An Analysis of the Mission Statements of Premier Universities in Malaysia

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ABSTRACT

Background: This study takes notes from a previous empirical inquiry which had analysed and explored the key areas of the mission trait (vision, goals, objectives, strategic direction, and intent) in the culture of top-ranked public and private universities around Klang valley. **Methods:** The purpose of this study is to compare the three facets of a university's mission using the conceptual framework and the survey instrument. This study is quantitative in nature, using data from 1440 university students from various faculties at four top-ranked universities. The survey was partially adapted from Denison's Organizational Culture Diagnostic Instrument (OCDI); as it is typically used for businesses firms, most of the items had been re-phrased for the university setting. **Results:** The instrument's reliability was assessed in the pilot study, whereby Cronbach's alpha values of between 0.690 and 0.876 were attained, indicating high levels of reliability. **Discussion:** Based on the results, it can be concluded that public university students view their university's mission, leadership, and goals more favorably than their counterparts in private universities. This may be due to the public universities under study have higher global rankings compared to the private universities, leading to a more favorable leadership impression for the former. **Conclusion:** The findings lead to the suggestion that universities must explicitly state their vision, mission, and core values. These statements could be posted on their websites and serve as a source of motivation, aspiration, and guidance for their community, including the students, faculty members, and management team.

Keywords: Organizational Culture; Mission; Core Values; Education; Malaysian Universities; World-Ranked Universities

1. Background

Numerous studies in higher education have shown that top-ranked universities engage in a robust culture that earns them respect and prestige. In contrast to universities with lower rankings, these universities place a strong emphasis on their research traditions, high-calibre scholarships, high-calibre publications, internationalization, as well as academic excellence (Asimiran & Hussin, 2012; Barnett, 2011;

Tsoukatos, 2011). Harvard University and Oxford University, for example, demonstrate cultures and missions rich in this concept, making them worthy as role models. According to Harman and Koohang (2007), organizational culture analysis can elucidate values and academic cultures that are crucial for comprehending not only how an academic society functions, but also how it should be led. According to Tierney (1998), taking corporate culture into account and comprehending it can assist in advancing common goals and lessening the likelihood of cultural misinterpretation and conflict. Yet, (Locke, 2007) contended that negative effects to the institutional management would ensue if corporate culture is ignored.

Given the aforementioned factors, it is crucial to regularly assess universities' organisational cultures, focusing primarily on their core missions and values, and to ascertain whether there is a desirable cultural shift (Dawson, 2010; Goleman, 2000) that would enable the management, faculty members, and staff to navigate the academic setting effectively. The results of organisational culture will have a huge impact on universities, especially when it comes to implementing change management strategies in new universities (Hargreaves *et al.*, 2010). The result of Imron *et al.*, (2021) research show that organizational culture has a constructive and substantial effect on employee innovation capability, both directly and by mediating tactic knowledge sharing. To avoid being primarily driven by the corporate and private business mindset, the mutually agreed mission of public universities is to successfully drive social awareness regarding the importance of continuous progress via knowledge development and dissemination. Except for religion-oriented private universities worldwide, such as those commonly found in Indonesia, the primary objective of public universities is to provide general comfort and social benefits in contrast to private universities that are more driven by the need to attain profit, funding, student satisfaction, and business projects. In light of this, it is arguably anticipated that public universities would show a different level of interest for student services and organisational structure than do private institutions (INSAN, 2007). As stated by Asbari *et al.*, (2020) "Dimensions such as desire, discipline, decision making, and alignment are presented as important elements of organizational learning". The conclusions drawn from a study by Qi and Chau (2018) point to the organizational culture as a significant performance gauge for assessing organization performance which assist in forming essential knowledge resources and sustain the development and stability of higher education.

Every organisation has a unique culture that develops over time as a result of its values, philosophies, expectations, goals, and activities (Goleman, 2000). Many of these characteristics reveal how crucial managers' contributions are to the development of organisational culture within public institutions. Hence, managers should constantly be the leading performer in the organisational culture's adherence to the core values on top of being the "designer" of the value system (Bennis & Peters, 2000). Core values are primarily intended to eliminate hesitancy in essential areas of collective performance. The conversion method also refers to ideas about normative behaviour. It encourages group members to communicate, think critically, and act confidently, especially when meeting new group members and in challenging situations. Philosophies and values frequently determine several fundamentals at the foundational level of an organisation or culture. Without ideologies and ideals that are based on past knowledge, it would be easy to forecast what people would say in a range of situations. This is not necessarily an indication that people will behave as they say in a particular situation (Argyris, 1992). The fundamental principle of academic collegiality is linked to university culture, governance, and management.

Academics who exercise their obligations to research initiatives, academic programmes, training, and student supervision based on a strong feeling of ownership exemplify the collegiality value, which is crucial in portraying the faculty. Collegiality may, however, no longer be sufficient to guide institutions towards their intended goals. It might be detrimental to ignore collegiality for the sake of management

effectiveness. It is commonly argued that academics are the thinkers who are most suited to understand, define, and realize their university's goals and aspirations (Evans, 1999). Of course, this could be observed via the university senate's extensive jurisdiction in creating and altering educational strategies that extend from student admission to graduation (Miller, 1999; Moore, 1975; Strohm, 1981).

1.1 Problem Statement

As stated by Xuan, Hao, and Phuc (2019) due to the fact that organizational culture affects the organization success, it has been deliberated for more than three decades. Many studies have examined the corporate cultures of industrial and commercial organizations, but there has not been enough empirical research on university cultures. Organizational culture has been conceptualized by previous researchers primarily into certain types and sub-types, including weak, strong, negative, positive, responsive, competitive, passive, inventive, conservative, and transformative (Adler & Gundersen, 2005; Rousseau, 1990; Schein, 2010; Triandis, 1996). These definitions were mainly developed with business corporations in mind, focusing on factors like competitiveness, efficacy, sustainability, productivity, and performance. Such common classifications render the study of culture as being unsophisticated.

Without a doubt, this classification system is inappropriate for other types of institutions, like universities and schools that entail students, teachers, parents, groups, and governmental bodies. In contrast to industrial and corporate enterprises, universities are social organisations with a variety of structures, components, visions, symbolisms, policies, and outputs. Since academic organisations entail students, scholars, associations, bureaucratic managers, and state policies, the majority of research discoveries made in business and industry are fundamentally inappropriate for them (Sekaran & Bougie, 2016). Universities have their own distinctive cultures that are entirely separate from those of business and industry corporations.

1.2 Literature Review

According to anthropology, organisational culture is made up of values, morals, aspirations, beliefs, expectations, and manners that have been created over time in all organizations and of which has direct and indirect effects on how well such organizations run and perform (Argyris, 1992). As a result, it highlights the significance of the management's involvement in establishing an organization's culture. They must build and develop the organisational culture's basic values, adapt it to new values, and integrate it into the larger framework of cultural values (Williams, Gore, Broches, & Lostoski, 1987). Dolipas *et al*., (2022) drew attention to the continuous effort to enhance the accessibility of the awareness, comprehension, and acceptance of its goals, vision, and mission. Seeber *et al*., (2019) framed mission as narratives that embody identity, serving as a symbolic representation for organization. The mission statement serves as a form of communication and articulating university objectives and goals (Iglesias, 2019).

The university mission pertains to how students articulate the university ideology. Universities are frequently driven towards achieving particular goals. For example, the shared goal of public universities is to produce and disseminate knowledge in order to achieve an awareness of their development, progress, and improvement in various aspects of life while avoiding the corporate mindset and attitude of private universities (Zusman, 2005). Public universities are widely expected to continue to focus on the general welfare and interests of the society, contrary to their private counterparts which are more concerned with student satisfaction, business operations, securing funding, and earning profits (Sufean & Wong, 2014). This hence brings to the expectation that public universities should have a different organisational culture and set of responsibilities for student services and facilities than private institutions (Clark, 1986; Hussin & Ismail, 2008).

The four pillars of strategic planning are vision, purpose, strategy, and action (Aktan, 2003). Ferlie and Ongaro (2022) assert that various analyses, participation, procedures, and management tools are the foundation of strategic planning and management. Strategic planning is a mechanism for creating long-term plans for prospects and challenges which the corporation may face. It also involves using these plans to operate more efficiently. One of the crucial phases of strategic planning is the creation of the mission and vision statements. Strategic planning effectiveness depends on the precise documentation and understanding of those statements, which also aid in the formation the universities' institutional identities.

Reducing ambiguity, unpredictability, and variability in crucial areas of group performance is one of the most important functions of the core values in this age of corporatization (Cortés Sánchez, 2018). The transformation process leads to normative behaviour assumptions. Due to this, group members think, interact, and act more confidently—especially when dealing with important events and meeting new group members (Brătianu & Bălănescu, 2008). An organization or culture's artefact-level elements are constantly constrained by its guiding principles and ideals. It may be able to predict how people will react in certain situations if the principles and values are not reliant on prior knowledge. But this is not an indication that they would actually behave as they say (Denison, 1990). Academic collegiality, a basic principle of universities, and the lengthy history of the university's management and administration, are commonly linked to university culture (Macfarlane, 2016). The importance of collegiality highlights the faculty as a knowledgeable and competent team of academics who take ownership of their responsibilities in a variety of academic programs, research endeavors, teaching, and graduate supervision (Hull, 2006). Collegiality may not be sufficient anymore for leading businesses towards their strategic goals. Nonetheless, it may be harmful to disregard collegiality in the quest of management productivity (Weinberg & Graham-Smith, 2012).

It is usually asserted that academic staff members are the most equipped to understand, articulate, and realize the objectives of their university (Denison, 1990; Dill & Helm, 1988; Evans, 1999). The university senate's vast jurisdiction in establishing and altering educational standards and laws including everything from student admission to graduation proves this (Miller, 1999).

2. Methods

This study's objective was to investigate the basic principles, mission, and vision of several renowned universities in Malaysia's Klang Valley. The study involved two prestigious public universities as well as two private universities. A university's mission component specifically consists of areas like the institution's vision, strategic goals, and action plans. The organizational culture diagnostic instrument (OCDI) established by Denison (1990) and of which has been utilized globally in commercial enterprises, served as the basis for the survey instrument employed in this study. The elements taken from the OCDI relate to the organization's mission and fundamental values (including the vision, goals and objectives, and strategic aim). Using these factors, this study selected a total of 20 questions from the OCDI, each of which was modified to fit the university setting. A five-point Likert scale from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree" was used to score each point (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). The next step was to conduct a pilot test of the survey instrument to determine its reliability and acceptability for use in a university context. Using the pilot data of 35 university students, our statistical study determined that the survey instrument's reliability was well within the acceptable range of between 0.760 and 0.895 Cronbach's alpha (Hair, 2010). The reliability values for the survey items and the various sub-constructs or domains were determined by the pilot study conducted on the students of several faculties at one of Malaysia's public universities. The validity of the OCDI instrument utilized in this study was determined with the help of earlier research studies and the

instrument's own theoretical underpinnings. Since the OCDI instrument is standardized and can be used confidently, a substantial amount of data from the actual study was collected to determine the instrument's validity using the principal components analysis statistics.

Four top-ranked universities—two public and two private—were used in our study, and randomly-selected students from various faculties were given the survey questionnaire. Based on the suggestion of Creswell, this study selected 500 students randomly from each university, thus distributing 2000 questionnaires in total. However, only 1440 of the questionnaires were fully completed and thus usable for data analysis which was carried out using the Statistical Package for the Social Science software Version 21 (George & Mallery, 2016).

3.   Results

The 1440 survey data were statistically examined. The results in Table 1 compare the mission and vision of the two public universities and two private universities based on the overall percentage, mean, and ranking. The results in Table 1 illustrate the points that are arranged according to the total percentage and mean value, i.e., A2, A4, A1, A3, and A5. In general, the students in both public and private universities believe that their university's administrators and leaders have a long-term vision of the growth and improvement of their institutions (A2); in some programmes, the vision has turned into the driving force behind the motivation (A4); and, the students understood and shared their university's vision (A3). Yet, the students also opine that sometimes short-term objectives or priorities could take precedence over long-term goals (A3, A5).

Table 1: Comparison between the Mission and Vision, as Measured by Aggregate Percentage, Mean, and Rank of the Public and Private Universities

No.	A: Mission: Vision	Agg. %	Public		Rank	Agg. %	Private		Rank
			Mean	SD			Mean	SD	
A1	Generally, the students have a shared vision of their university's future.	484 (67.2%)	3.78	0.87	3	381 (52.9%)	3.52	0.98	3
A2	The students believe that their university's leaders have a long-term vision of their university's growth.	567 (78.8%)	3.92	0.79	1	433 (60.1%)	3.62	0.80	1
A3	Short-term ad-hoc thinking typically jeopardizes the long-term vision.	482 (66.9%)	3.77	0.74	4	345 (47.9%)	3.50	0.81	5
A4	The students are driven by their university's grand vision.	482 (66.9%)	3.84	0.85	2	407 (56.5%)	3.57	0.92	2
A5	Students could fulfil short-term needs without compromising the university's long-term goals.	433 (60.1%)	3.64	0.81	5	382 (53.1%)	3.51	0.82	4

According to Table 1's results, the private universities are placed fourth for item A5 and fifth for item A3, whilst the public universities are placed in the opposite order. In general, both public and private students think that their leaders have a long-term vision for the development and advancement of their institution, and that they shared the university's vision and mission with the administration as a source of inspiration and motivation.

This brings to the question of how students can learn about their university's vision and mission. The university's website, newsletter, students' emails, the management and administrative personnel, or

academic staff are potential sources of information. The main force behind the creation and planning of programmes and activities towards realizing both the short- and long-term vision and mission is the university deans and lecturers. The university's goals and objectives give an indication of its culture. Table 2 presents the comparison between the missions of the public and private universities in terms of goals and objectives.

Table 2: Comparison of Goals and Objectives in Terms of Aggregate Percentage, Mean, and Standard Deviation between the Public and Private Universities

No.	A: Mission: Vision	Agg. %	Public		Rank	Agg. %	Private		Rank
			Mean	SD			Mean	SD	
B6	The students extensively agree about their university's objectives and goals.	496 (68.9%)	3.76	0.77	3	346 (48.1%)	3.43	0.94	5
B7	University leaders develop aspirational yet attainable goals.	528 (73.3%)	3.86	0.81	1	408 (56.7%)	3.62	0.83	1
B8	The leadership has formally stated the goals to be achieved by students.	508 (70.6%)	3.81	0.82	2	422 (58.6%)	3.56	0.93	3
B9	Students must continuously monitor their academic achievements to be in line with the university's stated goals.	408 (56.7%)	3.59	0.86	5	402 (55.8%)	3.49	1.003	4
B10	Students have an awareness of the aspects to be accomplished to ensure their long-term success.	486 (67.5%)	3.76	0.81	4	424 (58.9%)	3.58	1.068	2

The results in Table 2 show that item B7 is placed first for both universities, whereby 73.3% of the students at the public universities and 56.7% of the students at the private universities believing that their leaders had set ambitious yet feasible goals. For public universities, item B8 is ranked second, whereby 70.6% of the students believe that their leadership had made the aims and goals to be achieved by the students formally clear. For the private universities, item B10 is ranked second, whereby 58.9% of the students believe that they have the awareness of what is needed of them to be successful academically. With regards to item B6, most of the public university students (68.9%) ranked it third whilst most of the private university students (48.1%) ranked it fifth. How are the university goals perceived by the students? For Item B10, 67.5% of the public university students ranked it in fourth place, whilst 58.9% of the private university students ranked it in second place, indicating their understanding of what it required of them towards achieving long-term success. For Item B9, 56.7% of the students at public universities and 55.8% of the students at private universities used the institution's goals and objectives to evaluate their educational achievement; the item is ranked fifth and fourth, respectively. As the public universities have a higher global ranking than the private universities, the students at public universities typically perceive their university's goals and leadership more positively than their counterparts at the private universities; as a result, leadership is viewed more favorably at public universities.

Table 3 compares the strategic direction and goals of the public and private universities. A clear mission statement is indicated to be important for the private university students based on the results in Table 3, whilst the public university students deem it less essential as compared to the need for a clear long-term vision and direction. As the public universities have a higher global ranking than the private universities, a greater portion of the public university students perceive the aspects of strategic direction and intent more favorably.

Table 3: Comparison of Strategic Direction and Intent in Terms of Aggregate Percentage, Mean, Standard Deviation, and Rank between Public and Private Universities

No.	A: Mission: Vision	Agg. %	Public		Rank	Agg. %	Private		Rank
			Mean	SD			Mean	SD	
C11	There are distinct long-term aims and direction declarations at the university.	516 (71.7%)	3.82	0.752	2	426 (59.2%)	3.69	0.785	1
C12	The university's strategy drives other universities to re-consider their competitive advantage in the higher education industry.	513 (71.3%)	3.85	0.793	1	422 (58.6%)	3.63	0.912	3
C13	There is a distinct mission statement that imparts purpose, meaning and focus on the students' work and lives.	513 (71%)	3.78	0.790	3	441 (61.3%)	3.65	0.913	2
C14	An obvious and strategic future is communicated to the university students.	487 (67.6%)	3.70	0.748	4	406 (56.4%)	3.49	0.932	4
C15	The university's strategic direction is unclear to me.	284 (39.4%)	3.18	1.019	5	366 (50.8%)	3.47	1.021	5

The differences between the public and private universities' core values can be seen in Table 4. Item D20 is ranked first for public universities, whereby 71.7% of the students believe that their universities have moral and ethical codes that guide their actions and delineate the right from the wrong. Meanwhile, item D19 is ranked first for private universities, whereby 64.4% of the students believe that disobeying the university's core values and principles (such as committing plagiarism) would cause them problems.

Table 4: Comparison of Core Values in Terms of Aggregate Percentage, Mean, and Standard Deviation between Public and Private Universities

No.	A: Mission: Vision	Agg. %	Public		Rank	Agg. %	Private		Rank
			Mean	SD			Mean	SD	
D16	University leaders and administrators "practice what they preach".	420 (58.3%)	3.62	0.76	5	389 (54%)	3.55	0.77	5
D17	The university has its own distinct management style and practices.	484 (67.2%)	3.72	0.69	3	403 (56%)	3.59	0.75	4
D18	A set of values and ideals consistently guides the students' activities and education.	464 (64.4%)	3.69	0.74	4	436 (60.6%)	3.67	0.82	2
D19	Going against the set core values will cause problems for the students.	458 (63.6%)	3.75	0.80	2	464 (64.4%)	3.71	0.95	1
D20	There is an ethical code governing the students' actions and discerning the right from the wrong.	516 (71.7%)	3.85	0.80	1	424 (58.9%)	3.63	0.98	3

For item D17, it is ranked fourth in the private universities and third in the public universities. Specifically, 67.2% of the students at the public universities believe that their institution has a unique

management structure and set of procedures, and only 56% of their counterparts at the private universities think the same. For item D18, it is ranked second in the private universities but fourth in the public universities, whereby 64.4% of the students approve of the notion that their university has a trustworthy combination of ethics and values in place for guiding student activities and studies. This suggests that the students are somewhat devoted to the guiding ideals and core values of their university. For item D16, it is ranked fifth for both public and private universities, whereby 58.3% of the students at the public universities and 54% of the students at the private universities believe that their university administration and leadership "practice what they preach". This shows that the university's administration displays a degree of hypocrisy, since both the faculty and university administration occasionally fail to back up their assertions.

4.   Discussion

This study used the Denison (1990) model to thoroughly examine each component of the university organization's mission. To gain a deeper understanding of university culture, further research on the university mission and Malaysian culture is required. The findings of this study have several ramifications. These results are evident in the domains and items quadrant Mission and are consistent with the change theory proposed by Senge (1990) and Hargreaves *et al*., (2010). Universities must adapt to change in order to reach the requirements of top-ranked universities, despite resistance from staff and students. The Denison theory is successful because it could demonstrate the significant contrasts and commonalities between public and private universities. A university's vision and mission statements should not only be motivating and inspiring, but also accessible to all employees, students, and other stakeholders for quick reference (Ozdem, 2011). Also, for the purpose of evaluating employee performance, the vision and mission statements should be attainable and measurable. This also enables other colleges and universities to use the outcomes and conclusions achieved in this research as the yardstick in their quest to become top global universities.

4.1 Implications

Several implications emerge from this research's findings. The mission and culture of the four top-ranked public and private universities in Malaysia differ from one another, as found in this study. The top universities could learn not only what the students think about their strategic goals, objectives, and vision, but also about the areas in their institution that need improvement. Teams of university administrators and academic leaders should be formed to develop action plans that will increase satisfaction and address the identified problems. Also, this study enriches understanding and awareness regarding the mission and vision of the universities which hence serve as a model for other universities in Malaysia and other nations to imitate.

5.   Conclusion

The survey results generally demonstrated that the public and private university students under study held the same views regarding how their university's mission and vision serve as their sources of motivation and inspiration, and how they share these views with the administration and management. Also, students at both the public and private universities trusted their deans to have a long-term perspective on the expansion and advancement of their institutions. Students at the public universities tend to view university leadership and goals more favorably than their counterparts at the private universities. A higher percentage of the public university students also expressed a favorable opinion of their universities' strategic goal and direction. Additionally, the students believed that their university has an ethical code that may facilitate them in distinguishing between right and wrong and regulating their actions and behaviors. However, students at the private universities believe that

disobeying their university's core values would put them in conflict with the administration or lecturers. Overall, the findings lead to the suggestion that university leaderships should create attainable vision and mission statements that lead to the development of core principles as well as practical policies and programmes, and that the outcomes of these statements should be periodically evaluated using specific standards. A lofty, ambiguous vision or mission statement that cannot be achieved or evaluated methodically may be self-defeating. The vision, purpose, and fundamental values of the university make up only a small portion of organisational culture that was examined in this study; there are in fact other important factors that affect organisational pursuit and effectiveness.

6. Declaration

6.1 Ethics Approval and Consent to Participate: When gathering quantitative data, ethical considerations play a crucial role. The study emphasizes obtaining informed consent, where participants are fully briefed on the study's purpose, data nature, and potential risks or benefits. Researchers prioritize confidentiality by safeguarding participants' private data, protecting identities, ensuring secure data storage, and preventing unauthorized access.

6.2 Conflict of Interest: Not applicable.

6.3 Acknowledgement: All the participants are acknowledged, and all the required details are mentioned.

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