UNIVERSITI PUTRA MALAYSIA

RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN COMPETENCY AND SPIRITUALITY WITH EFFECTIVE ACADEMIC LEADERSHIP AMONG SELECTED MALAYSIAN PUBLIC UNIVERSITY ACADEMIC LEADERS

SITI AKMAR ABU SAMAH

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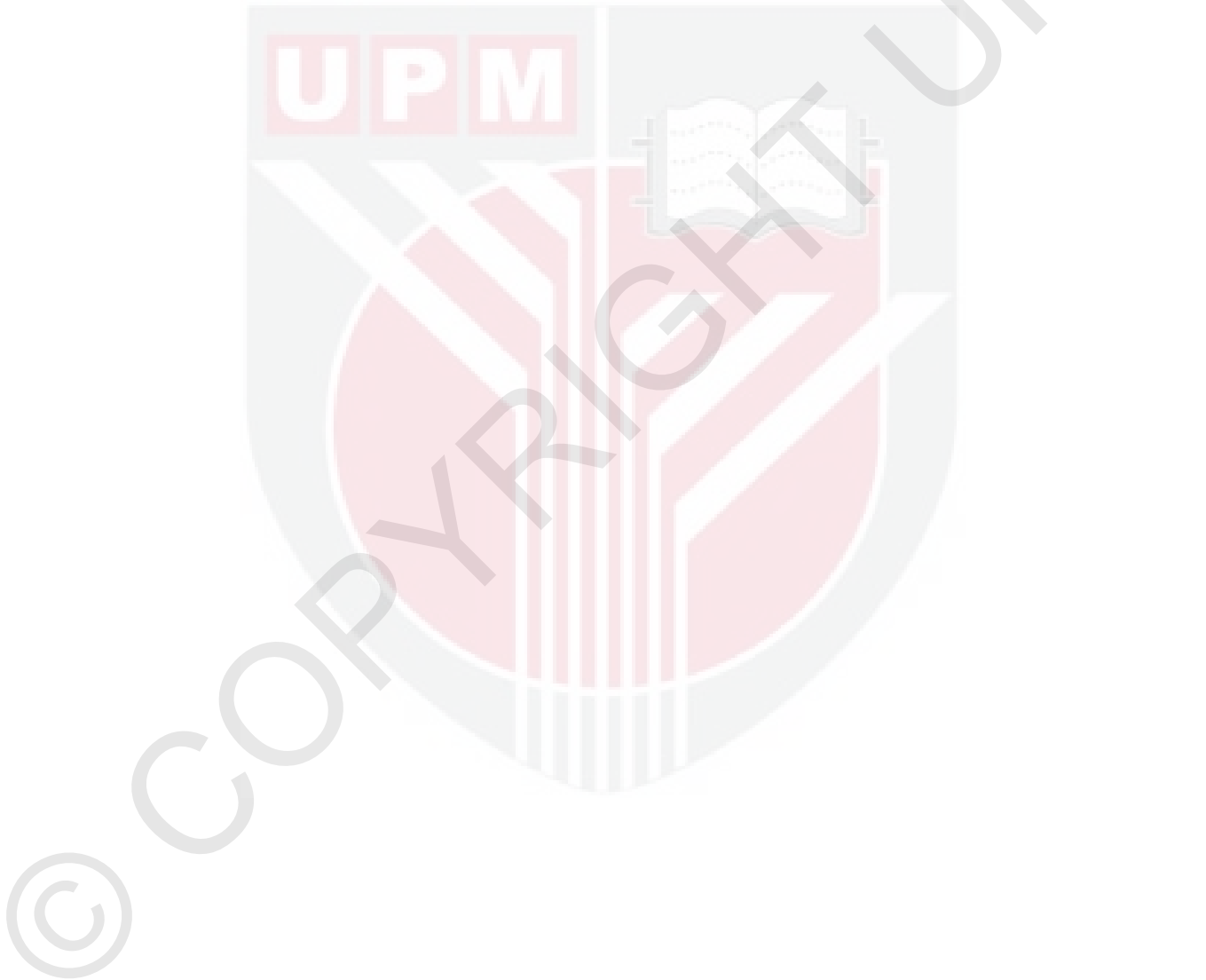
By

SITI AKMAR ABU SAMAH

Thesis Submitted to the School of Graduate Studies, Universiti Putra Malaysia in Fulfilment of the Requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

May 2014

DEDICATION

Dedicated to

my sterling leaders
Abu Samah Ahmad and Siti Hajar Hashim

not forgetting
Jamae

Abstract of thesis presented to the Senate of Universiti Putra Malaysia in Fulfilment of the requirement for the degree Doctor of Philosophy

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By

SITI AKMAR ABU SAMAH

May 2014

Chairperson :   Professor Abu Daud Silong, PhD
Faculty   :   Educational Studies

The purpose of this study is to examine the relationship between competencies, spirituality and the effectiveness of academicians as leaders of the institution of higher education. These are leaders who serve in varying hierarchy such as at course, programme, faculty and academic administrative levels. Research on leaders of higher institutions has been evolving on competencies in leadership, knowledge, skills and attitude. With the advent of global needs, challenges and requirements, inadequate competencies among leaders stifle to bring public universities to greater heights. Nevertheless, adding to competencies, spirituality is viewed as enhancing leadership effectiveness in the institution of higher education.

Hence, the research renders for the following objectives to be achieved through further investigation specifically to examine whether there is significant relationship between the levels of competency, spirituality and academic leadership effectiveness perceived by academic leaders in the selected Malaysian universities; to determine the extent of relationship between competency and academic leadership effectiveness; to determine the extent of relationship between spirituality and leadership effectiveness among academic leaders in the selected Malaysian universities; to determine if there is statistically significant difference among academic leaders with regards to competency identified for academic leadership effectiveness and to determine if there is statistically significant difference among academic leaders with regards to spirituality identified for academic leadership effectiveness.

Data have been collected through survey questionnaire conducted, with a sample of 180 academic leaders from the selected universities. The items of the questionnaire were chosen and adapted from previous studies. They were responded by selected academicians, those holding positions below the deputy dean level specifically those who are heads of programmes, courses or subjects that faculties offer as well

as coordinators. Both descriptive and inferential analyses have been conducted. The validity and reliability of the instrument used were tested in a pilot study. Multiple regression approach has also been undertaken to analyse the data in order to answer the research questions. One-way analysis of variance (ANOVA), paired samples t test and Pearson Correlation, among others, were conducted to test the relationship of the variables being studied.

In summary some crucial findings indicated the relationship that of competency level perceived by academic leaders stands at moderate level (60%) in relation to academic leadership effectiveness, while relationship of level of spirituality component perceived by academic leaders is ranked high (88.9%) in relation to academic leadership effectiveness. In addition, attitude has the most significant relationship on leadership effectiveness (Beta Coefficient .514) and human relationship (Beta Coefficient .808) has its most effect on the academic leaders to perform effectively. Academic leaders have to be aware of the challenges ahead when holding position with regards to attitude as a competency and human relationship as spirituality. Nonetheless, the other dimensions, namely competencies of leadership, knowledge, skills and spirituality, are not to be marginalized.

Finally, several recommendations are proposed to enhance leadership in higher education in particular leadership development programmes and continuous education. The research outcome may also contribute to the process of selection with the proposal to utilize the knowledge and insights that have been conceptualized based on the findings. Therefore, the mechanism to conduct leadership search can assist the institution to choose and develop future leaders that can fill current academic leadership positions or for future replacement or succession. In conclusion, the relationship of these competencies identified complemented by spirituality have the slant in the basis for academic leader development that promotes continuous improvement for the institutions.

Abstrak tesis yang dikemukakan kepada Senat Universiti Putra Malaysia sebagai memenuhi keperluan untuk ijazah Doktor Falsafah

HUBUNGKAIT KOMPETENSI DAN SPIRITUALITI DENGAN KEPEMIMPINAN AKADEMIK BERKESAN DALAM KALANGAN PEMIMPIN AKADEMIK DI UNIVERSITI AWAM MALAYSIA

Oleh:

SITI AKMAR ABU SAMAH

Mei 2014

Pengerusi   **:**   **Profesor Abu Daud Silong, PhD**
Fakulti   **:**   **Pengajian Pendidikan**

Tujuan kajian ini adalah untuk mengkaji hubungankait antara kompetensi, kerohanian dan keberkesanan ahli akademik sebagai pemimpin institusi pengajian tinggi. Mereka adalah pemimpin yang berkhidmat dalam pelbagai hierarki termasuk pada peringkat kursus, program, fakulti dan pentadbiran akademik. Penyelidikan ke atas pemimpin-pemimpin institusi pengajian tinggi telah berkembang dalam lingkungan kompetensi dalam kepimpinan, pengetahuan, kemahiran dan sikap. Dengan kepesatan keperluan global, cabaran dan keperluan, kecekapan yang tidak mencukupi dalam kalangan pemimpin menyekat untuk membawa universiti awam ke tahap yang lebih tinggi. Bagaimanapun, tambahan kepada kecekapan, kerohanian dilihat sebagai meningkatkan keberkesanan kepimpinan dalam institusi pendidikan tinggi.

Oleh itu, penyelidikan ini mengarah kepada objektif-objektif berikut untuk dicapai melalui siasatan lanjut khusus untuk menyiasat sama ada terdapat hubungan yang signifikan antara tahap kompetensi, kerohanian dan keberkesanan kepimpinan akademik yang dilihat oleh pemimpin akademik di universiti-universiti Malaysia yang terpilih; untuk menentukan sejauh mana hubungan antara kecekapan dan keberkesanan kepimpinan akademik; untuk menentukan sejauh mana hubungan antara kerohanian dan keberkesanan kepimpinan dalam kalangan pemimpin akademik di universiti-universiti Malaysia yang terpilih; untuk menentukan sama ada terdapat perbezaan yang signifikan secara statistik dalam kalangan pemimpin akademik dari segi kecekapan yang dikenal pasti untuk keberkesanan kepimpinan akademik dan untuk menentukan sama ada terdapat perbezaan yang signifikan secara statistik dalam kalangan pemimpin akademik yang berkaitan dengan kerohanian yang dikenal pasti untuk keberkesanan kepimpinan akademik.

iii

Maklumat telah dikumpulkan melalui soal-selidik kajian yang dijalankan dengan sampel 180 pemimpin akademik dari universiti terpilih. Item soal-selidik telah dipilih dan disesuaikan daripada kajian sebelum ini. Bahan ini telah diberi respon oleh ahli akademik yang terpilih, mereka yang memegang jawatan di bawah paras timbalan dekan, khususnya mereka yang berjawatan sebagai ketua program, kursus atau subjek yang ditawarkan fakulti dan juga penyelaras. Kedua-dua analisis deskriptif dan inferensi telah dijalankan. Kesahan dan kebolehpercayaan instrumen yang digunakan telah diuji dalam kajian rintis. Pendekatan regresi berganda juga telah dijalankan untuk menganalisis data bagi menjawab persoalan kajian. Sehala ujian analisis varians (ANOVA), berpasangan sampel t dan Korelasi Pearson, antara lain, telah dijalankan untuk menguji hubungan pembolehubah yang dikaji.

Ringkasnya beberapa penemuan penting yang menunjukkan hubungan bahawa tahap kecekapan tahap dilihat oleh pemimpin akademik berada pada tahap sederhana (60%) berhubung dengan keberkesanan kepimpinan akademik, manakala hubungan tahap komponen kerohanian dilihat oleh pemimpin akademik berada di kedudukan yang tinggi (88.9%) dalam berhubung dengan keberkesanan kepimpinan akademik. Di samping itu, sikap mempunyai hubungan yang paling besar ke atas keberkesanan kepimpinan (Beta Coefficient 0.514) dan hubungan manusia (Beta Coefficient 0.808) mempunyai kesan yang paling atas pemimpin akademik untuk melaksanakan dengan berkesan. Pemimpin akademik perlu menyedari cabaran yang mendatang apa

bila memegang jawatan berkaitan dengan sikap sebagai kecekapan dan hubungan manusia sebagai kerohanian. Namun demikian, dimensi lain, iaitu kompetensi kepimpinan, pengetahuan, kemahiran dan kerohanian, tidak dipinggirkan.

Akhir sekali, beberapa cadangan dikemukakan untuk meningkatkan kepimpinan dalam pendidikan tinggi dalam program-program pembangunan kepimpinan tertentu dan pendidikan berterusan. Hasil penyelidikan juga boleh menyumbang kepada proses pemilihan dengan cadangan untuk menggunakan pengetahuan dan pemikiran yang telah digarapkan berdasarkan penemuan tersebut. Oleh itu, mekanisme untuk menjalankan carian kepimpinan boleh membantu institusi untuk memilih dan membangunkan pemimpin masa depan yang boleh mengisi jawatan-jawatan kepimpinan akademik semasa atau untuk penggantian masa depan. Kesimpulannya, hubungan kompetensi yang dikenal pasti dilengkapi dengan kerohanian mempunyai kecenderungan asas bagi pembangunan pemimpin akademik yang dapat memberi penambahbaikan berterusan bagi institusi.

iv

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

APPROVAL

I certify that an Examination Committee met on 19 May 2014 to conduct the final examination of Siti Akmar Abu Samah on her Degree of Doctor of Philosophy thesis entitled "Relationship Between Competency, Spirituality And Leadership Effectiveness of Selected Malaysian Public University Academic Leaders" in accordance with Universiti Pertanian Malaysia (Higher Degree) Act 1980 and Universiti Pertanian Malaysia (Higher Degree) Regulations 1981. The committee recommends that the candidate be awarded the Doctor of Philosophy.

Members of Examination Committee were as follows:

Zaidatol Akmar Lope Pihie, PhD
Professor
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Date:

This thesis is submitted to the Senate of Universiti Putra Malaysia and has been accepted as fulfilment of the requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy. The members of the Supervisory Committee were as follow:

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BUJANG BIN KIM HUAT, PhD
Professor and Dean
School of Graduate Studies
Universiti Putra Malaysia

Date:

Declaration by graduate student

I hereby confirm that:

- this thesis is my original work;
- quotations, illustrations and citations have been duly referenced; this thesis has not been submitted previously or concurrently for any other degree at any other institutions;
- intellectual property from the thesis and copyright of thesis are fully-owned by Universiti Putra Malaysia, as according to the Universiti Putra Malaysia (Research) Rules 2012;
- written permission must be obtained from supervisor and the office of Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research and Innovation) before thesis is published (in the form of written, printed or in electronic form) including books, journals, modules, proceedings, popular writings, seminar papers, manuscripts, posters, reports, lecture notes, learning modules or any other materials as stated in the Universiti Putra Malaysia (Research) Rules 2012;
- there is no plagiarism or data falsification/fabrication in the thesis, and scholarly integrity is upheld as according to the Universiti Putra Malaysia (Graduate Studies) Rules 2003 (Revision 2012-2013) and the Universiti Putra Malaysia (Research) Rules 2012. The thesis has undergone plagiarism detection software.

Signature:_____   Date: 19 May 2014

Name and Matric No.: Siti Akmar Abu Samah (GS23604)

Declaration by Members of Supervisory Committee

This is to confirm that:
- the research conducted and the writing of this thesis was under our supervision;
- supervision responsibilities as stated in the Universiti Putra Malaysia (Graduate Studies) Rules 2003 (Revision 2012-2013) are adhered to.

Signature: _____
Name of Chairman of
Supervisory Committee:

Signature: _____
Name of Member of
Supervisory Committee:

Signature: _____
Name of Member of
Supervisory Committee:

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES

LIST OF FIGURES

xiv

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1   Background of the Problem

Academic leadership has been the essential core element for higher education sustainability in recent years (Collins, 2001; Hochel & Wilson, 2007; Syed Jalaludin, 2009). Although Malaysian higher education is attaining its half a century growth, for it to further excel in the realm of education, leadership development has to be given greater emphasis (Khalid, 2009), particularly with the launching of the National Higher Education Strategic Plan by the Ministry of Higher Education, Malaysia in 2007 October (Kamaruzaman & Siti Akmar, 2008a). With this initiative, it definitely renders for dynamic participation of all levels in the academia to play their role in leading the nation power of growth and development.

This is an underpinning for a preparation to be taken on the development of potential leaders to steer the helm of the ivory tower through proper succession planning initiative (Rothwell, 2009). This concern for leadership is further reiterated by the statement made by the then eminent Minister in which he states that, "the best strategy for dealing with the regularity of unanticipated phenomena is to build and fortify strong fundamentals. Becoming strong in fundamentals will enable us to withstand any unanticipated events. I believe this is the best strategy to adopt since we cannot accurately predict the nature of the scourge that is going to hit us next. Rather than using our limited resources to predict the next tsunami of whatever kind, we will be well advised to devote our hard-earned resources to building a strong and unassailable beach head." (Khalid, 2009 p.1).

In a statement of the Universiti Teknologi MARA Vice Chancellor Circular Number 24/2008 dated 13th August 2008, the aspiration of the University to achieve a research university status of world class standing is a clear and structured vision. Committed participation of every university member in all aspects of academic excellence vis-a-vis international recognition has to be continuously enhanced. This aspiration requires the effort to generate excellence that begins from the fundamentals of leadership which are to create, generate and innovate. Apart from performing effectively in academic roles which include teaching-learning, research and professional service contribution, the academia has to possess the competency and capability as leaders with the knowledge and understanding of leadership skills. Therefore, based on the above initial concern, it is vital that academic leader applies relevant competency in leadership, of his knowledge, skills and attitudes into his own leadership styles to help generate the cycles of academic activities to help attain the status of a renowned institution of higher education (Wheeler et al, 2008; Kamaruzaman & Siti Akmar, 2008b).

Koen and Bitzer (2010) shared their concern on higher education leadership as dynamic, complex and multidimensional which has enticed many researchers to

interpret, capture and analyse the essence of higher education leadership from different perspectives. Hence, this current study intends to take the opportunity laid down by this most observed and least understood phenomena through investigation on the competencies of academic leaders that have spurned from leadership concerns which are enhancing cohesiveness, addressing and resolving critical issues and hopefully promoting institutional effectiveness.

For a university to develop a strategic academic culture, there are necessary lessons to learn in order to develop effective leadership that brings about positive outcomes based on a shared vision (Middlehurst, 1993). Hence, for this study, the focus on enhancing the development of leadership intends to help the university attain its competitive edge that renders high image in the academia. To do so, grooming potential academics with the right competency can assist the university to achieve this task. For these justifications, the research is going to address this essential.

For the last three decades, the concept of leadership competency has received increasing attention (Poorkiani, Beheshtifar & Moghadam, 2010). Although this has been the focus of business management literature, this concept has also become crucial amongst the academic community (Rothwell & Lindholm, 1999). The literature further reiterates that the definition of the term 'competency' has been evolving since and has now been so close to an operational and implementable description and this includes both properties and classifications.

Although there have been substantial exponents of research on leadership, in particular, there seems to be very few research focusing on the specific requisite of leadership competencies in educational institutions (Koen & Bitzer, 2010). Throughout the last ten years, leadership researchers have continuously worked on to identify the characteristics of effective institutions and reiteration from the authors indicates that the characteristics may include those that are excellent academically, responsive developmentally, equitable socially, and supportive organisationally. They further say that educational leaders are like stewards than bosses, and those characteristics include providing the necessary support, resources, and time to the subordinates to do their job.

In creating and generating human resources, it is also only in recent years that published work on spirituality takes on a serious note in journals. In his comprehensive review on "Spirituality and Performance in Organization", Karakas (2010) who reviews 140 articles on the said issue, seems to concur on the fact that spirituality improves performance and organizational effectiveness, of which he verifies the relevance spirituality provides in enhancing work performance. Hence, the present study attempts to investigate the relationship towards leadership effectiveness, specific of those in institution of higher education.

This research has included spiritual capability, a contribution to the body of knowledge, as the variable because the academic theory and research have provided the support of the relationship between spirituality and leadership (Fry, 2003; Kriger & Seng, 2005; Dent, Higgins & Wharff, 2005). Spirituality includes spiritual beliefs and practices that have been factors that are linked to the forming

2

and fostering of servant leaders. However, historically, spirituality and leadership theories are said to be world apart. It is quite recent that Reave (2005) has reiterated that nowadays an increasing body of evidence has indicated that these two fields are related.

For the current study, it is also pertinent to look into a research by Kouzes and Posner (2007). They emphasise that effective leaders are able to focus on the right things in order that their organization moves towards excellence. They reiterate the practices of these exemplary leaders into five categories namely to model the way in which it states that the leader preaches and works in behaviours and values that they want their organization to emulate and develops open, honest, and trusting interactions through their conversations and actions. The second practice which is to inspire a shared vision, the basis of the belief that through communication of significant ideas and causes that capture the attention, the people within the organisation will be more motivated. Additionally, the third practice is to challenge the process and for this, the leader who practises these traits is not necessarily the problem solver but rather the problem identifier. This type of leader seeks out opportunity, encourage creativity which leads to exploring new ways of doing things, and support taking risks. The fourth practice which is to enable others to act projects the leadership practices with an attempt to inspire confidence in others through collaboration and to empower subordinates to act on their own ideas. Finally, the list ends with encouraging the heart. Such a leader expressively ascertains behaviour which displays concern, appreciation and care for his subordinates and hence, he maintains a caring and collegial community.

As the present study intends to explore the extent in relationship of competency, it is in proponent with another model. It is in Wheatley (1992) who reiterates that leadership has to do with relationship as it is always dependent on context and the context is established by the relationship that one values in an organization. It is commonplace to see leadership being exert in writing and speeches, most of all leadership happens in a more interactive context in which individuals in groups of team accomplish common goal in several attempts together.

In concurring with similar concept, Freeman (2011) emphasizes that as leadership may be best understood as a philosophy, it is actually practical philosophy that drives every individual in an organization to achieve common goals together through interaction based on affect, motives, attitudes, beliefs, values, ethics, morals, will, commitment, expectations and responsibilities. Evaluating from the above concerns, the present study is tied up within the rope of interconnectedness of competency and spirituality that have bearing on the leadership effectiveness amongst the academics holding office (Karakas, 2010).

Malaysia has a vision to be a fully developed nation by the year 2020. In order to achieve this vision, the country needs highly educated and trained workforce (Shahmandi, 2012; Oxford Business Group, 2010). This effort is shared by both the public and private sectors; and higher education institutions are not spared in promoting this aspiration (Siti Akmar et al, 2010). The population of the current study includes Malaysian public universities on the Klang Valley. Historically, these universities which are government-run have been in existence since the last

3

half-century (Oxford Business Group, 2010) in which these universities have been the key drivers in shift toward a knowledge-based economy. Therefore, the need for effective academic leaders will act to set impetus for higher education excellence.

In promoting Malaysia as a centre for international education hub, the academic leaders have to be competent not only within the specificity of their operational competencies, but also include the human relationship that strikes the balance of effectiveness (Abdul Ghani, Naser & Intsar, 2009). The public universities in the Klang Valley have been chosen for this study as these institutions provide higher education that plays a vital role in the emergence of this nation (Oxford Business Group, 2010). The number of faculties in these universities is representative of the number of respondents that will be selected to be the research population.

University has always relied on academicians to hold administrative or leadership positions in the operation of unit or institute across the board. Being trained as an academician, one requires leadership skills and competencies in order to operate the organisation effectively. When academicians with no formal leadership competencies, are appointed to hold manager's position, the organisation's operation displays limitation of competency and leadership limitation (Deem, 2007). Educational institutions will not be able to continue to improve unless they move away from an over-concentration on the short-term and focus on the strategic nature of planning and development.

This study attempts to contribute to the body of knowledge on human resource development research focusing on academic leaders, to identify the key practices of academic leaders, and to determine if supportive practices are more prevalent in better institutions. Hence, for this current study, the researcher intends to determine the extent of the relationship that competency and spirituality can corporate the academic leadership effectiveness. This validation process should help the ministerial and institutional officials to revisit the current policy or decision making for the kind of leaders that can affect change within the institution.

Therefore, based on the above discussion, this study investigates the impact of relationship of the predictors of competency and spirituality on the academic leadership effectiveness. It extends the current literature by empirically investigating the roles played by competencies and spirituality in influencing the leadership effectiveness of academicians holding leadership position. It is critical to understand whether these factors affect the leadership to strategise the focus of enhancing the needs and demand of higher education in the country that is constantly evolving due to the global demand of development. This study is found to be crucial as the insightful information, awareness and educating through leadership development will contribute to the narrowing of the literature gap on academic leadership.

4

1.2   Problem Statement

One major challenge faced by institutions of higher education (IHE) to sustain its credibility as a prime educational organisation in the country is the effectiveness of the academic leaders. As university has always relied on academicians to hold leadership positions in the operation of units, it is necessary that they are well-equipped with the competencies that set them off to become effective leaders that (Boettcher & Craven, 2008; Wolfred, 2008).

Nevertheless, apart from competency, there seem to be pressing needs to explore the inner person of the leader (Campbell, 2007). This is due to the day-to-day interactions that result in miscommunication and misunderstanding of orders from the leaders towards the other team members. Then, conflict arises and no one seems to know the resolution to such complicated situation (Hashim, 2001). Based on the research report of AKEPT 680-3/3(35), it suggested further work on the significance of spiritual capability as a dimension in leadership (Zaini et al, 2009). When both leaders and team members realize that they are trapped into a conundrum, they choose to act and perform as a sole individual rather than a member of the team. This problem may continue and failing to notice, it will create loss. The persistence of the occurring problem might have lagged the progress of academic activities like teaching and learning, research and publication as well as professional services. Furthermore, this also might have hindered the full contribution of IHE to the Malaysian society as a whole (Abdul Ghani et al, 2009).

Nonetheless, the situation expressed above is reiterated by Karakas (2010), who has stated that there is positive relationship between spirituality at work and organisational productivity and performance. In addition, he admitted that as much as there have been reservation on spirituality effect on organization, other research have proven that spirituality in-house practices have positive returns for the organizations (Ary, 2009). Karakas (2010) also depicted from his reviews that there are three different perspectives on how spirituality enables or leads to organizational performance. In his work, Karakas (2010) introduced three perspectives on how spirituality benefits the organization as an individual and as a unit by itself. He listed that spirituality has its impact on the following by the fact that it (1) enhances employee well-being and quality of life, (2) provides employees a sense of purpose and meaning at work and (3) provides employees a sense of interconnectedness and community. Hence, this current study attempts to determine the relationship spirituality has on academic leadership effectiveness.

The unique characteristics of academicians and the complexity in the career development inside the higher education institution in Malaysia renders for the need of a strategic model of talent pool searching in higher education succession planning. The system should accommodate and be in favour of the needs of higher education institution: to ascertain the flexibility of the academic performance while at the same time build core competencies for the institution. Higher education, facing change and high risks, is in need of new and better leadership now and also not just in the highest leadership, but at all levels (Wheeler et al, 2008).

5

The goal of leadership must be to expand the number of leaders and the total amount of leadership. This means that institutions must make a continuous effort in two critical areas (Newman et al, 2004). Given the fact that Malaysian university is continuously assessing its capability to run in the ranks of top universities in the world, the need for better leadership and what has been in practice has created a gap. Based on the above statement, the pressing need is therefore the requirement to conduct a structured research to find the answers to the issue. Hence, this accommodates the pertinent rationale for this research to be conducted and further addressed in the following research objectives.

1.3 Objectives of the Study

The general objective of this study is to determine the relationships among the variables of competencies and spirituality towards academic leadership effectiveness. Specific research objectives are:

1. to examine whether there is any significant relationship between the levels of competency, spirituality and academic leadership effectiveness perceived by academic leaders
2. to determine the extent of the relationship between competency and academic leadership effectiveness
3. to determine the extent of the relationship between spirituality of academic leaders and academic leadership effectiveness
4. to determine if there is a statistically significant difference with regards to competency identified among academic leaders for academic leadership effectiveness and
5. to determine if there is a statistically significant difference with regards to spirituality identified among academic leaders for academic leadership effectiveness.

1.4 Research Questions

Specific research questions addressed in this study are as follow:

1. What are the relationship between the levels of competency, spirituality and academic leadership effectiveness perceived by academic leaders?
2. What is the extent of the relationship between competency and academic leadership effectiveness?
3. What is the extent of the relationship between spirituality of academic leaders and academic leadership effectiveness?
4. Is there a statistically significant difference with regards to competency identified among academic leaders for academic leadership effectiveness? and
5. Is there a statistically significant difference with regards to spirituality identified among academic leaders for academic leadership effectiveness?

1.5   Significance of the Research

In tandem with the Malaysian government's mission and vision to enhance the standard and quality of higher education, university has a pivotal role in establishing the country as such (Kamaruzaman & Siti Akmar, 2008a). However, evidence reveals significant shortage in leadership that necessitates the influence on academics to be actively involved in enhancing the significance of higher education, and of those who can envisage the constantly changing academic environment. With inadequate competency in the form of the domain of knowledge, skills, and attitudes; results and performance of the organisation are affected (Amrizah, 2009). The persistence of the occurring problem might have lagged the progress of dynamic academic activity in the institution. Furthermore, this might also hinder the full contribution of institutions of higher education to the Malaysian society. Therefore, the study attempts to provide input for institutional improvement at the decision-making platform preferably at the ministerial level.

In position which requires the enhancement of academic activities, suitable candidates need to possess competent leadership skills (Blanchard & Miller, 2007). Simultaneously, the candidates have to be competent enough to handle themselves as well as promoting others in terms of teaching, researching, and providing professional services (Wheeler et al, 2008). These academicians will be appointed to lead the institution in varying hierarchy such as at course, programme, faculty and academic administrative levels. To assist institutions of higher education, educational centres of excellence and academic research centres have to define the competencies for sustainable succession plan of innovative and competent faculty members for prospective leadership duties, in order that mobilization of the institutions can get started.

This study offers the prospects of competencies, empirically proven for prospective faculty members to be selected in the leadership pool to prepare them to generate not only teaching and research initiatives, but also all other academic activities of excellence. The contribution to the body of knowledge specifically on competency relevant to academicians and the contribution of spirituality in promoting the enhancement of academic leadership effectiveness will accommodate to the tenure system in the academic institution. Meanwhile, the study will help to equip the potential talents the necessary competencies in terms of leadership, knowledge, skills and attitude before they can be successors in executing academic obligations and related activities in respective academic organisation, in particular the faculty, institute, centre or unit. In addition, the study is intended to help university to produce effective leaders as it is believed to be an important aspect to improve the performance of higher education institution in Malaysia and to create competitive advantage in academic excellence (Norzaini, 2012; Zaini et al, 2009).

Historically, Malaysian institutions of higher education began to be established during the post-World War Two era in the 1940's, and they are relatively young in

7

comparison to those established ones around the world. Hence, leadership remains crucial to ensure sustainability of the organisation. In these institutions of higher education, the concern for effective succession planning has been indicated clearly by the present selection of academic leaders in the public universities, in particular (Zaini et al, 2009). Finding replacement for vacated position is not any easier when academic leaders have to retire or leave in absence due to emergency or taking a break. This situation exists in Malaysian public university in which academicians holding leadership position are appointed according to terms. When one has completed a term there will be the next session of selection in which most times through recommendation based on performance (pers. comm. Tan Sri Anwar Ali, 2010).

The impact expected from this study sees the grooming of young academicians of one to five years to be exposed and groomed early for future academic leadership role. Subsequently, academicians in the tenure of six to ten years of service receive continuous enhancement in leadership training. Creating effective training modules for competency enhancement becomes the Ministry's initiative in creating first class university human capital for the higher education operation to be effective (Zaini et al, 2009). One of the benefits of the study is that the result of the research can provide guideline for effective and dynamic creation of a pool of talented academicians that can be groomed through education, training and other relevant developmental programmes. Academicians of public and private universities can emulate best practices to develop potential academicians to execute roles of research leader to intensify the formation of a research culture in the institutions.

Another expected outcome is to provide the Ministry of Higher Education and its human resource development and management departments the benefits of developing a talent pool of academic leaders with the understanding on the extent of competency complementing with spirituality than can contribute positively to each other and hence promoting leadership effectiveness in institution of higher education. This can provide continuous potentials to execute the leadership role in the institution. The study provides the Ministry and institution of higher education the knowledge of concrete model that can strategise staff selection for leadership assignments. This study helps the other academic institutions under the jurisdiction of the Ministry to handle selection using informed knowledge as a result of the research. The exercise of selection entails the preparation of these academicians for future stewardship in the university leadership for academic enhancement (Hochel & Wilson, 2007). Findings from this study will present essential information and serve as guidelines in formulating and executing the leadership selection policy in the education arena.

1.6 Scope of the Study

As the area of the research suggests, the setting of the study is conducted within the selected number of public universities in Malaysia. In order to keep focus and to minimize generalizability, five universities have been selected to provide appropriate number of samples. These universities selected have on average been

in operation at least for 30 years. The time range is selected based on ascertaining the flow of appointment of academic managers that shows trend and pattern in the leadership outcome. Newly established ones are not included as they have not been established more than 30 years. The established ones are more significant.

From each university, only academicians who have held or are holding positions within the faculty are selected as respondents. The choice made on this group of academicians is due to the fact that they have gone through substantial years as academicians to vouch for the kind of leadership they have gone through with. Moreover, for this study and for the title it renders, private universities are not included. This opens for future direction of the current research to look into the leadership development situation in this type of institutions.

1.7   Limitations

When this study is conducted, it is subjected to several limitations. Among the limitations include the issue on the questionnaire designed. It has been the main research instrument for this study. The data needed for this study were gathered via e-mail and mailed questionnaire and such instrument may raise some concerns about method bias. In normal circumstances, the use of such survey questionnaire may give rise to some form of bias.

Additionally, the data obtained were based on the information provided by the respondents from the questionnaire, which was developed by the researcher. Therefore, the validity and reliability of the questions are subject to interpretations, although attempts were made to minimise the possibilities of these different interpretations by validating and pre-testing the instrument in a pilot study.

The questionnaires were sent to the academicians throughout the selected institutions of higher education or the public universities. Hence, limited by the scope of the study, no information has been collected from the academicians of private universities. The possible inclusion of public university academicians may provide insights which may be of use for the reliability and validity of the questionnaire designed.

1.8   Definitions of Terms

There are several terms that have been used which are defined, explained and described. It is essential here to clarify exactly what are meant by the terms which are being used in this study. Specifically, the constitutive and operational definitions of these terms are provided below:

Competency:
Constitutive: The word competency is derived from the Latin word "Competere" which means to be suitable (Tripathi, Ranjan & Tarun, 2010). This term is further defined as the general descriptions of the abilities which are required to perform in

certain specified areas successfully. In profiling competencies the following dimensions apply.

Operational: For this study, the competencies of leadership, knowledge, skills and attitudes are synthesized to express performance requirements in behavioural terms (Abell & Oxbrow, 2001). Collectively, competency is the ability to perform an activity to a level that is acceptable for the effectiveness of a group, an organization or an institution. This ability is directly related to performance, its effectiveness and the value of the performed activity. The capacity to develop competencies is derived from education, training and experience, while this research delves into relationship study (Tripathi, Ranjan & Tarun, 2010; Rothwell, 2007).

Leadership:
Constitutive: Essentially, the term leadership is an acknowledgement of the root word leader. It is the concept of being able to work effectively together in a state of interdependence (Covey, 2004). Furthermore, it is about creating a vision of what might be and fostering a culture that supports the attainment of the institutional vision.

Operational: In this study, the term leadership is within the university context of which its function is closely related and integrated at institutional, faculty and department levels (Norzaini, 2012). As much it has been argued, leadership and management are two complex functions; however, for this study, both the academic leadership role and the management role require aspects of leadership.

Knowledge:
Constitutive: Khoo (2007) defines knowledge as having information that allows to know, to understand, to be acquainted with, to be aware of, to have the experience of, or to be familiar with something, someone or how to do something. It is the understanding of the information about a subject, which has been obtained by experience or study, and which is either in a person's mind or possessed by people generally (Griffiths & King, 1986).

Operational: In this study, this term is used in relations to occupation specific in university (Wheeler et al, 2009).

Skills:
Constitutive: Skills can be defined as the ability to use one's knowledge effectively (Griffiths & King, 1986). It is further posited by Wheatley (1992) as the proficiency, facility, or dexterity which has been acquired or developed through training or experience.

Operational: In this study, skills are occupation specific which is related pertaining to the work of academic leaders (Bartram, 2006).

Attitudes:
Constitutive: These are internally-drawn dimensions that provide a force of energizing expected outcome in the organization (Ryan, 2008). It is known as the

characteristics within the cognitive, affective and behavioural components (Tripathi et al, 2010).

Operational: For this current research, the term attitudes refer to the individual's feelings about performing a behaviour (Ajzen & Sheikh, 2013). It can be determined through an assessment of the individual's beliefs with regards to the consequences that arise from the behaviour.

Spirituality:
Constitutive: This concept of spirituality is manifested in providing services for the organization through collaboration, excellence, personal refinements and accountability (Abdul Ghani et al, 2009; Walt, 2014). These principles work into the organisation, essentially among the members.

Operational: For the purpose of this study, spirituality is viewed as having to do with human framework of organizational values based on one's relationship with God (Ary, 2009; Abdul Ghani, Naser & Intsar, 2009). The next is the relationship that one has upon oneself and with others (Salahudin, 2010). These are dimensions that are perceived and later to be proven reliable; in order to ensure that academic leaders in Malaysian universities at all levels share a collective leadership perspective to achieve the objectives of providing excellent higher education of world class quality (Ahmad Sarji, 2010; Dzulkifli, 2009; Campbell, 2007). In its relevance too, exists the nation statute of *Rukun Negara* or National Principles incepted in 1970, of which the first thrust is the belief in God (Sulaiman, 2013).

Academic Leadership Effectiveness:
Constitutive: It has been highlighted that academic leadership effectiveness entails the success of leaders towards institution development and change (Fieldler, 1997; Abdul Ghani et al, 2009).
Operational: For this study it is connected with the competency and spirituality of bringing about improvement among academicians by leadership empowering the peers or subordinates, bringing about connected through deep values for institutional benefits and initiating team spirit to achieve organizational success (Cacioppe, 1998). As a result of this, a process which is conducted orderly at the organization level can identify and groom potential people to take over the helm or to replace leaders (DuBrin, 2010).

Malaysian Public Universities:
Constitutive: Malaysian university is that knowledge-laden industry which leadership generates leadership in order to sustain the existence and credibility of the institutions (Syed Jalaludin, 2009). They are knowledge-based organisations where the added value of the employees is the knowledge they possess, that can be transferred from one situation to another.

Operational: For this study the institution of higher education of public statute is the location in which the population is derived. From these Malaysian universities; academic leaders that match the criteria of competencies (Dzulkifli, 2009) are

found. Within the scope of this research, the academic leaders from institutions of higher education are the population of respondents for the study. In the earlier chapter, the listings of these institutions presented the names of Malaysian universities. From this population lies the selected sample of respondents coming from this category of universities found in Malaysia.

1.9 Organisation of the Thesis

This thesis comprises five chapters. The summary of each chapter is presented below. Chapter 1 highlights the importance of identifying appropriate competencies required of academic leaders as well as the incorporation of these predictors upon the effectiveness of the academic leaders who are in position and also who may hold position. In this chapter, justification for the current research and the problem statement of the research, vital elements and a brief on the research variables are presented. In addition, this part of the thesis also provides an overview of the research questions, objectives of the research and its significant contributions.

Chapter 2 presents the review of literature on the previous studies of competencies which namely review critique the knowledge, skills, attitudes and leadership, as far as academic leadership effectiveness is concerned. Theories on leadership, models on spiritual capability, roles of academician within and outside the realm of the institutions which are relevant areas to be reviewed and definitions of key words are discussed comprehensively. These are vital so as to provide a holistic understanding of the elements required in this research in order to see the relationship between the theories underpinning and the practice that occur and does not occur. This chapter provides definitions of competency required as academic leaders, spirituality and the Malaysian university scene. The end of the chapter shares the discussion on the development of the conceptual framework for the research.

Chapter 3 presents the research methodology to be employed in the study and henceforth the development of hypotheses which are grounded based on the theories discussed in Chapter Two. Then, it discusses the research design which includes the sample frame, data collection method, the survey administration and the survey instrument. This part also discusses on the measurement, classification of the independent and dependent variables.

Chapter 4 presents the description of the statistical results. It reports a complete account of the results obtained through all the tests underlying both descriptive and inferential analyses. Additionally, the multiple regression analysis such as tests of normality, correlations and reliability tests are used. A variety of statistical analyses include a combination of descriptive and inferential statistics, factor analysis, mean ranking, one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA), independent-samples *t* test and Pearson correlation coefficient, to ensure the reliability, validity and relationships of variables in the study.

Chapter 5 attempts to bridge the data presented in the previous chapter and presents the analyses as well as interpretation of the results obtained, and finally the conclusions drawn. In addition, it discusses the findings with reference to prior research and theory. Henceforth, this chapter also provides the summary, conclusions and recommendations for future research. These are conclusive statements of the research findings and it also outlines the limitations and direction for further works on the area.

1.10 Summary

Chapter 1 of this study presents the rationale for the study in which the initial section describes the background and the importance of competency and spirituality in enhancing the academic leadership effectiveness pertinent to national agenda. Following that, the statement of problem is addressed in line with the conceptual framework and the research questions to be addressed. For the final section of this chapter, the significance and scope of the study is briefly outline.

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98

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