collaborative governance within an organization (Gallardo-Gallardo et al., 2017).

Communication and collaboration among the ABC university rectorate leadership need to be improved so that they have an impact on the resulting decisions. In addition, the leadership of the ABC rectorate can broaden the horizons of today’s leadership, one of which is becoming a critical thinker and, that is, being able to see things and events from different perspectives (Flores et al., 2012). In particular, critical thinkers consistently seek to lead their organizations in a rational, reasonable, and empathetic manner. Critical and agile leaders can generate ideas and programs that provide added value and new products at the university. Creativity and innovation are defined as competencies to show originality and inventiveness at work (Rony, 2020). Creativity is the ability to think outside the box and understand new ideas, methods, materials, products, and actions, while innovation involves the creation of new knowledge or a new combination of old insights to make a real and useful contribution to increasing the effectiveness of higher education (Mainemelis et al., 2015; Moos, 2015).

Based on the results of the interviews, the vice-rector showed that they increased their managerial competence by doing several things, including personal development (Earley & Bubb, 2023). They are self-aware and consistently seek out materials—be it books, videos, or audio—that aid in personal growth and self-improvement. Additionally, the rector frequently collaborates with the vice-rector on various extracurricular activities

A temporary assignment was given to complete a task within a certain period that may or may not be related to the field of work (Bodolica et al., 2021). They meet and lead new members so that they learn to deepen their knowledge and skills. In other words, they implement job expansion and job enrichment well. Job enlargement is a tool used by employers to increase the workload on vice-rectors. Another approach is that increasing variety and expanding responsibilities will provide opportunities for advancement and increased productivity (Bruning & Campion, 2019).

Job enrichment entails organizing and planning to gain more control over the vice-rectors. They are motivated and relieved of boredom by the execution of plans and the evaluation of results (Sungkit & Meiyanto, 2015). The job enlargement theory, which involves a horizontal expansion to increase job satisfaction and productivity, is simple and can be applied in a variety of situations (Pulido-Martos et al., 2023). When compared to job enlargement, job enrichment includes not only more duties and responsibilities, but also the right to make decisions and control. Job enrichment can help to humanize a company. Job enlargement and job enrichment are both effective methods

of motivating them to complete their tasks enthusiastically. Vice rectors can feel the psychological lift that comes from learning new skills and doing a good job, and they are encouraged to grow and push themselves (Mollahoseini & Farjad, 2012).

However, when faced with the fact that there are still many managerial competencies that have not been implemented effectively enough by the leaders of the rectorate, even though they have a lot of experience and have served as top leaders in various agencies, quite a lot of competency improvement efforts have been put into practice. This shows that the vice rector has not done enough evaluation (Ravet-Brown et al., 2023). While experiencing nostalgia for the past, they continue to retain a sense of capability and possess ample knowledge, whereas various changes have occurred, especially technological changes that have had a major impact on education, organizational growth, and changes in communication and coordination patterns (Fitaloka et al., 2020). Most of the vice chancellors are baby boomers, while members and work units at ABC University consist of generations X, Y, and Z. They have very different patterns of thinking, communicating, and coordinating. Often, they ask why they have to do a task that doesn't have a significant impact. They want clarity, transparency, and realism (Chong, 2008).

They feel constrained by protocol lines and command lines. Besides that, it requires an open space for expression with clear corridors. They are not the type to follow orders because of their position alone (Kraus et al., 2018). If this is well understood, the impact is that employees lack professional awareness. They need challenges and clear directions, as well as feedback on each activity (DeNisi & Kluger, 2000). This phenomenon also shows that the leadership's perception of what was considered right and appropriate in the past environment and organizational culture is not necessarily appropriate for the current environment and generation (Ogbonna & Harris, 2000). As a result, it is critical for leaders to evaluate quickly, develop good self-awareness, and implement changes as planned. Leaders are expected to continuously learn and adapt to current conditions (Bacon & Williams, 2022). Therefore, leaders need to have a personality that is sensitive to incoming messages where the message is expected to have meaning towards an emotionally binding climate in the form of warnings, needs, desires, hopes, and dislikes between groups that are constantly changing (Marquis & Huston, 2017).

Something that is very basic and is not done by management at ABC University is to have managers and human resources professionals who are reliable and understand the management of human resources (Pulido-Martos et al., 2023). HR is a capital asset, so it needs to be managed effectively. In some positions, appointments still refer to elements of personal closeness with superiors or the highest leadership at the university (Martin et al., 2010), even though considerations based on primordial paternalistic relationships must be avoided because, in an organization, appropriate and competent resources are the main driving force. Aside from that, without an HR management system, you can never expect to have adequate leadership and run the organization (Pulido-Martos et al., 2023; Ravet-Brown et al., 2023).

One of these initiatives pertains to the leadership succession program within tertiary institutions, commencing with an efficacious selection, recruitment, and promotion system that establishes specific leadership criteria (Kraus et al., 2018). These criteria encompass academic qualifications, experiential background, visionary outlook, and managerial proficiencies, ensuring that the leadership selection process transpires transparently and with accountability. All stakeholders engaged in this process are required to share a mutual comprehension of the selection criteria and procedures (Bacon & Williams, 2022). Furthermore, the endeavor encompasses the subsequent coaching of potential leaders via comprehensive training and mentorship initiatives, as well as special assignments that provide opportunities to develop leadership abilities (Bacon & Williams, 2022; Kraus et al., 2018). During the succession process, clear and open communication was carried out with all stakeholders in the academic community. This is to ensure that all parties understand the ongoing process and the purpose of the succession. It is hoped that universities

will always have their own uniqueness and challenges as well as be flexible and adaptive to the specific situations and conditions of the institution (Ravet-Brown et al., 2023).

Organizational support plays a pivotal role in enabling new leaders to function effectively. Organizational values that promote collaboration and integrity serve as the foundational underpinning for the requisites of leadership competency. Following this, an evaluation of the succession process is undertaken to identify both successful elements and areas requiring improvement for future undertakings (Kraus et al., 2018; Ravet-Brown et al., 2023). Receiving feedback from all involved parties will significantly contribute to the enhancement of the succession process in subsequent iterations. Even after succession is complete, it is important for new leaders to continue to develop themselves and receive any additional training or education needed (Bacon & Williams, 2022; Pulido-Martos et al., 2023). The university's "dream of excellence" is a big goal. One important element is having a leader who can identify strengths and weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (Nermend et al., 2022). It's a shame when Human Resources Department makes a program that doesn't take into account the actual facts and data but only deals with the problems it faces without thinking much about a clearer direction for the university's goals and as if the problems being faced are being cared for with full awareness (Keng et al., 2011).

### **6.1. Limitation**

This study presents some notable limitations. Although the observed phenomenon within tertiary institutions is significant and warrants examination, the findings from this study should be applied with caution. Each tertiary institution has its unique organizational culture and governance system, making broad application challenging. The research was conducted exclusively at ABC University and doesn't encompass other tertiary institutions. Moreover, time constraints were a pressing issue. Obtaining approvals and gathering both secondary and primary data posed challenges, particularly when employing qualitative research methods.

Gathering data and encouraging resource persons to discuss leadership competencies candidly was a significant hurdle. However, this research underscores a potential barrier to a university's journey towards excellence due to limited competence in top-tier leadership. Despite its localized focus, the findings should prompt researchers from tertiary institutions, not just in Indonesia, to explore similar topics. The urgency and importance of the study's objectives made the case study research method an apt choice. This case is unique because of its timely relevance and its potential impact on the university's aspiration to achieve excellence. It naturally evokes questions about how top leadership and management foster competencies to drive the university towards its goals. Due to time constraints, this study has honed its focus on specific areas, which will be elaborated upon

However, constrained by limited time, researchers have chosen to narrow their focus to the following areas: 1) Which managerial competencies most impact this university toward excellence? 2.) Which competencies have not been carried out effectively by leaders at ABC University? 3) How do the leaders (rector and vice-rector) build their managerial competencies?4) How does the Human Resources Department design leadership succession planning?

### **7. Conclusion**

At ABC University, the key strengths that characterize its top leadership—especially the rector and vice rector—is integrity by embodying these traits, they have set a sterling example for other leaders to emulate, laying a solid foundation for the aspiration of creating an exceptional academic institution. However, this foundation alone does not guarantee a seamless path to excellence. One of the pressing challenges facing the leadership is a palpable gap in communication and collaboration among leaders and various work units. The existing patterns of communication and coordination often seem mismatched with specific situations. A noteworthy concern is that the leadership's communicative approach tends to overlook generational nuances. Given the diverse age demographics present in a university setting, understanding and accommodating the distinctive characteristics of each generation is essential. Addressing this will enable the leadership to enhance both competence and

collaboration, ensuring that all voices are heard and valued. Planning, an integral component of effective leadership, has its own set of hurdles at ABC University. Although most leaders exhibit a proactive approach to planning, the execution often lacks integration. The segmented nature of this planning means that many strategies are reactive—formed in response to sudden and unforeseen needs rather than being proactive and holistic. Moreover, while certain advanced competencies, such as strategic thinking and analytical reasoning, are present among some leaders, they are not universally distributed across the leadership spectrum.

The leadership at ABC University is fortified with a breadth of experience, having held significant positions in a myriad of agencies. This deep reservoir of experience undeniably equips them with a nuanced understanding of managerial competence. Yet, this legacy of experience, which should ideally be a boon, paradoxically poses challenges in the current educational landscape. While their traditional strengths remain vital, the rapid evolution of the educational sector demands more. The onus is on these leaders to foster a growth mindset, an attitude that doesn't just rely on past successes but thrives on continuous learning and adaptability. Change is inevitable, and the ability to embrace and navigate these shifts is paramount. This adaptability, coupled with heightened self-awareness, will allow them to identify when to lean on past experiences and when to forge new paths in response to contemporary challenges. The educational sphere has undergone significant transformation. It no longer solely thrives on time-tested methods but calls for agility, quick decision-making, and a profound understanding of modern managerial nuances. For ABC University's leaders, the imperative isn't just to recognize that times have evolved but to actively recalibrate their leadership styles, ensuring they're not only keeping pace with but also leading the vanguard of change in education. In essence, while their foundational strengths are commendable, it's their adaptability and forward-thinking approach that will define their legacy in this dynamic era.

ABC University, in its current phase, grapples with a conspicuous absence of a structured succession system for its leadership roles. This gap casts a shadow over the caliber of leadership steering the institution. Without an organized process encompassing selection, recruitment, training, development, and promotion, the university finds itself making ad-hoc decisions regarding leadership appointments. Such an improvised approach not only undermines the strategic goals of the institution but also leaves room for inconsistencies in leadership quality. While some may argue that the role of vice chancellor is a coveted position, attracting numerous candidates, this sheer volume doesn't necessarily equate to quality. The assumption that the abundance of candidates simplifies the recruitment process is misleading. A position as crucial as that of a vice chancellor demands more than just numbers; it requires the right blend of expertise, vision, and adaptability.

The university's leadership void underscores the pressing need for an overhaul in the governance of higher education at ABC University. The onus now rests upon the university's stakeholders to re-evaluate and reform the existing processes. Instituting a structured succession planning system will not only ensure continuity and stability in leadership roles but also bolster the university's commitment to excellence and its vision for the future.

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