Training Programs for University Presidents: Mission Indispensable

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Abstract

The evaluation and selection process of presidents/rectors of universities and other higher educational institutions has always been a very special, extraordinary, exclusive and usually confidential process regardless of which office and/or authority conducts the process. The main qualification has almost always been the academic accomplishments of the candidates and the most promising place to look for a person with the capacity for the job is within academia itself. But the tasks and challenges facing the elected or appointed presidents are greatly administrative necessitating strategy deliberation; institutional positioning, financial dexterity, social skills, fund-raising capacity and leadership. This shift of overlap presents an unexpected and compelling issues both from the perspective of the candidate (or appointee) and institution. Addressing these issues is never easy and institutional pressures do not permit the luxury of learning on the job. Consequently, new educational schemes become available aimed directly the new elected or appointed position owners. This study investigates the training programs for elected and/or appointed president/ rectors as well as aiming the potential candidates. Some training programs are examined and compared by their perspectives, approach, duration, and content. And a new approach for training presidents of the educational institutions discussed.

Keywords: Higher education leadership, university presidents training programs, university management.

1. Educational Institutions and Presidents

The evaluation and selection process of presidents/rectors of universities and other higher educational institutions has always been a very special, extraordinary, exclusive and usually confidential process regardless of which office and authority conducts the process. The main qualification has almost always been the academic accomplishments of the candidates and the most promising place to look for a person with the capacity for the job is within academia itself (Dods, 2001). Chairs, deans and vice presidents form a natural pool of candidates for university presidency. Since the expected end products of such institutions are higher education and scholar outputs, a candidate's educational experience acquaintance with the ways and workings of academic institutions and research and learning orientation are vitally important. This orientation may be expected to support academic freedom against immense pressures from the environment as well as from various constituencies and stakeholders by giving courage to fight the short term profit orientation with the ideals of higher education. Presidents coming from academia are more likely to engage with enthusiasm instead of the cold professionalism expected from CEO's of the business life who might easily consider the post as a spring board for a better job, or a pleasant post to retire (Dods, 2001). For most of the academics, being president is the apex of carrier. Almost always the new president's tenure starts with great enthusiasm and impatient expectancy. Usually academics do not seem to consider the post of presidency until well along in their careers. However, once proposed or considered for the job, it momentarily becomes exciting. It impose liability on one hand, but forwards power and authority for an entire institution, to be able to make a difference in a world they know and value, correct the problems they detected and judged from long before (McLaughlin, 1996).

On the other hand, a newcomer to presidency of an educational organization from any other profession may not have a better chance of being accepted by the faculty as an intellectual peer. Faculty might easily condemn the new president coming from an unrelated vocation, as intellectually bankrupt, without considering possible past accomplishments of the person (Dods, 2001). Activation of the "immune system" (Watkins, 2003) of educational institutions seems more hastily responsive. New presidents may love the cheerful respect and admiration that

greets them on their arrival, but inevitably they will face harsh criticism that might appear so easily (McLaughlin, 1996).

Educational organizations carry different set of realities when viewed through the tenets of bureaucratic theory (Weick, 1976). Management of higher educational organizations are inherently different than management of common for-profit organizations. (Stephen, 1967). Karl Weick (1976) argues that educational organizations might be understood within the concept of "loose coupling" which incorporates disparate observations, stubborn problems for methodologists, and generates intriguing questions for scholars which might present unexpected properties of less rationalized and less tightly related cluster of events. These differences do not ease or replace the burden of presidents as the head of an entire enterprise with immense challenges; rather they add on top of them. The tasks and challenges facing the elected or appointed presidents also are greatly administrative, necessitating strategy deliberation, institutional positioning, financial dexterity, social skills, fund-raising capacity and leadership (Cocker et al 2007). Other hand, considering that the "equilibrium" becoming the transient stage and "disequilibrium" becoming the 'modus operandi' of our daily life, acceptance of uncertainty, irregularity, unpredictability, to be able to bridge the gap between subject and object by engaging in dialogical and dialectical thinking (Ardelt, 2004), to be able to make the sorts of difficult complex judgments that are pivotal for an organization's fortunes, in the last analysis (Rosenzweig, 2007) is critical for the post of presidency. A prescription for an ideal university president seems to call for a superhuman (Dods, 2001).

Paradoxically even deans have usually had limited contact with the full scope of responsibilities that a president assignees which requires acclimating themselves to new surroundings, multitasking, adjusting a reasonable pace of change, determining priorities for presidential action, delegating work to others they like to do themselves, detecting those fine nuances between what is right and what is not, capturing the meaning of several, often contradictory signals and stimuli, interpreting them in holistic and integrative manner, learning from them, and act on them (Dods, 2001, McLaughlin, 1996, Malan & Kriger,1998).

Emotional resilience, ability to withstand pressures, emotional stability and toughness, are among the many necessary capacities a president in higher education should possess. Considering the dual nature of higher education organizations these capacities will be tested with unexpected severity and intensity. The presidents are usually being elected or appointed to the position because of their accumulated knowledge, deep understanding of the intricacies of the job, and past accomplishments in number of situations on other posts proving their wizardry on the profession. However, transition from teacher to chief executive and able to keep integrity, is a challenging accomplishment. Development of key relationships especially with the trustees, ability to gain confidence of others, ability to deal with nonacademic people, developing a secure base of support are all inevasible but vital skills for them which had been a closed book to him as a professor. Therefore, very few of them are fully prepared for the challenge that lies ahead or diverse capacities required (Coyne et al, 2005, McLaughlin, 1996). This shift of overlap presents an unexpected issue both from the perspective of the candidate (or appointee) and institution.

Organizational stakeholders greet the new president both with hopes and wariness. Higher educational organizations are anti-authoritarian by nature. Still the focal point is on the president. Presidents are expected to understand the academic enterprise, admissions, retention, financial aid discounting, and institutional positioning as well as classical tasks of the chief executive such as managing complex budgets both in terms of allocating and reallocating resources living on good terms with the state legislature, and be a good speaker, productive, articulate and responsive leader. On the presidents' side, common challenges indicate the "surprises" they face in the initial "entry" phase. Such surprises may provoke the president into an unintended action or indiscretion. It will cause stunning into immobility, even catatonia at best. These surprises include the nature of the president's job, the pace one must keep, the number and range of demands, issues brought to the president's attention, constituent's paradoxical hopes and disappointments for expected change and solitary nature of decision making (McLaughlin, 1996). These external and usually self-imposed internal pressures forces presidents to look for quick fixes and expeditious remedies. Crash courses on engineering, private meetings with external industry experts, hiring private coaches and asking help from previous presidents as mentors is not uncommon. But time and organizational restraints may not permit the luxury of learning on the job (Coyne et al, 2005). They cannot assume that things will get sorted out "along the way", or can be dispensed by conducting proper meetings (Bensimon, 1989).

Expectation of change, accumulated for some time, surfaces as soon as the new leader's transition into the new role (Watkins, 2003). The arrival of new president immediately triggers prospects of change for an institution. New presidents aren't expected to have all the details of their programs worked out by the first day. Still, stakeholders look for important signals immediately. They are expected to "hit the ground running" (Watkins,

2003). They will try to understand the assumed new direction, new ways of doing business and cultural reorientations. But these are the times when new presidents are most vulnerable. They will be -and have to be- more timid on decision making. Instead, it will be imperative for them to make more decisions during this period than they had expected. Decisions made in the initial days and months of a president's tenure are disproportionately important in determining in the success of the president and the organization (Coyne et al, 2005). Managing organizational change has been covered extensively and excellent resources exist, but most implicitly assume that the change agent is already settled in the organization, with the necessary knowledge and relationships in place to plan, build support for, and carry out transformation initiatives, which do not coincides with the reality (Watkins, 2003).

2. Success and Failure

A great deal of secessions from the post of presidency is not by choice (McLaughlin, 1996). As the final seat for decision making, risk for failure is much greater than all the other posts. And a considerable portion of the risk is not the simple and plane incompetency of the new president but rather mismatch for this particular context (McLaughlin, 1996). Great portion of the blame falls to the selection committee. Indeed, selection processes are greatly been influenced by an agreeable social presence, by ability to make a speech, or by the fact that a man "looks like a college president" (Dods, 2001). Thus, it may not be that the new president is a failure, per se; rather it is the person-job unfit between the new president and the cultural setting of the educational institution.

Erroneous decision for the exact time and the pace of change is another source of failure for the president. Capacity to absorb change, no matter how desirable the change might be, is relatively limited for people. Poor judgment of the timing and the rapidity of change instead of the content and the direction of the change might pose a more profound danger for successful transition (Watkins, 2003).

The net and its relentless offering of almost incredible amounts of knowledge threatens to overwhelm us unless we grow a holistic view of the educational landscape, and keep an eye on the required end results such as reaching an acceptable level of satisfaction among academics, students, staff and society at large. Widespread transformation of educational institutions under the pressures of efficiency and cost control, resembling corporate profit units necessitates an analytical approach while not to lose sight that ultimately the task of such an institution is creation and dissemination of knowledge. Whether we call it better management or advancement of science, the challenge is to create and fulfil high expectations from and to all stakeholders through strong exercise of leadership.

Another reason for failure is the inclination of presidents to their usual ways of conducting proceedings based on their already accumulated knowledge. Working extremely hard doing something which simply doesn't fit to the new context will end up in miserable failure. Perhaps the biggest pitfall a president face is assuming that what has made one successful to this point in the career will continue to do so. Successful leaders with "stellar academic records" (Argyris 1991), do not easily accept setbacks, refraining to confronting and learning from them. Instead they develop extremely "brittle" personalities with a tendency to become defensive and sticking the old ways. Tensions and pressures of the job, which never cease to exist in today's organizational environment, consists another formidable cause for error for the presidents too. Under pressures from the environment which makes processing information and making judgment difficult, they readily take sanctuary in the old and trustable ways. Tendency to take refuge in the past knowledge is very real (Pfeffer & Sutton, 2000).

Failure is harsh for a leader who commands and an organization with such large dimensions. Condemnations come both from inside and from the environment. From inside; damaged self-respect imposes a heavy burden on the leader which might cripple future conduct. And from outside; even a mediocre success causes raised eyebrows at the observers. Under these circumstances neither a new appointment at the same level or returning to deanship or vice presidential level is difficult to negotiate, if not impossible.

But there is a less overlooked but probably more costly side of presidential failure; which is to consider it from the perspective of the organization. Every leadership failure is immensely costly for the organization independent of the reasons behind that failure (Watkins, 2003). Time, energy and financial costs, as well as lost opportunities cannot be calculated. Even the prestige of the organization might suffer deeply. In spite of all these risks board or selection committee cannot guarantee the success of the new president in advance. But they may help to increase the odds instead of being a bystander and relying solely on try-and-error. Throwing people into deep water and see if they sink or swim might be quick way to teach swimming but with immense amount of costs. You might drown the candidate during the process and impose a lot of unnecessary prodigality for the organization as well. On the contrary, furnishing the candidates with the basics of swimming, preparing them for

the dangers ahead, coaching them and then and only then expecting the talent and performance to emerge might mean tremendous gains for the organization and for the person as well (Watkins, 2003).

3. A Comparison of Training Programs for University Presidents

An investigation of the executive training programs for elected and/or appointed presidents/rectors is presented below. The analysis examines the perspectives, duration, content and the costs of Harvard *Seminar for New Presidents*[1], *Institute for New Presidents* at American Council on Education[2], *New presidents program* run by The American Association of State Colleges and Universities[3], *Program for new presidents*[4] and *Executive Leadership Academy*[5] run by the Council of Independent Colleges.

Place Table 1 here (Table 1. Training Programs for University Presidents)

All president training programs above contain a common base concentrating on practical management skills such as financial management, personnel management, institutional strategic planning and team building etc. Indeed, a robust understanding of financials, relationships with government agencies and other constituencies pose a great challenge for a new president. Therefore, a focus for establishing these skills is understandable and necessary. But there is one exception which demands attention; Seminar for College & University Presidents conducted by the Council of Independent Colleges which focuses on philosophical endeavors states that;

   "… clarify their own sense of personal vocation and weigh it in the context of the missions of institutions they lead and might lead in the future,

   … explore the ways in which greater understanding and alignment of personal vocation and institutional mission,

   … an appreciation for the kinds of endeavors that offer personal satisfaction, a sense of meaning, and, in many, but not all cases, a spiritually-grounded belief about the importance of work as president which offers the promise of self-knowledge at a level that can contribute significantly to presidential success." (http://www.cic.edu/meetings-and-events/Leadership-Development/Documents/brochures/VocationMisson 2014.pdf retrieved at 02/01/2013)

The emphasis here indicates that although practical skills are gravely important, philosophical skills might prove to be critical. Leaders must have the capacity to confront and reflect critically on their own behavior, and diagnose the ways they often inadvertently contribute to the organization's problems. Processing the incoming data and information, technical and quantitative tools give way to more qualitative and even philosophical understandings (Zeleny, 2006). Not only asking "how?" but also asking "why?" is indispensable (Ardelt, 2004). What to do and how to do necessitates a coordinated process, extensive utilization of knowledge and lots of skills. But why to do is fundamentally different. It necessitates a capacity of perspective taking, ability to employ new ways of doing things as well as doing new things. Seeing and defining problems from a new vantage point, crossing the boundary from the safe and secure to explore unsecure and unknown but still being able keep superior judgment capacity, necessitates wisdom that is so necessary to filter knowledge and turn it into useful and meaningful action (Zeleny, 2006).

But, do these skills are teachable, especially in a short training program? The answer may be not. Answering the question of "why?" might be dependent not on the knowledge but the way of knowing (Small, 2004). It necessitates transformation of the person, not adding the already accumulated knowledge. But furnishing the presidents with the right tools and previse them about the new angles, is possible. Presenting the perspectives to ask the right questions, emphasizing the necessity of introspection and reflection, and facilitating and coaching the journey, and leaving the rest to them might be the best course of action. Thus training presidents should facilitate the abilities development, but, not all those who receive training are expected to become experts.

Choosing the best course of action when faced with a difficult life dilemma necessitates the ability of superior judgment. This ability might be enhanced with the help of mentors (Baltes & Smith, 1990) by synthesizing their life experiences with introspection and perspective taking. Consultations, discussions and counseling with others termed as "interactive minds" (Staudinger & Baltes, 1996) can be a powerful force to see matters deeply and in novel perspectives. Instead of simply revising other people's response to emergent problematic situations, having a glimpse on reflective judgment by interacting, increases the developmental level of their own responses to a problem as well as transformative and integrative processing skills to utilize it (Kitchener et al., 1993). What is meant is not to substitute interactive mind for the individual mind, but to facilitate judgmental ability and help

contextualize it. Indeed, decision makers must learn how to contextualize their decisions so as to optimize their decision making for a given time and place by effective employment of dialogical thinking, which involves understanding single issues from multiple points of view and dialectical thinking, which involves the recognition that what constitutes a good answer to a question can change over time (Sternberg & Jordan, 2007). Exhibiting and enhancing capacity of perspective taking, moral reasoning, recognition of the limits of knowledge while craving for it, to accept and deal with the uncertainties of life, and searching and finding creative and novel solutions for the problems as well as searching and asking creative and novel questions can be accomplished through such a training program.

4. Proposed Training Program

In order to achieve all these objectives, a short, comprehensive and an intensive program is developed for the presidents of Turkish Universities.

Place Table 2 here (Table 2. The Proposed Training Program)

Such a program will cover both a narrow occupational preparation and philosophical matters including critical thinking, problem solving and perspective taking. A two track program over a consecutive five-day period is suggested. The two tracts cover morning and afternoon sessions. Former sessions focus on occupational preparations, basic and fundamental technical knowledge and practical tips. Latter sessions focus on more salient phenomena and organized in intense and small-groups for getting together with ex-presidents as mentors, experienced colleagues, scholars and facilitators, discussing how to interpret and integrate conflicting, irregular and uncertain signals, how to accept and face unpredictability, how to learn and make sense without hindering execution and how to lead against all these uncertainties. The purpose is to have "thinking partners" (Owings & Kaplan, 2012) to facilitate the painful process of re-learning without loss of ego identity (Schein, 1996). In a non-critical, non-judgmental atmosphere by diminishing anxiety and defensiveness as low as possible, going through fishbowl dialogues, simulations and case studies, reflective interviewing and shadowing will aspire novice presidents to give full attention to analysis and re-synthesis without the urgency of immediate action, and adapt and learn valuable/applicable strategies to use for judgment and decision making.

Analytical and intuitive cognitive processes or perspectives embedded in the modules are complementary modes aiming sound judgment. Similar to divergent/convergent thinking sequences, one is to evaluate matters analytically while others are to combine them on a path gathering in the whole picture for conclusion drawing and judgment. Internal coupling of the modules is deliberately selected to promote dialectical unity while demonstrating contradictory aspects. Through the dialectical processes presidents actively shape their own perspectives and grasp the whole. Building new viewpoints where they can conduct purposeful and mature thinking and make informed judgments and execute profound. Hence, brave and bold changes are fundamental and indispensable for job facing novice presidents.

3. Conclusion

Purposing a program aiming newly elected presidents or proximate candidates of higher educational organizations should not be a classical management and leadership training program per se; but rather gaining ability for perspective taking and sound judgment. Most attendees are likely the holders of vast intellectual knowledge but concentration on interpretative knowledge which reaches beyond formal operational thought and far broader than simply analytic, might be more critical for the post of presidency. Although practical orientation and tools to deal with pressing matters have to be an integral part of the proposed program, the main focus should engage philosophical perspective taking and understanding matters in depth and new vantage points incorporating contradictions that are now inevitable part of higher educational organizations' daily conduct.

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Table 1. Training Programs for University Presidents

Inst. / Program	Objectives of Program	Content of Program
Harvard University/ Seminar for New Presidents - 6 days - $6000-$7000	- A practical and conceptual orientation to the presidency. - Familiarizes new presidents with the opportunities and hazards they will likely face. - Prepares to respond for multiple responsibilities and constituencies of their new role.	- Sessions ranging from fundraising to building the administrative team. - Seminar focuses on the critical issues of the first months and years of the presidency. - Provides a chance for new presidents to reflect on their own situations and to consult with experts about their special concerns and circumstances. - Seminar introduces presidents to an extraordinary peer group of colleagues from around the country. - Addresses key topics such as; contexts of leadership governance, presidential fundraising, presidential perspective on financial management, building the administrative team, academic leadership, life of president, strategic planning.
American Council on Education/ The ACE Institute for New Presidents - 6-day seminars + webinars and virtual activities - $6000-$7000	- Provide insights about the leadership challenges faced by new presidents. - Knowledge and skills for dealings with high-visibility, high-exposure, and unexpected challenges and opportunities. - Practical advice on working effectively with the media. - Increased understanding of how to assess and manage campus culture and change processes. - Practical advice on how to form and manage a highly effective executive team.	- Interactive panels with experienced presidents and other experts. - Mini-case studies presented by program participants. - Conversations with peers from a range of institutions. - Briefings by national experts. - Sessions are facilitated by experienced and highly successful presidents and thought leaders. - An extended professional network of fellow presidents from a cross-section of institutions. - A low-risk setting to test ideas.
American Assoc. of Com Colleges/ Presidents Academy Summer Institute - 3 days with 8 preconvent workshops - $1470	- Focus on current challenges, emerging trends, and opportunities unique to the position.	- Focuses on issues of critical importance to success in the role of the community college president. - Providing a mix of content experts and interaction around related case studies that result in the development/acquisition of ready-to-use skill sets that participants can apply back at their respective campuses. - Provides opportunities for newer presidents to develop mentor-mentee relationships with more seasoned presidents. - Focus on immediate challenges and opportunities that these presidents are facing on their campuses.
American Association of State Colleges and Universities/ New Presidents' Academy - 5 days - $1900	- Emphasizing the establishment of a strong presidential base. - Designed to provide both the knowhow and the tools to forge a solid presidency. - An intensive and highly focused program, a group of tightly connected topics and experiences. - Focus on the first 500 days, developing and enhancing skills that will carry participants through their presidential career.	N/A
The Council of Indep. Colleges/ Seminar for College& Univ. Presidents - 2 seminars, each 2 days, total of 4 days - Registration	- Discover ways in which the individual's vocation connects with and may be animated by the institution's mission. - Provide an appreciation for the kinds of endeavors that offer personal satisfaction, a sense of meaning, and, in many, but not all cases, a spiritually-grounded belief about the importance of work as president	- A seminar-based program designed to help college and university presidents and their spouses to clarify their own sense of personal vocation and weigh it in the context of the missions of institutions they lead and might lead in the future. - A series of structured conversations, participants explore the ways in which greater understanding and alignment of personal vocation and institutional mission can be resources for effective presidential leadership.

$400, seminar is privately funded by Lilly Endowment	which offers the promise of selfknowledge at a level that can contribute significantly to presidential success.	
The Council of Independent Colleges/ Executive Leadership Academy - 2 seminars, each 3 days, total of 6 days - $1800	- A year-long program to prepare experienced provosts and vice presidents to become successful presidents. - Includes two national seminars, readings, webinars, individualized experiential activities, and structured mentorship experiences. - By completing the program, participants will have acquired considerable knowledge, skills, and experiences that are germane to the portfolio of responsibilities and activities central to the work of the president.	- Focus on presidential areas of responsibility, none of which is completely contained within the portfolio of a single senior campus officer's position. - fundraising - comprehensive campaigns - student affairs and athletics - endowment development and management; board development and board relations - institutional strategic planning as well as institutional repositioning; alumni affairs - marketing and branding; financial management - legal issues - governmental relations at the state and federal levels; towngown relations - campus master planning; buildings and grounds - enrollment management - personnel management

Table 2. The Proposed Training Program

Module	Topic	Content
1	Strategy deliberation and managing change Accepting uncertainty and irregularity	- Strategy deliberation, and institutional positioning as well as focus on current challenges, emerging trends, and opportunities unique to the position. - Understand the academic enterprise, admissions, retention, academics and student matters. - Acceptance of uncertainty, irregularity, unpredictability, and impermanence and knowing how to deal with them. - Holistic and integrative interpretation of multiple and often contradictory signals, an ability to detect the fine nuances between them, and applying proper and relevant action.
2	Financial basics Sense making and sense giving	- A robust understanding of financial basics and knowledge for managing complex budgets both in terms of allocating resources, endowment development and fundraising capacity. - Gaining the ability to question personal life experiences together with self-awareness, determination, and constancy to transcend subjectivity and projections.
3	Team building Dialogical and dialectical thinking	- Understanding team building, ability to gain confidence of others and capacity to build a solid supporters base as well as development of key relationships especially with the trustees. - Adjusting a reasonable pace of change, determining priorities for presidential action, able to delegate works. - Learning dialogical and dialectical thinking.
4	Relationships with the stage legislature Retrospection and reflection	- Policies about how to live on good terms with the state legislature. - Gaining qualitative perspective; deeper understanding of salient phenomena and events, able to have a broad perspective.
5	Media matters Integrity and ego	- Working effectively with the media. - Able to keep ego in check despite the pressures of high-visibility, high-exposure, and keep integrity while transition from teacher to chief executive.