

Prophetic, Associative, Activist, Straight and Dynamic Leadership, A Phenomenology Study at University of Muhammadiyah Malang Indonesia

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Abstract

This study aimed at encompassing the Executive Board's understanding and interpreting the leadership styles as well as its strategic implementation that could contribute beneficially to both internal and external stakeholders. The variety of leadership styles emerged as a strategy shifting the university from a market follower to a market leader. This study used qualitative approach with Edmund Husserl's phenomenological philosophy reviewing that the thought pattern of subjectivism does not only regard the visible phenomena but also tries to interpret them thoroughly. The success of an Islamic University, in this case University of Muhammadiyah Malang is a visible phenomenon while the leaders' interpretation of leadership styles emerged as an object in this study. Several findings on the implementation of leadership styles in this study were: 1) prophetic leadership style with the characteristics of Sidiq, Tabligh, Amanah, and Fatonah; 2) associative leadership style with the cultural, collective, and collegial approaches; 3) activist leadership style through an organization mover. The interpretation of activist leadership became a wedge bridging one leadership style and others. This activist leadership style was characterized by massive ideal goals developed through a series of discussions and subsequently be implemented through a series of vigorous movements; 4) straight and dynamic leadership style characterized by progressive, flexible, and rationale movements. This straight leadership style was interpreted as a gradual change from standard movements to more progressive ones. It was mainly due to the impact of standardization determined by either the government or the institution proper.

Keywords: leadership, prophetic, phenomenology

1. Introduction

An organization functions its established structure to yield the qualified human resources which ultimately lead to the achievement of maximal outcomes. A higher education runs and works based on the organizational principles. It ideally reflects the manifestation of a group of elements or units that should be managed and mobilized to reach the expected goals. As one of organizations, University of Muhammadiyah Malang (UMM) draws attention to be deeply studied, especially in regards to the leadership factors mobilizing its success. As a higher education, leadership requirement must be set up along with its all complex issues. Therefore, this university becomes a great object in this study.

Attentively perceived in the historical perspective, the development and change of leadership styles at University of Muhammadiyah Malang along with its gauges can be summarized as the transformative leadership style. It refers to the Northouse's notion (2001) that a transformational leadership approach in an organization is based on four major factors: 1) the strong and idealized influence, in this case is Muhammadiyah's lofty ideals; 2) fertile spirit and motivation of each individual in the organization, characterized by their progressive movements; 3) high intellectual of each individual to pursue the desired goals; and 4) an individual's existence as the key role in the organization.

It is in accordance with Aarons's findings (2006) revealing that the leadership significantly correlates to the organization's conditions and member's performances. The individual's and organizational behaviors intersect with the leadership style that is required openly.

The leadership issues emerge to be an interesting topic in the organization studies. Thus, varied studies and findings on human resources mostly concern on the leadership styles. Despite being perceived in distinct definitions, many define leadership based on respective point of views upon this interesting phenomena. A study by Bass & Stogdill (1998) explains that the definition of leadership emerges as many as the experts defining this concept.

This perspective is similar to a study conducted by Hughes, et al. (2002) that the distinct definitions of leadership are due to the different perspectives in methods, measurement varieties, and leadership aspects per se. Meanwhile, Yukl (1998) states that these differences are because of varied aspects comprising the subject of authority, object of authority, the way this authority is used, and the attempt to use this authority.

Possibly, the established relationship might tend to be instructional-vertical or participative-horizontal

relationship. Therefore, if it is used to perceive the leadership issues in an organization or a higher education institution, these distinct definitions will vary due to different perspectives, leader-follower relationship, and surrounding circumstances. Particularly, the leader-follower relationship in this context refers to the relationship between leaders (Executive Boards: including Rector, Vice Rectors, and other Boards) and followers.

The transformative leadership performed by a leader can expectedly contribute to the increase of followers' motivation to achieve the optimal outcomes. Ergo, the transformational leadership as a promising leadership style starts to be used considerably in facing any changes, whether from internal or external side (Bass, 1985; Avolio, et al., 1988; and Bass, 1996), and in increasing the followers' motivation to achieve the best performance (Bass, 1985; Hughes, et al., 2002).

Motivation can offer an energy that could mobilize any potentials creating ideal and high willingness. Therefore, an individual's performance is not merely influenced by job satisfaction and morale; the motivation also appears as a determining factor for the organization's success.

Porter & Miles (2003) explain that the issues on followers' motivation are determined by three factors: the characteristics of individuals, the characteristics of job, and the characteristics of work environment; one of which (the characteristics of work environment) might hugely relate to the relationship between a leader and followers. How a follower perceives and be treated by a leader will surely impact on the job performance. A follower will perceive the leadership style of his leader; hence, he will judge and manifest it through the job motivation. It means if the perspective of leadership style reflected by a leader apparently leads to a better and positive influence, the followers' motivation will remarkably increase for sure. Otherwise, if the perspective of leadership style reflected by a leader somehow leads to a negative influence, the followers' motivation thus will inevitably decrease.

Based on this understanding, a study and discourse on leadership must be regarded from variedly basic aspects. Despite the small number of advanced and in-depth studies on leadership, the need of information and related references on this leadership topic gradually increases.

The scarcity of leadership study is formerly due to an unresolved debate on the terms and concepts between leader and manager. The scope of leader and leadership is essentially broader than one of manager and management (Alfian, 2009:15). This definition highlights that a leader is indeed a unique mankind with full of specialties. Any leadership models will always relate to a power which require two factors: *influence* and *power*.

However, many ignore the idea that a leadership has different focus in profit and non-profit organizations. According to Drucker (2005), non-profit organization is a voluntary organization. The distinct focus lays on voluntarism dimension. Therefore, Drunken's explanation elaborates that most of organizations are likely closer to non-profit organization since each member shares the same goals. This makes a leadership study become one of the most interesting studies perceived from varied points of view. If a word "leadership" is combined by a phrase "higher education" or "educational institution" (into higher education leadership), it becomes an interesting study that can be encompassed thoroughly and dynamically.

In numerous aspects, a leadership is described as a process but mostly theories and researches on leadership focus on a figure to get better understanding. Joseph C. Rost (2004) defines a leadership as inter-influencing process between a leader and followers (subordinates) who mutually wish for real and concrete changes reflecting the collective goals. A leadership involves in-depth influence happened between those willing to have significant changes as the mutual objectives. The influence in this case refers to an active relationship between a leader and followers comprising a reciprocal relationship without any coercions.

Thus, a leadership per se is an inter-influencing process in which a leader influences his followers and vice versa. Those involved in this such relationship wish for a transformation. A leader, thereby, is expected to be capable of creating significant changes in an organization instead of maintaining *the status quo*.

Furthermore, the changes, instead of reflecting something that a leader wants, illustrate the mutual purposes. These such purposes must be achieved in the future and become major vision and mission of the organization. A leader influences his followers to achieve the mutual goals. A leadership, further, is collective activities or movements comprising the desire, intention, and active engagement between a leader and followers to achieve the desired goals. Eventually, either a leader or followers takes personal responsibility to achieve the communal goals.

2. Research Method

This study was conducted by means of qualitative method which ideally focused on individuals in their life, especially their interaction among others. It strives to interpret their language as well as understanding upon the surrounding world (Nasution, 1988:5).

By using qualitative method, the obtained data would be greater, comprehensive, credible, and meaningful to achieve the desired objectives. The use of qualitative method might fasten the investigation upon the findings. Different from quantitative one, this method could only focus on empiric and measurable facts (Sugiyono, 2013:205). These facts are not visible to any senses and therefore rather hard to express. By enabling

qualitative method, it would thoroughly access the high credibility of the data.

This study, moreover, used Husserl's phenomenological approach encompassing the structure of awareness intentionality. It formulated four inherited activities inside the awareness: 1) objectification, 2) identification, 3) correlation, and 4) constitution.

It involved the researcher proper as main instrument despite the use of another simple instrument to widen the focus of the study and to complete the observation data. There were two designed instruments namely: 1) an instrument to rank the university's achievements, and 2) an instrument to measure any influencing factors of the achievements.

In qualitative study, the data sources were selected *purposively*. The determination of data sources in the proposal remained temporary and would surely develop in the implementation. The data sources were those having a *power* and *authority* in particular social situations or objects of the study and thus could "*open any available gates*" to which the researcher collected the data (Sugiyono, 2013). Faisal (1990) by quoting Spradly's statement explains that social situations as initial samples must be dominant in other domains. He also suggests that samples as the data sources or informants must meet the requirements.

Based on the objective and focus of the study, the data sources and data collection technique used were two leadership periods of Abdul Malik Fadjar (MF) and Muhadjir Effendy (ME). Further, to strengthen the findings of this study, the additional objects were selected from Daily Advisory Board (BPH), the current Rector, Vice-Rectors, former Vice-Rectors, Deans, former Deans, and numerous Heads and Directors at University of Muhammadiyah Malang as the key respondents. The data collection was conducted by means of documentation and interview during the leadership periods.

3. Findings and Discussion

The elaborated findings in this study were subjects' understanding upon the unique and distinct leadership styles compared to the existing theories. Besides, the context of organization's environment, which in this case was Islamic higher education transformed from minimum conditions into a leading higher education, emerged as an inseparable background of the findings.

As the object of this study, University of Muhammadiyah Malang can be regarded as public organization in which faculties (lecturers and staffs) became major human resources inside the organization. Their intentions and movements were mainly influenced and determined by the leaders' direction along with their leadership styles. The leadership in this context refers to more than a manager since a manager is merely required to run his functions well. Meanwhile, in this study, the leadership is rather defined as the leaders' ways to manage and inspire followers to achieve the organization's goals. Each organization requires an effective leader who has abilities in influencing his followers to achieve the desired purposes.

3.1 Findings on the Leadership Styles at University of Muhammadiyah Malang

The leadership style at University of Muhammadiyah Malang took a role simultaneously along with the university's progress. In the initial steps, this university tended to demonstrate an earthy collective-collegial style, yet still carried out a "hard work" concept to achieve the university's goals. Currently, as a *market leader*, formal and dynamic style seems more prominent to achieve the university's goals. Below is several findings on the understanding of the leadership styles at University of Muhammadiyah Malang during MF and ME leadership periods:

3.1.1 Prophetic Leadership

As an Islamic Higher Education, University of Muhammadiyah Malang rigorously realizes that its ideology is mainly oriented on transformative-prophetic movements. Therefore, it seems plausible that a rector as a top leader puts this prophetic movement as a reference. It was seen from both MF's and ME's references imitating the leadership style of AR Fachruddin which is essentially characterized by *sidiq* (truth-oriented), *tabligh* (communicative), *amanah* (trustworthy), and *fatimah* (brilliant) otherwise abbreviated as *STAF*. This leadership style was also in accordance to Brilliantono's findings (2011). Besides, 15 centuries ago Allah SWT had said through Al-Quran Sura Al-Ahzab: 21 "There has certainly been for you in the Messenger of Allah an excellent pattern for anyone whose hope is in Allah and the Last Day and (who) remembers Allah often".

This leadership style rather ranges over times, prevailing either in the initial era or in current progressive era. Since the beginning of this university, this prophetic leadership style has been used. MF used this style to live modestly and did not brag out this university upon other universities. Besides, his modesty was also demonstrated in his surveillance: not too procedural yet still entrusting the subordinates' self-control. Meanwhile, ME likely demonstrated this style as humble and kind. He rather positioned himself as a student upon his seniors and subordinates. As a teacher as well as student, he also possessed *STAF* characteristics.

3.1.2 Associative Leadership: Cultural, Collective, and Collegial

The associative leadership style existed as the university was managed traditionally. This style was influenced by less-professional NGOs management. It, however, still has several advantages; one of which is cultural and tends

to be dynamic and family-oriented. This style contrasts against the structural leadership style tending to be rigid and procedural. Besides, this associative leadership style also raised collective and collegial movements. It indeed reflects the Muhammadiyah's movements, in which the leaders do not highlight their personal image but rather a pack of leaderships. In a modern management, this way seems likely similar to presidium leadership structure yet its implementation is mainly due to collective factors.

Furthermore, this associative leadership style was often carried out in early era since this university was still organizationally mixed up with Muhammadiyah Leadership in Malang. Structurally, this university had to share the duties with Muhammadiyah and its human resources had to "borrow" other campuses or institutions. Hence, this associative leadership style seemed effective to be used at that time. During this era at University of Muhammadiyah Malang, there was a term "*dosen takmir*" to refer to a lecturer who has double roles: as a leader as well as an attendant. They could carry out any functions as long as it brings benefits to the organization. This style appears to be unprofessional one due to the absence of *authority distribution* and *concrete job description*.

3.1.3 Activist Leadership: Organization Movers

The understanding of this activist leadership style intersects bridging between MF and ME leadership. They both share the same background as an activist or organization mover. This activist leadership style was characterized by massive ideal goals developed through a series of discussions and subsequently be implemented through a series of vigorous movements. MF demonstrated this style through his capacity as an alumnus from America who had a great willingness to develop this university as those in develop countries by steadily motivating his subordinates in routine forums as a 'mental revolution' movement. Meanwhile, ME demonstrated many leading 'out of the box' transformations under the high dynamics. These two leaders demonstrated this activist leadership style with high level of 'hard work' mentality, discipline, and sustainable innovations.

3.1.4 Straight and Dynamic Leadership Style: Progressive, Flexible and Rationale Movement

This straight leadership style was interpreted as a gradual change from standard movements to more progressive ones. It was mainly due to the impact of standardization determined by either the government or the Muhammadiyah institution proper. The implementation of this style existed during 2000s as MF entrusted ME as his successors. In this era, University of Muhammadiyah Malang started strengthening the internal system and adjusting to the superior regulations. Nevertheless, the straight leadership style tending to follow any procedures at this time was also offset by its dynamic. Obeying the rules for a leader emerges as minimalized standard, meanwhile in its implementation it must exceed this standard. Therefore, this dynamic leadership style should be defined as a flexible style following the era shift. It was reflected on how this university adjusted to *status quo* (government regime) or Muhammadiyah Leadership whether from Central or Regional Boards. This leadership was interpreted by Malik as having a progressive, flexible, and rationale movements. Progressive refers to dynamics with multicultural and open-minded ideas. Flexible refers to dynamic, flexible, and adaptive. Meanwhile, rationale refers to its measurable ability and its '*on the right track*' status.

ME implemented the football manager style in observing the change of internal dynamics. In another occasion, he also implemented the 'Kostrad' style to emphasize on each duty. He also implemented a philosophy of '*hulubis kuntul baris*' to adjust himself either in the front, middle, or back liner.

4. Conclusion

Understanding and interpreting the implementation of leadership style at University of Muhammadiyah Malang comprise the understanding of Muhammadiyah Ideology and Rasulullah's patterns with its all values: *Sidiq*, *Tabligh*, *Amanah*, and *Fatonah*. The Muhammadiyah Ideology refers to the system of beliefs and Muhammadiyah's ideal life as an Islamic movement in realizing the real Islamic society (Haedar Nashir, 2010: 198).

To understand and figure out the beneficial values received by all stakeholders whether from internal or external side, the findings of this study become a salient proposition for Executive Boards to take a policy in implementing the transformational leadership style as a strategy to achieve better goals. It could also become a leadership model at other Muhammadiyah universities in Indonesia. The government could expectedly be able to take benefits of this study as one of alternative references in developing Private Islamic University. Further, the findings of this study could inspire students and later become a prominent reference on the concept of leadership style for them once they would like to implement it on their future carrier. Last, it is expected to give a theoretical contribution on the current science, particularly in terms of the concept of leadership style.

Meanwhile, the variants of leadership style as a strategy shifting the university from a *market follower* to a *market leader* under these following indicators: *expertise*, *social responsibility*, *corporations*, *well-equipped*, and *well-paid*.

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