

GOALS, COMPONENTS, AND FACTORS CONSIDERED IN UNIVERSITY DEVELOPMENT

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Abstract

It is generally known that the main goals of universities are to produce high-quality graduates for the job market, to continuously advance the frontier of knowledge in all disciplines, and ultimately to advance human civilization. The goals are easier stated than done. In today's competitive and globalized environment, however, there are many pragmatic issues to be considered, and it is imperative that universities employ strategic development planning to identify the specific goals, components, and factors of development. A well-formulated strategic development plan will ensure a synchronized development programs and activities throughout a university system.

Universities produce their annual report and calendar, but nothing much is known about their priorities in planning. As such, we decided to conduct a study on eleven (11) foremost public universities in Malaysia, a country with a centralized education system, to examine the goals, components, and factors considered by university top-management in planning university development. We administered a checklist to 296 respondents, comprising deputy vice-chancellors or deputy rectors, registrars, deans, and directors. The checklist required

the respondents to rate the consideration level on a scale of 1 (least considered) to 5 (highly considered) for each of the items on goals, components, and factors.

This paper reports the main findings of our study. Among other things, the most obvious result that we noticed was that universities were very concerned with the relevancy of academic programs offered and their performance in research. It was rather surprising to see that the top-management of public universities in Malaysia placed the goal of providing quality infrastructure and facilities at the lowest ranking. Also, we noticed that the government as a factor exerted its prominence only in terms of university budget and research grants and the execution of some policies of national interest, but university expansion and development was largely driven by the university organization itself, i.e. on where, what, and how it wants to expand and grow. In this regard, public universities in Malaysia still enjoy a large degree of academic autonomy and a strong support by the government.

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Introduction

There is a pervasive myth that public universities in many countries are under the dictates of the federal government. This is due to the claim that government universities are public institutions that are closely linked to the government and, therefore, must accommodate national needs, demands, and expectations. The subservient bondage is embedded in the fact that public universities are largely sponsored by the government; hence, university's goals and development agenda must concur with the government's agenda and priorities, as if the universities themselves lack the sense of direction in determining their

GOALS, COMPONENTS, AND FACTORS CONSIDERED IN UNIVERSITY DEVELOPMENT

vision, goals, and priorities. The public universities are deemed accountable to the society and nation in materializing social, economic, political, and technological development goals. Such is the case in Malaysia (Isahak, 1989; Malaysia, 1996a; Molly Lee, 1999; Selvaratnam, 1989; Sufean, 1996a, 1996b). The myth seems to be unchallenged, and it has become somewhat an accepted theory in which the government is the central force that drags up universities at the periphery—the central-periphery theory of development.

Several studies done before in Malaysia have further reinforced or supported the 'truthfulness' of the myth and the seemingly true theory (Ibrahim, 1987; Mustafa, 1990; Robiah, 1980; Thong, 1995). In Malaysia, public universities have been positioned to be the agent of socio-economic mobility, human resource development at the professional and technical levels in numerous economic sectors, and socio-economic equity among ethnic groups. The thesis is higher education is the means for the expansion of middle-class group and it produces the necessary manpower for industrialization and economic globalization process.

However, as a corporate body and responsive organization, universities usually plan and design its own development agenda and priorities, in consideration of its external and internal environments. Davies & Ellison (1999) put forth a tangible and feasible model on planning organizational development, which is applicable to corporate as well as university organizations. In this model, universities are by their own right autonomous bodies which determine their vision, goals, objectives, strategies, and timeline of development. Universities have experts and professionals that can be deployed for designing their own development plan according to their values, needs, and demands (Lemmer (2002).

Public universities in Malaysia apparently have adopted the

strategic organization development model in the past one decade. This model requires, among other things, that universities to specify their vision, mission, objectives, timeline, strategies and actions, and performance indicators. A development plan derived from the process serves as a guideline that would ensure an integrated and concerted mechanism in achieving the desired outcomes (Davies & Ellison, 1999; Kaufman, 1992;).

Apart from that, a university development plan is normally comprehensive, encompassing the vital components of a university such as finance, study programs, students services, human resource, research, and infrastructure. For each component, a university then can deliberate on what it wants to achieve, how activities should be done, when to achieve, who should carry out the plan, who are accountable, what are the necessary facilities, and how much funds are needed. The vision, goals, and objectives of a development plan keep the organization on the right track (Allen, 1988; Altbach, 1989, Davies & Ellison, 1999; Kaufman, 1992; Mondy & Premaux, 1995; Purcell, 2001).

The widespread application of the strategic development model among universities apparently runs counter to the common belief and hypothesis mentioned before. The strategic model considers that universities, public and private, have a full autonomy in managing their own direction of developments and operations. The universities set their own agenda and priorities.

Forces Shaping National Higher Education Systems

There are salient differences among higher education systems of countries in the world. Clark (1983) and Dill & Sporn (1995) observe that the variations are due to the interaction or integration of three important forces, that is, government power, market demand-supply

GOALS, COMPONENTS, AND FACTORS CONSIDERED IN UNIVERSITY DEVELOPMENT

force, and academic oligarchy.

Government power refers to the total federal power of the government in determining every policy decisions pertaining to the management and operation of higher education institutions, encompassing policies concerning students admission, creation of new study programs, financial allocation, hiring of academic staff, research priority areas, and disbursement of research grants (Abdul Rahim, 1994). The government power, it seems, has caused uniformity in the structure and functions of universities in a country. The government also controls the growth tempo universities and colleges, both the public and private ones. Such a situation happens in countries with dominant centralized education system, such as Russia, China, Germany, and Sweden (Clark, 1983; Prokofiev, Chilikin & Tulpanov, 1971). This situation is also similar to many other countries in Southeast Asia, Middle East, and Central Asia.

Besides government power, market forces can influence the growth and expansion of higher education institutions in terms of quantity, quality, and size in the United States (Clark, 1983; Kerr 1973). The situation applies to many other countries (Altbach, 1982, 1991). Nowadays, higher educations have to compete among each other for status, visibility, students, funds, research projects, quality of services, expertise, and publications (Dill & Sporn, 1995; Kivinen & Rinne, 1991). The competition has significant bearings on student fees, university budget, size of academic programs, and size and quality of faculties.

In addition, higher education systems are also affected by academic oligarchy, that is, the diversified power and autonomy of academic staff at various faculties and departments in the governance and management of universities, especially those long-standing prestigious ones, which seem impervious or unperturbed by the dictates of government and market forces (Clark, 1983). The

academics have the dominant power to determine the growth of study programs, research priorities, and sometimes the kind of students to be accepted in (Kerr, 1963; Veysey, 1965).

The different degrees of interplay of the three forces have not only contributed to the pattern of variations of national higher education systems in the world, but also to the pattern of orientation, culture, and performance among institutions within a country (Clark, 1983; Dill & Sporn, 1995). The interaction and interplay of the three forces can be portrayed by Figure 1 next page.

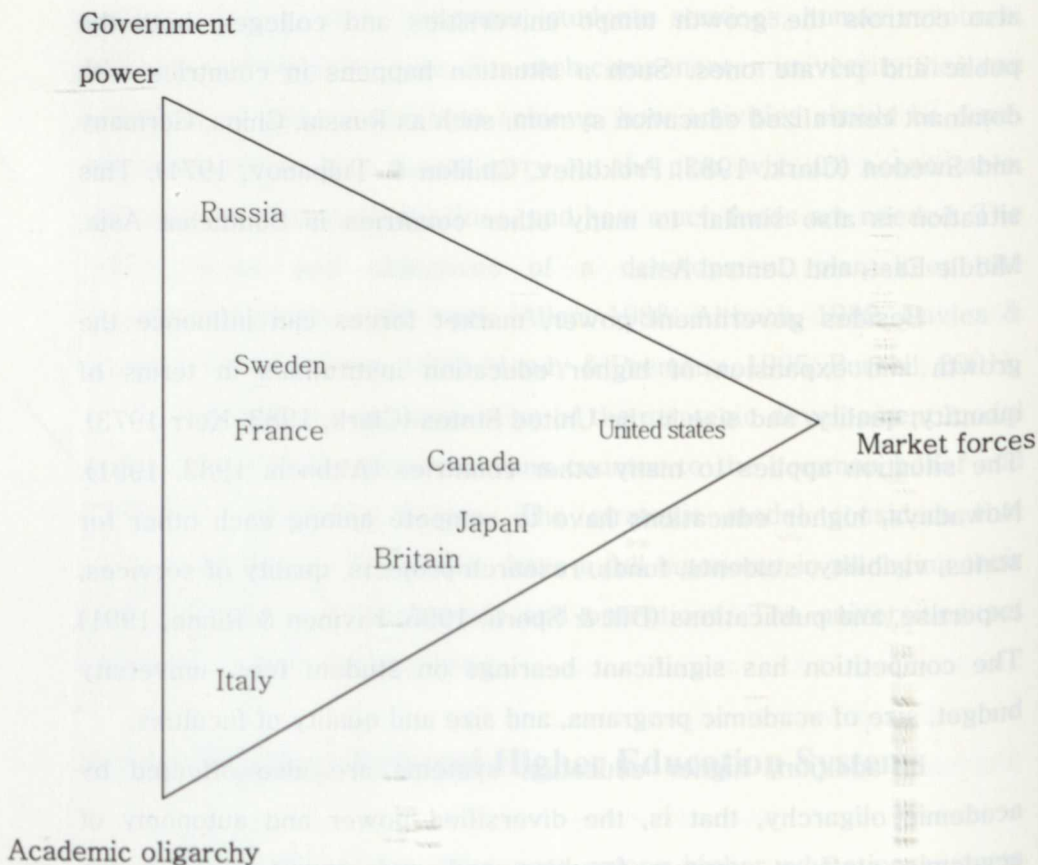


Figure 1: The Position of the National System of Higher Education of Various Countries Based on the Interplay of Three Forces (configured from Clark, 1983)

GOALS, COMPONENTS, AND FACTORS CONSIDERED IN UNIVERSITY DEVELOPMENT

states are at the top end of the triangle, that is, at the government power end, which means that the central government bureaucracy has the absolute power to determine the number and size of higher education institutions and their orientation, study programs, research areas, and budget. The government has the sole power and control on universities and colleges. On the right end, however, is the market forces end, which is best exemplified by the United States' higher education system, that is characterized as non-centralized. For decades public as well as private universities in the USA have been competing among each other for students, research grants, and accreditation, and they have experienced cycles of budget deficits and downsizing. Corporate style of university governance and management is now firmly entrenched in the system.

Furthermore, Clark (1983) characterizes that Italy's higher education system as one that approximates the academic oligarchy type, which means that universities and colleges are respectable institutions that govern and manage themselves, even if they receive government funds. Traditionally academics, with their strong culture of professorial collegiality, maintain and sustain the continuity of their institutions. In other European countries such as France and Sweden, however, their higher education system is the resultant of the interplay between government power and academic oligarchy. Countries like Britain, Japan, and Canada, on the other hand, are characterized as having a system that accommodates and integrates market forces and academic oligarchy.

The positions of countries in the triangle should not be mistaken as being static or absolute. This is because higher education systems are subjected to the dynamic interplay of the three forces differently at different times. The shift of positions, however, is never extreme, not to the detriment of the culture, structure, politics, and economics of

institutions (Clark, 1983; Dill & Sporn, 1995). Nowadays, the fluidity of the position is made even more rapid than ever due to international competition and the widespread of corporate style of university management and benchmarking practices. In this trend, innovations made in advanced countries are emulated by those in developing countries. Malaysia and Korea are no exception. Inter-organizational learning and development is main feature.

Factors Affecting University Development

The three forces discussed before can be equated as crucial factors to be considered in university development planning by top-level university management. Apart from that, there are other crucial factors that should also be considered. French and Bell (1984) suggest that the identification of relevant factors pertaining to organizational development requires teamwork contemplation of the internal and external environment. In this case, the most influential framework is strategic planning by SWOT analysis (analysis of Strengths-Weaknesses-Opportunities-Threats).

A review of literature suggests that some crucial factors to be considered for university development are the availability of academic expertise (Clark, 1983; Dill & Sporn, 1995), infrastructure (Micheal, 1997; Perkins, 1972), scientific and technological progress (Jasbir, 1991; Dill & Sporn, 1995; Sufean, 1996b); global trend in higher education (Micheal, 1997; Mohamed Suffian, 1974; Kivinen & Rinne, 1991), and financial allocation (Hussien, 2001; Jasbir, 1991; Perkins, 1972; Ylijoki, 2003)

Academic expertise available within a university can also influence the rate of university of development, that is, if there were many experts and professors available to run faculties, then there

GOALS, COMPONENTS, AND FACTORS CONSIDERED IN UNIVERSITY DEVELOPMENT

would be a stronger credibility and expansion of study programs. Apart from that a university would stand stronger in being accredited and more substantial research projects could be initiated (Sufean, 1996a).

Literature also suggest that sufficient and high quality infrastructure is vital for university development; as such university managers should ensure that ample and suitable learning and instructional resources are made available to academic staff and students. High quality infrastructure is related to effectiveness and efficiency of education in the classrooms and laboratories, and thus consequently ensuring high quality of graduates (Micheal, 1997; Perkins, 1972). The reputation of a university also greatly depends on the sufficiency and quality of infrastructure for student services as well as for management process.

Today is a globalized world, thus adavancements in knowledge and innovations in technology made in one part of the world could influence the growth and development of universities in other parts of the world, particularly in the fields of science, medicine, engineering, and liberal arts (Dill & Sporn, 1995; Jasbir, 1991; Sufean, 1996a). This is because scholars and researchers in various fields and disciplines share knowledge advancement via journals and books, or via the internet.

Trends and developments in higher education in advanced countries have constantly affect the landscape of higher education in many other parts of the world, especially in the developing countries (Kerr, 1990). It is learning via comparison and benchmarking. For instance, the USA's academic and management model of universities has been borrowed by many developing countries in the past five decades, including countries like Malaysia, Korea, Philippines, Australia, and New Zealand (Kivinen & Rinne, 1991; Micheal, 1997; Mohammed

Suffian, 1974). Today, universities form partnerships and collaborations at the local and international level to strengthen their position and improve their quality in academic and management matters (Micheal, 1997).

Furthermore, among many factors, financial strength is the most critical factor for university sustainability and development. Budget cuts or shrinking budget could lend a heavy blow to a university. The consequences are many: downsizing of management and faculties, slower and fewer research projects, brain drain, and higher tuition fees. This situation equally applies to state universities that are dependent on government allocations as well as private universities that are dependent on grants and contributions (Hussien, 2001; Jasbir, 1991; Micheal, 1997; Perkins, 1972; Ylijoki, 2003).

In strategic planning, all critical factors have to be analyzed specifically and in detail in order to ensure a systematic and coordinated university development. Priority areas and performance indicators can then be set and the university organization can move towards the targets systematically (Onushkin, 1971 and 1973). Subsequently, monitoring and assessment can be done to streamline the direction of university development. Besides that, to prevent an inward blindspot, a university must constantly assess threats and weaknesses in the surrounding environment by means of a practical diagnosis method. This is to ensure that threats are being checked and weaknesses are being minimized. The university is accountable to its own survival, development, and status (Abdul Rahman, 2002; Lemmer (2002).

Purpose and Objectives of the Study

The purpose of this study is to examine and highlight the general goals and development components of eleven public universities in Malaysia. The universities chosen were of the comprehensive type, having several faculties and academies or research institutes. Besides that, this study also examines the consideration level (or priority level or criticality level) of some factors related to university development planning.

The objectives of this study are to typify the kinds of goals prevalent among the universities involved and subsequently chart the pattern of variation of priority levels of the goals as perceived by top-university managers; to portray the pattern of variation of priority levels of university development components; and to portray the pattern of variation of priority levels among the factors identified.

Research Methods

The research done employed two methods of data collection. First, we examined and analyzed the annual calendars and reports published by the eleven public universities involved in this study. The purpose is to identify and categorize the philosophy, vision, goals, and development objectives of the universities. Second, from the document analysis, we constructed a survey questionnaire which comprised three sections, namely the development goals section, the development components section, and the factors in development planning.

The survey instrument was pilot-tested and the necessary corrections were made to it so that it fitted with the purpose and objectives of the study. We then administered the survey questionnaire

to 308 respondents, who comprised the top-university managers such as deputy rectors, deputy vice-chancellors, registrars, deans, and head of departments. We tracked the responses of these respondents. After three months, the return of the questionnaire was poor, and we then decided to make visits to the respondents involved. After another three months of persuasion and face-to-face meetings, we manage to get back 296 fully-answered questionnaires.

The survey items required the respondents to score their answers on a scale of five-point of Likert type (refer to Tables 1, 2, and 3 for examples). We made a statistical analysis of the quantitative data collected. Apart from frequency and percentage analysis, we also used Anova (analysis of variance) and Spearman correlation (but for this paper we do not present the results).

Findings of the Study

From our survey data, we analyzed the distribution of frequency and percentage of responses regarding the developmental goals of 11 public universities in Malaysia, as portrayed by Table 1 next page. The responses, i.e. the different levels of consideration, were given by 296 respondents. The values of the mean score and standard deviation for the goal items were also calculated and provided in the table as well.

GOALS, COMPONENTS, AND FACTORS
CONSIDERED IN UNIVERSITY DEVELOPMENT

Table 1: Developmental Goals of Public Universities

Developmental Goals	Level of Consideration					Score	
	1	2	3	4	5	mean	sd
	(n, %)	(n, %)	(n, %)	(n, %)	(n, %)		
To establish and offer academic programs that are very relevant to the expectations and needs of the stakeholders associated to the university	-	4 (1.40)	3 (1.00)	31 (10.50)	258 (87.20)	4.83	0.49
To be a reputable research university at the national and international levels.	1 (0.30)	3 (1.00)	8 (2.70)	54 (18.20)	230 (77.70)	4.72	0.60
To be a center of excellence in post-graduate education and services	-	5 (1.70)	20 (6.80)	87 (29.40)	184 (62.20)	4.52	0.70
To upgrade instruction and learning in the university	3 (1.00)	1 (0.30)	21 (7.10)	63 (21.30)	208 (70.30)	4.59	0.73
To ensure an effective and efficient university management system.	3 (1.00)	7 (2.40)	23 (7.80)	112 (37.80)	151 (51.00)	4.35	0.81
To produce sufficient professional and quality human resources for the academic division and management division of the university.	3 (1.00)	12 (4.10)	36 (12.20)	98 (33.10)	147 (49.70)	4.26	0.90
To generate and manage efficiently and effectively university's assets and incomes.	-	16 (5.40)	50 (16.90)	118 (39.90)	112 (37.80)	4.10	0.87
To build and procure sufficient infrastructure and facilities for university operation and development	2 (0.70)	13 (4.40)	50 (16.90)	97 (32.80)	134 (45.30)	4.18	0.91
To produce graduates of high merit and good character	-	9 (3.00)	12 (4.10)	57 (19.30)	218 (73.60)	4.64	0.70

Keys to the scale:

- 1= Not considered important at all
- 3= Considered fairly important
- 5= Considered highly important

- 2= Considered low importance
- 4= Considered important

Looking at the mean scores in Table 1, we could see that the three goals considered highly important and given high priority by the 296 respondents of this study were the development of academic programs of high relevance, reputation as a research university at the national and international levels, and output of graduates of high merit and good character. The goal that received the lowest mean score relatively was the one concerning management of university assets and income—i.e. reflecting that the respondents were least worried about this aspect because they were from eleven public universities largely sponsored by the government.

The findings above suggest that the public universities in Malaysia still behave as institutions of higher learning having the special privilege in determining the curriculum orientation and content, and they still uphold the academic and intellectual tradition in expanding the frontiers of knowledge continuously through research and development projects. Apart from that, the universities feel very accountable to the society in producing graduates of high merit and good character. The respondents feel that, as academics at heart, they should be concerned with the quality of instruction and learning and to worry less about logistics and facilities.

As a reflection of reality, the top-management staff and academics in the eleven public universities are conscious about the need to always maintain the high standard of academic programs and to develop study programs that have a strong relevance with the job market and economic development of Malaysia. In this regard, universities nowadays establish smart partnerships with corporations, government agencies, and foundations in designing study programs and professional training of undergraduates. Post-graduate study programs are also given priority for the purpose expanding research and development (R & D) manpower and new innovations for the public and

GOALS, COMPONENTS, AND FACTORS CONSIDERED IN UNIVERSITY DEVELOPMENT

private sector.

Table 2 next page shows the distribution frequency and percentage of responses regarding the consideration level or priority level on the main components of university development. We translated the nine goals in Table 1 before as the corresponding components. We requested the 296 respondents to rate the consideration level on the components.

Scanning through the mean scores in Table 2, we can see that the top four components of university development that have been given priority by the respondents. They are academic programs, instruction and learning, students services and development, and research and consultancy. Human resource development is ranked the last, even though it is considered important.

The finding suggest that all the nine components of university development are important, but the top four components reflect the basic functions of what a university should perform. A university that disregards these four components is not a university. Universities must continually expand their study programs in line with knowledge expansion, technological developments, and market demands. The sustainability and competitiveness of a university depend on this component. In addition, for reputation sake and accreditation, universities should always stress on the the quality of instruction , training, and learning because the excellence of universities is measured in terms of the output of graduates of high merit and good character. Simultaneously, universities need to provide quality services to their students, who are the main customer and who provide the reason for existence of universities.

Table 2: Priority of the Core Development Components of Public Universities

Core Development Components	Priority Given					Score	
	1 (n,%)	2 (n,%)	3 (n,%)	4 (n,%)	5 (n,%)	mean	sd
Academic Programs	-	4 (1.4)	5 (1.7)	19 (6.4)	268 (90.5)	4.86	0.48
Research & Consultancy	1 (0.3)	1 (0.3)	21 (7.1)	74 (25.0)	199 (67.2)	4.58	0.67
Post-graduate scholarship & research programs	-	9 (3.0)	11 (3.7)	98 (33.1)	178 (60.1)	4.50	0.71
Instruction and learning	-	4 (1.4)	11 (3.7)	45 (15.2)	236 (79.7)	4.73	0.59
Management	-	9 (3.0)	34 (11.5)	141 (47.6)	112 (37.8)	4.20	0.76
Human Resources	-	14 (4.7)	57 (19.3)	113 (38.2)	112 (37.8)	4.09	0.87
Finance	1 (0.3)	13 (4.4)	50 (16.9)	113 (38.2)	119 (40.2)	4.14	0.87
Infrastructure and facilities	-	15 (5.1)	36 (12.2)	116 (39.2)	129 (43.6)	4.21	0.85
Student Services and Development	-	7 (2.4)	13 (4.4)	76 (25.7)	200 (67.6)	4.58	0.69

Keys: 1= Not considered important 2= Low consideration and importance
 3= Considered moderately important 4= Considered important
 5= Considered highly important

Table 3 next page shows the distribution of responses regarding the consideration level of factors in university development planning. Each factor has seven item-sentences (matching the seven factors themselves), and we compiled together and recoded all the scores for each factor.

GOALS, COMPONENTS, AND FACTORS CONSIDERED IN UNIVERSITY DEVELOPMENT

Table 3: Factors Considered in Planning University Development

Factor	Level of Consideration					Score	
	1 (n,%)	2 (n,%)	3 (n,%)	4 (n,%)	5 (n,%)	mean	sd
Government's higher education agenda	-	38 (12.8)	177 (59.8)	79 (26.7)	2 (0.7)	3.15	0.63
Expertise inside and outside university	-	-	23 (7.8)	211 (71.3)	62 (20.9)	4.13	0.52
Market demands	-	6 (2.0)	116 (39.2)	170 (57.4)	4 (1.4)	3.58	0.56
Provision of infrastructure	-	1 (0.3)	33 (11.1)	231 (78.0)	31 (10.5)	3.99	0.48
Scientific and technological progress and innovations	-	-	26 (8.8)	233 (78.7)	37 (12.5)	4.04	0.46
Developments in higher education at global level	-	-	29 (9.8)	211 (71.3)	56 (18.9)	4.09	0.53
Finance	-	-	21 (7.1)	238 (80.4)	37 (12.5)	4.05	0.44

Looking at the mean scores, we can see that the top four factors of priority in university development planning are the availability of expertise inside and outside the university, developments in higher education at the global level, financial capacity, and scientific and technological progress and innovations. In order of importance, the government factor is ranked the last.

The findings suggest that the availability of a large pool of expertise is fundamental to the existence, reputation, and well-functioning of a university. That is the reality. The more experts and

well-known professors a university has the better is its ranking in the world and the more prestigious it becomes. In addition, it is the experts and professors who keep abreast with the advancements made in their area of expertise in the world and they consequently make improvements in the curriculum contents of the courses they teach in a university.

The findings also suggest that a university must have sufficient funds to finance development projects, either for the academic or management division. For public universities, substantial amount of funds come from the government annually, but nowadays universities have been told to secure funds from numerous partnership and joint-venture sources made with industries and businesses, and in this regard therefore universities are forced to embark on commercialism of its R & D products.

In tandem with the university's knowledge tradition, the findings also suggest that research and development projects are crucial for upholding the essential function of a university in expanding the knowledge frontier of various areas and disciplines of knowledge. An institution is a university when it does this. Academics and researchers in universities understand this commitment well. They are the people who advance the knowledge and technology of the human civilization from time to time.

With respect to the government factor, university managers understand that it is an important factor considered in university development planning, but yet the government does not exert its dominance totally in university development, particularly in the expansion of new study programs and recruitment of expertise. This finding testifies to the fact public universities still enjoy academic freedom and autonomy to a large extent. The limit and boundary of that freedom and autonomy depend on the horizon of thinking of the

GOALS, COMPONENTS, AND FACTORS CONSIDERED IN UNIVERSITY DEVELOPMENT

university management—which may expand and shrink the interpretation and use of the concepts to the management's advantage sometimes.

Discussion

On the one hand, there is a widespread belief that public universities in a centralized education system are under the domination and prescription of the federal government, but on the other hand, the strategic development model refutes that belief and upholds that public universities, as autonomous corporate organizations, largely determine their own goals and priorities of development. The findings of this study suggest that the latter position is tenable, that is, public universities are in fact true to the tradition of academia and knowledge. As communities of academics and researchers, public universities in Malaysia place a high priority on the expansion and quality of study programs of high relevance, reputation as a research university at the national and international levels, and output of graduates of high merit and good character. The government priorities, in the form of some policies on student intake, minor curriculum input, and funds allocation, however are given due consideration, but not the detriment of universities' autonomy in designing and implementing their own development plan and priorities.

The main finding of this study is that the top four factors of priority in university development planning are the availability of expertise inside and outside the university, developments in higher education at the global level, financial capacity, and scientific and technological progress and innovations. In order of importance, the government factor is ranked the last. This finding suggest that public

universities in Malaysia place high importance on a large pool of expertise for attaining a reputable status; on tracking new knowledge frontiers and technological innovations at the international level; and on expanding new sources of funds and assets. This finding also suggest

frontiers and technological innovations at the international level; and on
somewhat perturbed by the corporate mind-set that stresses on status and best practices.

What is the general theory that can explain and assist strategizing of university development? From our study, it seems that the multi level-factor theory operates in the universities involved. This theory suggests that a comprehensive, operational development planning requires detailing of critical factors at various levels of university management.

Conclusion

Strategizing is an art and science of survival and sustainability. Public universities, and even more so private universities, must adopt the strategic development model in order to gain the competitive advantage and to be at the frontline of progress, whether at the local level or at the international level. The world today is characterized by many trends, challenges, turbulences, opportunities, and threats; thus, analyzing those elements and consequently planning a proactive strategic plan deem necessary and vital. For public universities, the government does influence its direction in some small ways in terms of policies and regulations, but it is the universities which shoulder the main bulk of charting their own management style, determining the

GOALS, COMPONENTS, AND FACTORS CONSIDERED IN UNIVERSITY DEVELOPMENT

quality of the curriculum, advancing the quality of graduates, determining research priority areas, and identifying profitable ventures. Public universities are, by and large, autonomous bodies, even in centralized education system.

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GOALS, COMPONENTS, AND FACTORS
CONSIDERED IN UNIVERSITY DEVELOPMENT

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