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LEADERSHIP QUALITY REQUIRED OF A UNIVERSITY PRESIDENT
IN CHINA: THE NEW VERSION IN THE 1990s

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Abstract: The science of leadership became a new research frontier with the academics in the People's Republic of China since the late 1980s. University presidents' quality of leadership has attracted close attention from scholars in research institutions as well as many university presidents themselves. The higher education system in China is experiencing a period of restructuring and re-adjustment in large scale since the last decade--macro restructuring that includes nationwide upgrading and establishing institutions of higher learning (1,054 by the year 1996); and micro-restructuring that consists of departmental and curricular revision within colleges and universities, to meet an increasing demand for changes of the functions of these institutions so as to adjust to the rapidly changing social and economic systems. The most striking phenomenon in higher education administration has been a switch of power-authority at the top of a university's leadership, i.e., redefinition of the role and functions of the president in the hierarchy of administrative structure. The constitutional change is that the president has risen from the traditionally secondary position to virtually the primary position, while the Communist Party secretary steps aside from the supreme leading position to assume supervisory functions.

In this context, this paper tries to address the challenges of presidency in the new power-authority allocation within institutions of higher learning, to describe the demands of strong leadership of presidents from the society, and to identify strong leadership qualities. This paper bares the result of a research project on leadership quality of university presidents in the 1990s, based on 1) a literature review of recent research findings; and 2) interviews through correspondence with the presidents of some renowned universities in the cities of Xi'an, Beijing, Dalian, and Guangzhou. The main questions include: 1) what are the basic and crucial qualities a strong university leader must possess? 2) what personal and professional
The author thanks a number of professors and university administrators for their contribution to the ideas contained in this paper, especially Quan Chun Ji at Yanbian Medical College, Xia Shu Zhang at Zhongshan University, Yuan Cai Hong at Luoyang Teachers' College, Zhao Jian Hua and Li Hong in the Ministry of Culture, Beijing.

I. Introduction

The policy of opening China to the world and the economic reform starting in the 1980s provide main dynamics of pushing higher education to reform its system. As the reform was progressing, there appeared two noticeable phenomena in higher education: expansion of institutions and complication in programmes. Within one decade, the number of institutions of higher learning increased from 675 in 1980 to 1,075 in 1989. The Government readjusted the speed of expansion, focusing on qualitative development rather than quantitative increase. As a result, the number of institutions of higher learning by 1996 is 1,054, and enrolment increased from around 800 thousand in late 1970s to more than 2 million in late 1980s. See The Development of Education in China, 1988-1990 (presented at International Conference on Education, 42nd session, Geneva, 1990), published by the State Education Commission of the People's Republic of China, September, 1990. pp. 40-41. Because the role of universities is to prepare and produce labour force with expertise, new frontiers need to be opened up and new programmes need to be established to train professionals. The expansion and complication have been challenges for university administration and have posed a push factor for universities to build and then reform its complicated administrative systems.

From the late 1980s, the State shifted the focus of Chinese higher education from expansion to improving educational quality, readjusting its structure, and raising efficiency and facilities. Towards the end of the last decade, institutions of higher learning began to have the following new characters: competition, openness, efficacy, autonomy, and comprehension in programs (Yuan, 1989). Among the above characters, one outstanding character related to aspects in higher education management is "autonomy and empowerment". With educational authorities (administrative departments of education) in the government decreasing their excessive intervention in the day-to-day operation in administrative work in universities, the management system of higher education has more power in decision-making than before. And the government only retains legislative and economic means of indirect control and regulation.

When this new type of higher education administration started to operate, people's attention was focused on qualities of administrators, and on the qualities of presidency. One of the topics of discussion among scholars and researchers has been on re-defining the role of university presidents and on their leadership qualities. The science of leadership has become an interest and focus. Leadership in institutions of higher learning has become more complicated than before and requirements are much higher (Li, 1989). Both practitioners and researchers have realized that theories of leadership, both from the West and from the East, can meet social needs in China (Han, 1990). In the following sections, the new role of presidency and leadership qualities are addressed.

II. The New Role of Presidency

A Costar

During the first stage of higher education establishment and
development from the 1950s to the middle of 1960s, the management
systems in universities were characteristic of the Communist
Party Committee as the top management organ headed by the Party
secretary with the president as a member of the committee. The
Party secretary was the leader, and the president a costar. In
those years, university presidents were mainly those who were 1) demobilized army officers; 2) government officials transferred to
work in educational institutions; and 3) professionals returning
from overseas. They were appointed to be presidents basically
because they were politically qualified. Their shortcoming in
common was that they lacked the knowledge of university
administration (Yuan, 1989).

Since higher education was the front line for the Communist Party
to indoctrinate students with the communist ideology, the State
regarded institutions of higher learning as the most important
"battle field" and therefore Party secretaries were appointed to
be leading figures to embody the Communist Party's absolute
leadership. Professor Quan Chun Ji, dean of the English
Department at Yanbian Medical College, recalls that Professor Li
Jun Fu, the then president of Pingyuan University, was a scholar
returning from the United States where he had taught in a
university for twelve years. President Li was highly respected by
the faculty. However, because of the managerial system, he was
only a member of the Party Committee. As the Party Committee made
all major decisions, Professor Li did not have any power or much
say. What he did was to sit in committee meetings and to carry
out decisions afterwards. This was typical of the role of a
university president for a few decades before the middle of the
1980s.

A Leader
In the late 1980s, as the government's emphasis was shifted from
ideology to academy, a significant movement of separating the
functions of the Party committee from those of administration
took place. The image of a president was raised for the first
time since early 1950s from playing a supporting role to becoming
the leading figure. Nevertheless, this was only a tendency, not
yet a nationwide reform (Li, 1989). Up to the present time, there
are only a minority of institutions that have presidents as
leaders, whereas the majority of institutions still have the
Party secretaries as real leaders. As shown in Figure 1, the
president, as a member of the university Party committee, has a
limited function of supporting the Party secretary who heads the
committee.

Figure 1. An Illustration of Power Distribution

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Party Secretary</th>
<th>President</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>University</td>
<td>Party Committee</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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On March 18, 1995, the National People's Congress adopted the
Education Law of the People's Republic of China. This is the
first education law in China. It is stipulated in item 30,
Chapter 3 that "the president is responsible for teaching and
administrative work". See the Education Law of the People's
Republic of China adopted by the National People's Congress on
March 18, 1995 in Beijing, in Chinese Higher Education, No. 5,
Education Commission, the majority of universities in China have
the system of the President working under the leadership of the
Party secretary, while some of the universities adopt the system
that the president is actually the leader. The Party committee is
still the decision-making organ, and the president assumes the
executive role. A great change in the role of the president is
that the president is not only a member of the Party committee,
but also the head of university administration. The president's
power is augmented from having "no say" to "some say" or "much
say". Only in some universities can they have the "final say".

Figure 2. New Power Distribution in University Administration
Figure 2 shows that the University Party Committee has the function of consulting, and the University Administrative Committee assumes executive function. The president and the Party secretary mutually support each other in managing the university. One conspicuous feature is that the function of the university Party committee has been separated from that of the administrative committee, which means that the Party secretary is less powerful than before. In contrast with his power and functions illustrated in Figure 1, the president has more power and is a more important figure now.

As the president has become a more important figure, he is regarded as one of the leaders. In a university where the president has the final say, he Party secretary assumes a supporting role. In this situation, although the president and the Party secretary have separate functions, what practitioners like to see is that the two leaders support and trust each other (Zhao & Ju, 1989). With the new role of the president instituted, new requirements are naturally put forward by faculties and administrators.

III. Leadership Qualities
The Three Qualities
University administrators, drawing from their administrative experiences, find that the president must know basic educational theories, be familiar with the government's educational policies and principles, and know well the main characteristics and basic laws of the development of higher education, according to Li Zhong Shan, former Vice President of Shaanxi Teachers' University. With this as basic qualities, some university leaders express that "sense of responsibility", "educational and professional knowledge", and "managerial competencies" are the three crucial qualities university leaders must possess.

1. Sense of responsibility The president must love his work, and carry out his administrative duties with commitment, selfless contribution and dedication (Li, 1989). The president must be loyal to the institution and work closely with other administrators and the faculty, according to Shen Ji Zong, Director of Higher Education Research at the Fourth Military Medical University (1989).

2. Educational and professional knowledge Shen (1989) offers a theory of "knowledge structure" as described below:
   a. Knowledge of a profession. By the nature of institutions of higher learning, universities and colleges are places where intellectuals and professionals come together to undertake academic work. Therefore, to be a qualified leader, the president must be one of these professionals, who is academically an authoritative figure and a distinguished scholar.
   b. Knowledge of educational science, especially, of higher education. The president should be knowledgeable about the educational system and its development, and about the educational and social functions of higher education in China. He should be well-informed of the development in other educational systems abroad as well.
   c. Knowledge of management and leadership. A scholar with a high title like professorship may not necessarily be a good leader. Conceptually, the emphasis of requirements is shifting from traditionally "a leader with administrative experiences" to "a leader having leadership skills". This has become one of the major qualifications of a leader when the administrators and the faculty examine their leader's knowledge structure.

3. Managerial competencies To make sure of orderliness of the administration and normal operation in all the departments in the university, the president needs organizing skills as prerequisite competencies. These organizing skills include planning, coordinating, commanding, and controlling. Also, when
using these technical skills, the leader needs to possess such crucial qualities as being "holistic, strategic and creative" (Shen, 1989) so that he can have a blueprint of the university in his mind instead of being short-sighted and paying attention to trivial things.

To be an effective leader, the president has to have a close relationship with others, and adopt a democratic style. Before a major decision is made, he needs to do some investigation, and to consult his "brain trust", that is, the university advisory committee (Zhao & Shen, 1989).

In sum, university leaders are required to have a high level of professional establishments, politically and correctly understanding the government's policies, and strong managerial competency and leadership skills (Zhang, 1989). In a university in China, administrators and faculties respect most those leaders who are distinguished professors, scholars and experts with high academic accomplishments (Li, 1989).

Personal Qualities
What should a university president rely on to influence others' perceptions and behaviors? Is it "power", "position", or "personal quality"? People in an Eastern society like China show respect to, and are easily influenced by, those who have the power and are in high positions. However, in a changing society that has a more progressive civilization, and people's expectations are higher also, the traditional style of influencing others by power and position appear outmoded. New requirements of strong and effective leaders include "professional knowledge", "outstanding competency", as mentioned before, and "personal characteristics", that is, personal qualities.

Faculties believe that the most important are the leaders' personal qualities, including self-awareness of his own personality, strengths and weaknesses, modesty, tolerance, uprightness, selflessness, and trustworthiness, otherwise he can not establish his authority among the faculties and administrators. When working with other administrators, the president needs to have self-control, self-adjustment, and adaptability (Ding & Yuan, 1989), flexibility, knowing Eastern leadership theories expressed in Taoist and Confucianist philosophies (Yuan, 1989). For instance, the leader has to be good at role modelling which is one of the Eastern values. Exemplary leadership has a strong effect on influencing others (Yuan & Lu, 1989; and Li, 1992). "Honesty" and "harmony" are the two values in human relationships; and "unity" and "conformity" are another pair of key values in leader-follower relationships, according to Li Mian, former president and Party secretary of Shaanxi Teachers' University.

Case 1. Wu Qi Di, president of Tongji University (TU)
Being an enthusiastic, committed and persistent scholar and administrator, Wu Qi Di is the first elected, female president of the 89-year old TU. She is well respected, admired and trusted by the faculties. She is a distinguished professor with outstanding accomplishments in her profession, and an entrepreneurial leader with administrative experiences and strong personal characteristics. She is skilful at building and maintaining good relationship with people inside and outside of TU (Fang, 1995).

The president is expected to be decisive and to have the power of resolution. Being indecisive and irresolute is considered a weak leader. According to Yu and Liang (1989), the leader needs to obtain necessary information, and rely on certain feedback system. The leader needs to have analytical skills, well-informed judgment, and the courage to take risk as well as to take responsibility if a wrong decision has been made. Li (1992) points out that while a leader's decisiveness in decision making is important, consultation is also necessary for avoiding subjectivism.

Preparing the labour force with specialties, as one of the major characters of higher education management, is a long-term endeavour. It takes 4 to 5 years to bring up an undergraduate, and then 3 to 5 years at work before university graduates are able to exert their specialties, so decision making at the top administrative level and mission statement should be forward-
looking (Sun, 1992).

The president has to be innovative and unconventional. Li (1989) stresses that those who are conventional and ritual-oriented can never make any progress and achievements. Normally there are three work attitudes among university administrators: 1) taking initiative, active and creative, guided by policies; 2) waiting for others to do first, passive; and 3) taking initiative but reckless, not following the guidelines of policies. The first attitude is recommended because although university leaders have the authority to make changes in their programmes and administrative structure; in setting criteria for recruitment of the faculty and for enrolling students; and even in managing the budget, to realize the leader's vision of the university, they have to do all these in line with national goals through guidelines set in policies. For instance, when restructuring the programmes to introduce information technology to enhance the teaching and learning; and when establishing exchange programmes with institutions abroad, the president takes initiative in an unconventional way and in line with the educational policy with long-term goals towards modernization, opening to the world, and facing the future.

Case 2. Wu Shu Qing, president of Beijing University (BU)

Wu Shu Qing, president of BU, described how he came to the vision of BU: He analyzed the trends of higher education development in and outside China, carefully studied the models and characteristics of the best universities in the world, examined the advantages and disadvantages of BU, and took into consideration of the targets of the national economic and social development, then set the goals for BU -- during the early years in the next century, BU will be developed into one of the first-class universities in the world and built as an advanced education and research centre to exert its three major functions, i.e., talents training, scientific research, and social services (Wu, 1996) A reading of mission and vision statements expressed by first-rate universities in China, like BU, shows that it has reached a consensus among the presidents of most of these universities to aim at building theirs into first-rate universities in the world in the 21st century. Another example is Xi'an Jiaotong University (XJU) whose president, Jiang De Ming, also sets the university goal of establishing it as a first-class international institution of higher learning (Jiang, 1996). At present, there are 14 schools and institutes with 43 departments offering 53 programmes in this 100-year old university.

Grooming talented people
Identifying and grooming talented people is a virtue in leadership. Shen (1989) points out that one of the indicators of leaders' professional maturity is that he is good at identifying people with potential, utilize their talents and unite them, and consolidate those whose perspectives are different from theirs.

The leader is supposed to be good at selecting and promoting talented people (Liu, 1989). He is expected to be sharp at noticing and identifying the right persons, and to have the courage to appoint them to positions. Also he is to protect and groom those administrators and faculty members with potential. Once appointing these people, he must trust and support them. University leaders have to overcome the pitfall of jealously as it causes mistrust. It is hard for a leader to promote someone who is more competent than the leader himself, and even harder to promote someone to replace his own position. Those leaders who envy their subordinates with potential are looked down upon by the faculty.

Commitment and dedication
Respectable presidents are those who are committed to and persistent in the mission of the university. The following 5 functions embody the president's "commitment and dedication": 1. designer--designing the blueprint of the university and operational plans; 2. commander--deciding and organizing at the top level; 3. mentor--grooming potential leaders; 4. coordinator--building positive human relations between administration and faculty; and 5. civil servant--helping the staff who have problems, and the assistance can range from consultation to logistics (Yuan & Lin, 1989).
IV. Discussion
Higher education development and management in China in the past four decades has come out with two apparent characteristics: 1) higher education values "knowledge as authority", which determines the focus of management to be on "teaching" and "research"; and 2) higher education is an integration of "teaching", "research", and "administration"; therefore the university leadership should be a combination of "academic leadership" and "educational leadership" (Sun, 1992). Leaders are expected to possess educational administration and academic leadership competencies.

As the role of the president changed since the 1980s, the requirements of presidency are different and are at a higher level than before. Institutions of higher learning are at the top level of the educational system, and university presidents have high social status (Lu, 1989). It is noticeable that in the 1990s, about two-thirds of university presidents are professionals, compared with the majority of presidents who were politicians and scholars in the 1950s and 1960s. A predominant idea among university administrators and scholars is that, as a fundamental requirement, a university president should be a scholar; and as a crucial requirement, he should be a leader. Ideally, the fundamental and crucial requirements are found in one candidate (Lin, 1989).

Figure 3. In a University Where the President Is the Leader

Some apprehensions
The administrators and staff in certain universities where the presidents are more powerful than the Party secretary have expressed their apprehensions, especially when situations are fluid regarding to what extent the university has its autonomy, and to what extent the president is responsible for the university. Generally, there are four kinds of apprehensions, as Yuan (1989) puts them:

1. Some people are apprehensive of the presidency that has become too powerful a position, which may lead to autocracy.
2. Some people are concerned that the university does not have enough autonomy, still controlled by the government--from programme to budget--thus the president can not take responsibilities for the university, and he can not afford to be responsible.
3. When the Party committee is out of administrative affairs, the president is plunged into day-by-day administrative work, leaving no time to consider and plan major events, thus inhibiting the development of the university.
4. Some people are afraid that the president has to sacrifice his own profession and research, at least slow down his own research projects and professional development, thus lagging behind his colleagues in academic fields.

When they assume the presidency, presidents have to shift their pattern of work, and spend all the time on administrative work, thus affecting their professional development. To tackle this issue that never surfaced in the history of higher education management in China, Jiang (1989) suggests that, to be effective, the leader unify "power, responsibility, and service". Since more and more presidents are professionals who spend most of their time on teaching and research before they are appointed or elected, a scheme in the administration has to be established so that they are able to continue their research.
Speaking of the above apprehensions, Zhao and Li (1989) suggest that 1) the government has less interference, for the university to have authentic autonomy in their curricular designing and budgetary management, so that the president is helped to overcome the predicament in which the president has responsibilities with no power; 2) setting up an administrative committee for the president to do consultation with, in order to avoid autocracy; 3) establishing an inspecting system to encourage faculty's participation and to prevent any major mistakes made by the president; and 4) unifying "responsibility, power, and benefit" of the presidency, in order to make up their losses in academic undertakings.

V. Conclusion
Higher education development in China in the 1990s is under the guidance of the policy stipulated by the State Education Commission (SEC). The emphasis of the policy since late 1980s was shifted from expansion to 1) improving educational quality, 2) readjusting its structure, and 3) raising efficiency and facilities, as mentioned in the Introduction section. In response to this shift, administrative systems in universities were under drastic reforms that have resulted in such new characteristics as "competition, openness, efficacy, autonomy, and comprehension in programs". The most important change in the administrative systems is the changing role of the president from a supporting figure to a leading figure. Because of this changing role of the presidency, administrators and faculties have higher expectations in their leaders. In this paper the president's leadership qualities have been identified as follows:

1. Basic qualities-- sense of responsibility, educational and professional knowledge, and managerial competencies.
2. Personal qualities-- self-awareness, modesty, tolerance, uprightness, selflessness, and trustworthiness, self-control, self-adjustment, adaptability, power of resolution, commitment and dedication.
3. Professional qualities-- knowing the science of education, the science of leadership, and Eastern leadership theories expressed in Taoist and Confucianist philosophies.

It is commonly agreed that the first consideration of presidency is that the president is a renowned scholar and a professional in certain academic field, possessing leadership capacity, and that whether the leader is accommodating, tolerant, modest, or human-relationship oriented should be the second consideration. Zhu Kai Xuan, Director of State Education Commission, when addressing requirements of university leaders, points out that "they must have academic qualifications, integrity, and pioneering" (1996).

In summary, presidency has become a very challenging position. The president is not only a political figure supported by the government and the Party secretary in the university, but also an educational/academic leader supported by the faculty. More importantly, the president needs to have high academic accomplishments so that he is qualified to assume academic leadership. According to Weng Shi Lie (1996), president of Shanghai Jiaotong University (SJU), it has become indispensable to have more components of academic leadership in decision making, consultation, and commanding systems in university administration. This is apparently a challenge for university presidents, and they need to continuously make their best endeavour in self-cultivation to raise their leadership qualities.

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