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**Going Global And University Competitiveness:
Skill set for strategic leadership**

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Abstract

The terms "globalisation" and "internationalisation" of the university have received numerous attention worldwide. Yet, being internationally visible does not mean the university is properly internationalised. A university requires the capacity to harness the power of strategic partnership and attract renowned intellectuals to attain global status and international appeal. University leadership must foster a holistic ecosystem in addressing community issues in line with SDGs. The study evaluates and proposes an integrative analytical skillset for strategic leadership, combining three different areas of research: job-related competencies, interpersonal competencies, and personal competencies, juxtaposing two dimensions – value and uniqueness – revealing different forms of university leadership.

Keywords: UiTM; internationalisation; strategic partnership; university leadership

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1.0 Introduction

To become a globally renowned university, UiTM must deliver unmatched value proposition to its stakeholders. The rise of a global knowledge economy has intensified the need for strategic partnerships that go beyond the traditional funding of discrete research projects. UiTM realizes that networking through global partnerships is necessary to push the frontiers of knowledge, and these alliances become a powerful engine for innovation and economic growth. UiTM leaders must exercise caution and discernment when considering strategic alliances, ensuring clarity regarding the synergies they offer. Leadership within higher education institutions, such as UiTM,

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significantly influences stakeholder actions. Research (Fischer & Sitkin, 2023) highlights that deficiencies in leadership can result in adverse outcomes, including unclear vision leading to confusion, impaired communication fostering distrust, and insufficient empowerment stifling innovation. Ineffective conflict resolution hampers collaboration, while overlooking diversity and inclusivity undermines equitable education. Thus, fostering strong leadership cultivates a positive, productive environment, ultimately enhancing institutional success in the dynamic higher education landscape.

Empirical evidence suggests that globalization shapes leadership approaches and styles (Brooks & Normore, 2010; Robertson, 1995; Sart, 2014). Despite a burgeoning interest among scholars, limited studies have examined the strategic global leadership quality required by universities aiming for global expansion (Derue et al., 2011). Therefore, this study aims to offer a skillset for analyzing strategic global leadership in universities, integrating insights from three perspectives: job-related competencies, interpersonal competencies, and personal competencies.

2.0 Literature Review

2.1 Gap Identification:

Previous research highlights a gap in understanding the competencies required for strategic global leadership in universities, particularly concerning the transition from national to international contexts. While existing leaders within universities may have excelled in managing internal operations and navigating national systems, many lack experience in international marketing, market entry strategies, and managing diverse workforces (Schroeder, 2023; Galpin, 2023; Bergman & Thalin, 2023). This gap underscores the need to identify and cultivate leadership competencies tailored to global contexts to enhance university competitiveness on the international stage. The most important competencies used to identify high potential were orientation toward results, communication skills, adaptability, strategic skills, and ability to make decisions. This example illustrates how leadership competencies can be used in UiTM. Several researchers proposed that leadership competencies for university leaders should be created that can significantly propel the university into global visibility.

2.2 Conceptual Framework Development:

Drawing from prior models (e.g., Chung-Herrera et al., 2003; Testa & Sipe, 2012; Kay & Russette, 2000), this study adopts a three-factor competency framework comprising job-related, personal, and interpersonal competencies (Robescu et al., 2021). Notably, recent updates emphasize a shift towards enhancing personal leadership competencies, reflecting the evolving internationalization orientation of universities and the increasing importance placed on these skills by university administrators (Kezar, 2023). However, there remains a need for a comprehensive understanding of how these competencies translate into effective global leadership within the university context.

2.3 Elicitation of Constructs:

An observable deficiency in many university leadership teams, including presidents, vice-chancellors, and deans, is the lack of international capabilities (De Meyer, 2012; Wariowei, 2023; Reiche, 2023). These leaders often lack grooming in international savvy, posing a challenge for universities seeking to expand their global presence. To address this gap, universities must assess the competencies of individuals against the demands of global leadership roles, ensuring alignment and identifying areas for development. This process enables universities to better equip leaders for participation in global educational and research initiatives, integrate globalization content into courses, and foster an understanding of global issues among faculty and students (De Meyer, 2012). By looking at his/her current competencies and comparing those to the skills necessary to fill a leadership position, universities can make better-informed decisions in requiring them to participate in global educational and research activities, to infuse their courses with globalization content and make a significant effort in building up an understanding of global issues (ibid, 2012).

3.0 Methodology

The study was qualitative and descriptive to gather insights related to leadership competencies and skill development to promote better leadership, utilizing a purposive sample of key stakeholders within UiTM, including university administrators, faculty members, and department heads. Participants were selected based on their roles and expertise in university leadership and internationalization efforts.

Interviews were employed to gather rich qualitative data regarding leadership competencies and skill development. The interview questions were developed based on the initial competency model derived from existing research and literature review findings. Questions were tailored to elicit insights into specific competencies needed at different leadership levels within the university. Data Analysis: Thematic analysis was employed to analyze the interview data and identify key themes related to leadership competencies and skill development. Initially, codes were derived from the predefined competency model developed from existing literature (Chung-Herrera et al., 2003; Testa & Sipe, 2012) and expanded based on emergent themes identified during the analysis. By using a leadership competencies (LDC) approach, specific competencies can be determined in the context of managing a University. A retrospective approach was used, with the researcher's experience who indulged heavily in UiTM's internationalization agenda. This process involved iterative review and refinement of the coding framework to ensure comprehensive coverage of relevant themes. Model Development: Building upon the identified competencies and themes, a comprehensive competency model for university leadership was developed. The model integrated insights from the interview data with existing literature on leadership competencies (Robescu et al., 2021; Sparrow & Makram, 2015; Müller & Turner, 2007; Shamim et al., 2019; Fowler et al., 2018; Mumford et al., 2007).

The competency model was structured into three hierarchical levels: competencies, skills, and behaviours, with each level reflecting increasing granularity and specificity. This hierarchical structure facilitated a nuanced understanding of the capabilities required for effective leadership within UiTM.

4.0 Findings

The strategic leadership framework outlined in the title necessitates a comprehensive understanding of leadership competencies tailored to the dynamic landscape of higher education. Our research delves into three key perspectives – job-related competencies, interpersonal competencies, and personal competencies – to elucidate the nuanced skill sets required for effective leadership within universities.

4.1 Job-related Competencies

Our study underscores the paramount importance of job-related competencies in driving organizational productivity and global outcomes within universities. Effective leaders play a pivotal role in inspiring and facilitating the improvement of team performance. Notably, university leaders, particularly top management such as Vice-Chancellors, possess diverse capabilities shaped by their organizational context. While government-funded universities may excel in managing relationships with national stakeholders, international marketing and engagement remain underdeveloped areas. The prioritization of competencies such as problem-solving, time management, and organizational skills is essential for navigating the complexities of university leadership learning (Boyatzis, 2004; Billett et al., 2023).

Assuming organizations have limited resources and cannot develop all competencies, it is contended that many universities have no experience with international marketing while participating in global educational and research activities, let alone infuse their courses with globalization content and make a significant effort in building up an understanding of global issues. Considering the divergent placement goals and experience as an international academic manager may be welcomed but was till recently rarely in the job description. Key leadership related to job competencies include problem-solving, time management, planning, objectives setting and prioritization, performant leadership, and organization (see Table 1):

Table 1. Job-related Competencies

Competency	Definition
Problem-solving	Ability to anticipate and overcome obstacles or difficulties encountered in current work, by correctly identifying problems, formulating appropriate solutions to solve them from the perspective of the entire organisation, and taking responsibility for actions and decisions, both individually and as staff manager subordinated.
Time management	The ability to effectively use one's own working time to achieve set goals, to set aside time for team management, and good relationships with superiors, subordinates, and peers in the organisation, as well as with other business partners.
Planning	Planning the coordinated activity and projects considering the long-term perspective of the organisation; building clear, logical, and coherent work plans for the subordinate team/teams and their convincing presentation to those involved.
Objectives settings and prioritisation	Setting SMART work objectives for subordinate staff and prioritising teamwork/teams. Allocate the necessary time for the activities that contribute the most to the achievement of the company's strategic objectives and guide the coordinated team/teams to proceed similarly.
Performant leadership	Possession of good, specialised knowledge and management skills; the ability to define and track specific performance parameters to ensure the constant achievement of objectives and the permanent improvement of performance at the level of the coordinated team/teams. Ability to identify risks associated with actions and find ways to reduce or eliminate them. Supporting a collaborative work environment at cross-departmental level.
Organization	Balanced and equitable distribution of tasks among the members of the led team and allocation to them of work tasks appropriate to the training and experience of each. The organisation of the team emphasises the talent and ability of each member, creating a vision of progress among employees.

(Source: Adapted from Robescu et al., 2021)

4.2 Interpersonal competencies

Strategic leadership involves the ability of leaders to think and act strategically, guiding their organizations through complex and dynamic environments in shaping an organization's long-term success. It transcends day-to-day operations by setting a visionary direction, making informed decisions, and aligning resources to attain strategic goals. However, challenges like complexity, uncertainty, balancing short- and long-term goals, change resistance and ethical considerations must be navigated. Strategic leadership demands adeptness in thinking and acting strategically to navigate complex environments and steer organizations toward long-term success. Our findings underscore the significance of interpersonal competencies in fostering globally-minded leadership. Understanding the interplay between global and local dynamics is crucial, with competencies such as team development, delegation, and feedback facilitation being instrumental in fostering collaboration and driving organizational success (Easley & Tulowitzki, 2013). (Easley & Tulowitzki, 2013). Studies on successful global leaders have developed a list of common interpersonal competencies specific to the global leader: Team development, Delegation, Contribution, Feedback, and Respect for team/employees (see Table 2).

Table 2. Interpersonal Competencies

Competency	Definition
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Team development	Motivating, encouraging, and constantly supporting subordinate employees so that they develop the skills necessary to achieve high professional performance; knowing the aspirations of the members of the coordinated team, supporting their career progress; ensuring an environment conducive to development and a confident attitude in their capacity for development; recognition of merits and cultivation of employee performance; willingness to provide support through coaching and mentoring to achieve positive results for the team and the organisation. Creating and sustaining a culture based on continuous improvement and development at the company level, learning from past experiences, conflicts, and divergent opinions.
Delegation	Ability and concern to delegate tasks correctly to team members / led teams. Delegation of both routine tasks and complex decisions or tasks, preparing all the conditions for the delegates to successfully carry them out. Tracking and supporting the execution of delegated tasks. Taking responsibility for delegated tasks.
Contribution	Manifestation of an open, positive, and proactive attitude toward colleagues, work and progress in general. Involvement and support through personal example, current activities, and projects of the organisation to achieve the strategic objectives of the organisation. Identify and support innovations and change initiatives at the organisational level to improve results.
Feedback	Allocate the necessary time to discuss the tasks, projects, or behaviours of subordinate employees to extract relevant lessons from them and improve performance. Providing regular positive and constructive feedback to led team members, based on concrete facts and results, in an honest and balanced way. Sincere recognition of the merits of subordinates, celebration of team achievements, and public appreciation of special merits. Providing constructive feedback particularly and maintaining confidentiality on the issues discussed. Requesting feedback about one's own activity, results, and behaviour from others and using the feedback obtained for professional and personal development.
Respect for team/employees	Manifestation of respect in all interpersonal relationships, with all types of people, in any situation. In debates or conflicts, the ability to understand and consider adverse points of view, to counter-argue without attacking the person, showing good self-control. Promoting an inclusive culture, recognising and valuing diversity of any kind. Promoting among the employees the awareness of the company's mission and the responsibility that each one has towards the clients, the health of the community, and the protection of nature.

(Source: Adapted from Robescu et al., 2021)

4.3 Personal competencies

Much attention to research has increasingly shown that communication and personal engagement can mitigate the adverse effects of high job demands on burnout and reinforce the positive effects of job resources on work engagement (Schaufeli & Taris, 2014). Following Luthans (et al., 2007), hope can directly improve workers' job satisfaction, work happiness, and organisational commitment and indirectly enhance work performance. Additionally, hopeful people are better at envisioning a promising future and pursuing goals in the face of overwhelming obstacles (Gallagher & Lopez, 2018). Moreover, they tend to respond to external challenges and implement effective coping strategies better, therefore experiencing less stress, higher commitment, and more success in identifying plausible means to reach their goals (Snyder et al., 2000). Personal competencies play a pivotal role in shaping leadership effectiveness and organizational resilience. Emotional intelligence, stress management, integrity, communication, and personal engagement emerge as critical competencies for university leaders. Emotional intelligence enables leaders to navigate interpersonal dynamics effectively, while stress management fosters resilience in demanding environments. Upholding integrity and fostering open communication channels are essential for cultivating trust and ethical leadership. Additionally, personal engagement is vital for inspiring commitment and driving organizational success (Ashkanasy, 2003; Min et al., 2016). Indeed, highly committed project workers are vital for the success and survival of collaborative projects, as they actively steer the projects despite situational constraints (Arrieta et al., 2017).

Our findings underscore the multifaceted nature of strategic leadership within universities, emphasizing the need for a holistic competency framework. By cultivating job-related, interpersonal, and personal competencies, university leaders can navigate complexities, foster collaboration, and drive organizational success in the global higher education landscape. The strategic leadership framework presented here serves as a guide for university educators and administrators in developing effective leadership development programs tailored to the evolving needs of higher education institutions. Given the future higher education environment trends and their importance to university leaders, it is recommended university educators include personal competencies training with a focus on the following skills: Emotional intelligence, Stress management, Integrity, Communication, and Personal engagement (see Table 3).

Table 3. Personal Competencies

Competency	Definition
Emotional Intelligence	Recent research on emotional intelligence suggests that emotionally intelligent leaders can control their negative reactions while simultaneously transmitting enthusiasm and positive energy when communicating with followers (Ashkanasy, 2003). This has important hierarchical implications in the university context because of the high number of emotional exchanges that occur among managers, employees, and customers.
Stress management	The ability to cope with the demands of the job without excessive consumption of emotional energy, without affecting one's own health and the work environment of others. In tense, crisis, or conflict situations, the ability to have good self-control, to remain calm, and inner balance allows good management of those situations. Recognising your own level of stress and the ability to get out of high stress quickly. Able to create a climate that supports the well-being of colleagues, monitoring their emotional state and helping them to overcome difficult circumstances.

Integrity	Constant behaviour that gains the trust of others. The responsible and professional approach to all activities is in line with the values, strategy, and mission of the organisation. Compliance with applicable legislation, rules, working procedures, and standards of the organisation. Promoting and supporting an organisational culture that sanctions unethical, illegal or abusive behaviours.
Communication	Ability and courage to express opinions pertinently, to say things by name, to manage conflicts effectively, and to overcome obstacles in communication, creating an environment in which open debate and sincere dialogue are encouraged. Ability to support clear, concise, and compelling communications for multiple audiences, both written and oral. The ability to actively listen to the interlocutors to identify common points in case of divergence of opinion or to identify optimal solutions to problems encountered.
Personal engagement	The ability to generate enthusiasm and commitment among others to achieve the strategic objectives of the organisation. The ability to inspire confidence in coordinated team members for the future, their ongoing motivation, and the cultivation of team performance.

(Source: Adapted from Robescu et al., 2021)

5.0 Discussion

The study explores strategic leadership in higher education, emphasizing the roles of job-related, interpersonal, and personal competencies in a globalized context. Through literature review and empirical findings, it highlights how these competencies intersect to enhance global engagement and university competitiveness. Job-related competencies empower leaders to navigate international markets effectively. Interpersonal competencies drive collaboration across diverse cultures, while personal competencies cultivate resilience and adaptability. The study advocates for a holistic approach to leadership development, leveraging these competencies to propel institutions as global leaders. This strategic alignment fosters innovation and excellence, ensuring sustained success in dynamic environments.

5.1 Leadership Skill Requirements across Organizational Levels

Effective value proposition will enhance UiTM's reputation and make it easier to be even more visible globally in the future. Key areas of concern include the global ranking and visibility of UiTM as an institution that can attract quality students and staff, quality services, and the ability to produce reputable and well-equipped graduates that are in demand and versatile. In this study, the authors argue that UiTM, as an established brand, must continue to demonstrate what it can offer stakeholders that no other competitor can and how its products and services fulfil a need that no other competitor can fill. The University culture clarifies values and norms that positively contribute to the visibility of UiTM globally. Further, global networking was positively related to the university world's ranking. Consequently, the competency of transformational leadership was found to have a positive impact on university performance through the leaders' competency. The results imply that one way to advance its global position is to develop the competency of transformational leadership. This study shows that leadership competencies can have an impact on the core of the hierarchy through competitive strategies. The training division of UiTM can influence university performance by identifying and developing key leadership competencies in the university.

5.2 University Orientation and Strategy Drive Require New Leadership Personal Competencies

In addition to looking at future business trends to shape the development of leadership competencies, organizations must also look to the specific strategy and preferred business results of the particular organization. By creating competency models that reflect the future strategy of the globally minded university leadership that is integrative, recognizing glocalization (i.e. the interrelationships among the local, national, and global contexts) (Robertson, 1995; Brooks & Normore, 2010).

Sart (2014) defines effective university leadership by emphasizing the important role they attributed to intensive collaboration with members of industry, particularly those with important management positions. Researchers have found that when stakeholders have confidence in the leadership talent of a university, it will create a unique leadership brand via leadership competencies that produce results for stakeholders, and universities gain a competitive advantage. The model is useful to those who manage the internationalisation of universities, clarifying the concept and making systematic action to increase the competencies of university leaders.

The study's implications span practical applications and theoretical contributions. It emphasizes cultivating specific leadership competencies in higher education to enhance global engagement and competitiveness, offering actionable insights for administrators. Theoretical contributions include advancing frameworks for understanding leadership in complex environments and shaping discussions in leadership studies.

6.0 Conclusion & Recommendations

Leadership competencies can be used to effectively select, develop, and promote leaders in an organisation. Three factors proposed as integrative skillsets that link current research and theory on global University, intellectual capital, and strategic university leadership should be considered when creating leadership competencies. Within the realm of strategic leadership, three focal points emerge: job-related competencies, interpersonal competencies, and personal competencies. Job-related competencies empower leaders to navigate complex international landscapes, ensuring the institution's relevance and attractiveness on a global scale. Interpersonal competencies facilitate cross-cultural collaboration, fostering meaningful partnerships and enhancing the institution's standing. Personal competencies,

on the other hand, cultivate the resilience and adaptability needed to thrive in a competitive global academic arena. Subsequently, it implemented the following dual strategies to propel global engagement and enhance university competitiveness:

The recommendations stemming from this research advocate for a comprehensive approach to leadership development, particularly relevant in today's globalized world. Universities must integrate global perspectives into leadership training programs, ensuring that leaders are equipped with the necessary skills to navigate diverse cultural landscapes. This approach is not only beneficial for universities but also extends to various industries and organizations operating in an increasingly interconnected global market. Fostering interpersonal skills becomes essential for effective communication and relationship-building, particularly in facilitating international collaborations and partnerships. Additionally, nurturing personal competencies such as adaptability and open-mindedness is crucial for leaders to drive innovation and sustain competitiveness, benefiting industries across sectors. The unique integration of these strategies within university contexts underscores the importance of optimizing leadership competencies aligned with global strategies. By strategically developing a unique set of skills among its leaders, UiTM and similar institutions can maintain their global competitive advantage, enhancing visibility and success on the global stage.

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Paper Contribution to Related Field of Study

This study evaluates how LDC models appreciate the complexity of university life and how both situational and individual differences factors can attenuate or increase the effectiveness of leadership competencies. By intertwining these perspectives - job-related competencies, interpersonal competencies, and personal competencies, with the dimensions of global engagement and university competitiveness, this research offers notable contributions to the existing knowledge landscape. It sheds light on how these competencies influence and interact within a globalized educational context, enriching our comprehension of effective leadership in higher education. Future study should focus more on the interconnectedness of these competencies in bolstering both global engagement and university competitiveness.

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