

## Chapter 1

### Introduction

Mongolia is a country that has a rich history and that has undergone significant changes in the past century. It shifted from a monarchy to a socialist satellite of the Soviet Union in the 1920s. In 1990, however, Mongolia moved to a democratic form of government. This shift to democracy has had an effect on many of the country's social institutions, including higher education.

For the first part of the century, Mongolian students were sent to other countries for higher education opportunities. As of 1920s, the Mongolian government was sending young people to institutes and universities in the Soviet Union. In the 1950s, students were sent to the People's Republic of China and Eastern European (socialist) countries for training in different fields of specialization.

Mongolia's higher education system does not have a long history. Mongolia established her first modern university, the Mongolian National University (MNU) in 1942. The MNU was modeled organizationally and academically on the Soviet higher education system because Mongolia was the second socialist country and the Kremlin was a strategic ally for Mongolia. In the early years, there were many faculty members from the Soviet Union teaching at the MNU. (Sanjaasuren & Jernosek, 1978)

Additional colleges and universities were founded in the country after MNU. The second higher education institution, the State Pedagogic Institute was established in 1953 and was designed to meet the growing demand for schools and school teachers in the country. In the late 1950s and 1960s, three specialized higher education institutions were created. The Mongolian Agricultural Institute, the Medical Institute, and the Polytechnic Institute were established in 1958, 1961, and 1969 from the former faculties of agriculture, medicine, and polytechnics at MNU. These three institutes were predecessors of three current universities: the Agricultural University, the Medical University, and the Technical University.

The Economic Institute was established as a new independent institution of higher education in 1967. During this period, the number of students enrolled in higher education in Mongolia increased dramatically as economic and social development of the country created bigger demands year by year.

The 1970s and 1980s witnessed further development of existing higher education institutions in terms of the quality of faculty members, the content of instruction, the expansion of facilities (including library-information services), the selectivity of students, and the creation of international partnerships as resources for improvement. The expansion of higher education was dictated by the demands of society and by the resources the country could provide. The MNU established international partnerships to promote the exchange of faculty. The country sent delegations to international conferences and initiated faculty exchange programs with over 20 universities from 20 countries. MNU and the Mongolian Agricultural Institute started to accept students from foreign countries in late 1960s.

But the history of higher education in Mongolia is directly linked to its political history. Mongolia was a socialist country from 1921 to 1990. To understand contemporary higher education in the country, it is necessary to understand that the higher education system in Mongolia emerged during its socialist period (1942-1990). The main characteristics of higher education institutions during the socialist era set the stage for the contemporary higher education system.

All higher education institutions were public and state-run in the socialist era. The central government controlled the higher education system through its Ministry of Education. Planning, budgeting, investment, curricula approval, and key appointments were all centralized. The system of higher education was totally financed from a central budget and key administrators such as the Rectors of institutions were appointed by the Minister of Education.

Organizationally, higher education institutions consisted of a number of faculties or colleges, each of which had a certain number of departments. Most departments had laboratories where practical classes were conducted. The faculty was the main academic and administrative unit of an institution. For example, the MNU had 12 faculties in 1978 including the Faculty of Mathematics, the Faculty of Physics, the Faculty of Chemistry, the Faculty of Biology, the Faculty Meteorology, the Faculty of History, the Faculty of Mongolian Language and Literature, and the Faculty of Law (Sanjaasuren & Jernosek, 1978, p.81). The faculty was headed by the Dean.

Faculty conducted training and research activities in their fields or closely related disciplines. The Department Heads were the chief faculty members in the department. The

Deans and the Department Heads fulfilled both administrative and faculty functions. They had reduced teaching loads and conducted administrative duties except those duties related to financial activities. All financial duties within an institution were centralized and managed by the Vice-Rector for Finance and Logistical Support.

All higher education institutions were generally teaching-oriented, although the importance of research was emphasized. Faculty members' teaching norms were determined by the Ministry of Education. Faculty members had a teaching load of 720 to 750 hours per academic year depending on the discipline. These included hours spent delivering lectures, conducting seminars, teaching classes, supervising field trips, and administering examinations. Actual teaching time in front of students would consist of around 600 hours which meant that, on average, a faculty member had 60 actual teaching hours per month. The Deans and Department Heads had teaching loads of 520-550 and 420-450 hours respectively. Normally, faculty members taught more than teaching norms during the academic year and they were paid for the extra teaching hours. On the other hand, the success of faculty members and their compensation depended on research productivity. As new faculty members matured professionally, they had to devote their time to research activities. They were eligible for the academic privilege of up to six months sabbatical leave and a decrease in teaching load (with the permission of the administration of the institution) to pursue research endeavors. Newly hired faculty members were expected to select a topic of research after a certain period of time. They formally submitted that topic for approval from Department and from the Academic Council of the institution.

There was not tenure system, per se, at this time in Mongolia. Holding the Candidate of Sciences degree as result of successful completion of course work, an individual research project, and the public defense of a dissertation (which many consider equal to a Ph.D.) was a sort of unwritten guarantee to serve as a faculty member in a higher education institution. Due to the relatively high social status accorded faculty members and the reasonably good reward system in higher education during this time, the best and brightest graduates from universities chose to become faculty members in higher education institutions.

Enrollment of students was conducted through a centrally planned system. Based on demands and existing resources, the Central Planning Committee of the Government would

establish a quota for each province which then was further allocated to each post-secondary school. The selection of students was conducted by the Admission Commissions created by the Ministry of Education for each province. Once students enrolled, they received a monthly allowance and those in need of lodging were provided with a dormitory room with essential furniture for a nominal fee.

In 1990, Mongolia had eight institutions of higher education with a total enrollment of 13,397 students. Over 3,500 students were enrolled in foreign universities in 1990, of whom 90% went to the former Soviet Union and 10% pursued their studies in Eastern European countries (Torsten & Postlethwaite, 1994).

Teaching in higher education institutions was conducted according curricular guides specifically designed for each program area and approved by the Ministry of Education. The curriculum was fixed and specified the classes to be taught from the first semester to the last semester and the number of hours to be spent in each course. The curriculum was designed to ensure that graduates acquired the necessary general theoretical and specialized knowledge relative to the discipline. The curricula were designed by groups of leading specialists in the field and were reviewed once every five years. Students had no option to select classes according to their interests. The duration of most undergraduate programs was four to five years, except at medical institutions where students studied for six years. Graduates from higher education institutions were issued a qualification diploma in a given specialization. All higher education institutions had postgraduate courses. The period of study in postgraduate programs was three years.

The fixed curricula were inflexible. They led to unproductive use of facilities and library-information resources in higher education institutions because the academic year consisted of two semesters: the first semester ran from September 1 to January 25, and the second semester ran from February 5 to June 5. There were no summer programs. All faculty members and students had fully paid vacations for almost two months. During this time facilities and buildings were barely used.

Also, the fixed curricula created a situation where students, once enrolled, studied together from the first day until the last day. There were no student organizations like fraternities and sororities that influenced students to develop interpersonal skills and leadership abilities

while they were students. Rather, student leaders were appointed by young communist organizations.

There were no accreditation policies in place to ensure quality within the higher education system. From time to time, commissions appointed by the Ministry of Education revised the activities of higher education institutions. Such commissions consisted of officials from the Ministry and administrators and faculty members from other higher education institutions. Institutional administrators submitted annual reports of activities to the Ministry of Education at the end of each academic year.

Institutions of higher education, except the Pedagogical Institute in Khovd, were located in the capital city and they did not have branches throughout the country. The idea of an extension service was unknown. Instead of coordinated scientific and intellectual services, faculty members and students were often directly involved in the construction of facilities for agricultural farms and industrial complexes.

In sum, the higher education system in Mongolia and its institutional administration during the socialist era were significantly different from higher education systems and administrative practices in industrialized countries because of Mongolia's different political, social, and economic systems. Since the emergence of democracy in the country, however, Mongolian higher education has changed.

In 1990, Mongolia embarked upon democratic changes in all spheres of life. Political, economic, judicial, social, and educational changes were initiated. The country is now in transition from a socialist system to a democratic system. During the transitional period from early 1990 to the present, many changes have occurred in the higher education system. The Ministry of Education of Mongolia prepared an Education Reform master plan in 1994. Educators and administrators as well as other stakeholders in the educational system of Mongolia took part in fine-tuning this document. Implementation of this five-year program started in 1997. The project focuses on strengthening education management capabilities at the central, local, and institutional levels, improving coordination of management and academic development in higher education, and upgrading the quality and relevance of educational content at the secondary and postsecondary levels. In 1995, State Ikh Hural (Parliament) adopted two laws: the Law on Education and the Law on Higher Education. These laws outlined

the legal frameworks for restructuring education system in the country so that they might become more comparable to education systems in western democratic countries. Both laws play an important role in the ongoing reorganization of the education system from elementary through secondary and higher education. For example, private higher education institutions have appeared for the first time in Mongolia in order to produce professionals in areas of high demand. As the country moves to a democratic social system, demand for professionals in new areas such as law, business, foreign language, and accounting are rising. Former faculty members and administrators with entrepreneurial attitudes have started to establish law, business, and foreign language schools. Additionally, these areas are attractive to students and do not require extensive initial investments in laboratory equipment or other facilities.

Public higher education institutions have changed their organizational structures as well, through the consolidation of formerly independent educational institutions. Former Polytechnic, Agricultural, Medical, and Pedagogical Institutes took over other related small institutions and became, respectively, the Technical University, the Agricultural University, and the Medical University. Some of them adopted the American university model of structure. For instance, the Technical University consists of seven colleges. Others stayed with the European faculty structure. Well known former two-year vocational schools, so-called technikums, also became a part of the higher education system after changing their curricula, admission criteria and other restructuring processes. The Economic College and the College of Commerce and Business were established in this way.

Public higher education institutions have gained more freedom in terms of administration and internal management. Micromanagement by the Ministry of Education has decreased and institutions and faculties have more autonomy in selecting mid- and low-level administrators. Department Heads and Deans of Colleges are selected by faculty members on a competitive basis and they have become more accountable to their subordinates.

Higher education institutions have introduced tuition fees for students for the first time and a student loan system has been established. Public institutions' tuition is lower than in private higher educational institutions because public institutions receive partial funding from the state central budget. Most private higher education institutions are in the initial stages of development. These institutions rely heavily on part-time faculty members. Students prefer to

study at public higher education institutions because they have more qualified teaching personnel, better facilities, good international linkages, and better reputations for future career success as compared to private institutions. That is why public higher education institutions are more selective and more challenging for students. Private higher education institutions generally are second choice schools and are affordable for those who can pay the tuition and other expenses related to study. At this time, however, several private schools are also becoming more selective.

Most universities have opened branch schools in provinces based on population distribution in the country and upon projected future demand. Most of these branch schools emerged as a result of the consolidation of former two-year vocational training schools.

Another notable change is the development of international links in the form of bilateral and multilateral relationships with higher education institutions in industrialized countries. All public institutions and many private institutions have become a part of international projects sponsored by international donor organizations. These relationships have provided study opportunities for faculty members ranging from short-term training programs to graduate study in foreign universities. Also, thanks to newly established relationships during the transition period, higher education institutions have improved their library-information resources and have obtained access to the Internet. The United Nations Development Program (UNDP), the United States Information Agency (USIA), the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), the Scholarship Program of Japanese Ministry of Education (MONBUSHU), the TACIS program of the European Union, the German Foundation for International Higher Education (DAAD), the Australian Agency for International Development (AUSAID), and the Danish Agency for International Development (DANIDA) all sponsored special programs designed to assist in the reorganization of the Mongolian higher education system. Each of these donors has assisted in certain areas tailored to the needs of Mongolian institutions' projects. Many of these projects still continue (or are in their second phase) at present.

As a new phenomenon, inter-institutional cooperation has emerged. The first consortia, the Consortium of Mongolian Management Development Institutions (CMMDI) and the Consortium of Mongolian Universities and Higher Education Institutions (CMUHEI) were established in 1994 and 1995, respectively. These consortia are very useful in maximizing

effective use of scarce information and personnel resources, improving capacity for international cooperation, and benefiting a variety of areas.

Higher education institutions have started to develop their own strategic planning processes which is an entirely new and challenging issue for administrators. The centrally planned outcome indicators and directives on administrative actions and budget were far more convenient for leaders and administrators during the socialist time. Now they must envision the future while taking into account the market environment and they must implement strategic plans in a competitive market environment.

At present, the higher education system in Mongolia consists of six public universities, 10 public specialized institutions, and 46 private institutions. All of them are four-to-five year institutions. Universities now grant Master's and Doctoral degrees. Specialized institutions of higher education can grant Master's degrees in their areas of expertise subject to approval by the Ministry of Education.

The higher education system of Mongolia faces many problems and challenges. Among the most urgent problems are the accreditation of institutions, the preparation of new faculty or retraining of current faculty, learning and using the English language as a means of increasing knowledge among faculty members as well as students, and financial problems that constrain improvement of facilities, laboratory and library-information resources. As Mongolia moves from a command-driven social system with a centrally-planned economy to a democratic social system with a market-driven economy, the country is attempting to reform its higher education system in order to make it comparable to systems in highly developed industrial nations. In order to implement this major reform, Mongolia needs to make changes in the content and methodology of education, as well as in staffing, structure, finance and management.

One of the most important issues in reforming and restructuring the Mongolian higher education system is the reform of leadership and management of the higher education institutions. The Chief Executive Officer or Rector's (in some universities President's) role has dramatically changed from being a mediator between the university or institution and the Ministry of Education under the socialist regime to being a leader with responsibility for achieving results under the democratic state. The Chief Executive Officers of public higher education institutions now have much more freedom when compared to their predecessors



during socialist times. They have more authority to make appointments, initiate new programs and merge or abolish existing programs, open branch campuses, and develop international linkages. They have more financial freedom, more freedom to make organizational changes, and greater latitude to join consortia and other professional organizations. As they have been granted this authority, they have also had to take greater responsibility for institutional outcomes.

The traditional career track for higher education administrators in the socialist era was to move from faculty member, to Department Head, to Dean to Academic Secretary, to Vice-Rector. Many current leaders in higher education followed this track during the socialist regime and remain in their leadership positions today.

During the transitional years (1990-present), a new and younger generation of leaders entered the ranks of public higher education administration. Many of them skipped some of stages of the traditional career track and were promoted from Department Heads, to Dean, Academic Secretary, or Vice-Rector. In terms of professional characteristics, they are good teachers and promising scholars in their fields. But in terms of leadership capacity, the Chief Executive Officers do not have much expertise. Improving the leadership capabilities of administrators at all levels of higher education is an important issue in Mongolia. Rectors of higher education institutions in the country are very influential figures, not only in universities and institutions but in society at large. Deans and Department Heads are leading figures in higher education institutions. Accordingly, leadership practices of rectors and other senior administrators are of prime importance.

Researchers have developed and have used many different instruments to measure leadership. One of the most extensively used instruments is the Leadership Behavior Description Questionnaire (LBDQ) (Stogdill, 1963). This questionnaire consists of 20 items each of which describes leaders' behavior. The LBDQ is designed to assess two major types of behavior: task orientation and relationship orientation.

In order to measure leadership styles of leaders, the Least Preferred Co-Worker Measure (LPC) was developed and used by proponents of contingency theories (Fiedler & Chemers, 1984). The idea of this instrument is to examine the leader's style by describing a co-worker with whom the respondent least likes to work. According to LPC, the selected co-worker has to

be described or scored on 18 sets of adjectives. For example, participants rate the co-worker on a continuum of “pleasant” to “unpleasant,” or a continuum of “friendly” to “unfriendly.”

While some researchers focused on leadership from the point of view of the leaders or of the followers, other researchers looked at interactions between leaders and followers as a process. This approach is called leadership-member exchange theory (LMX) (Dansereau, Graen, & Haga, 1975). LMX is measured through a seven-item questionnaire. The items reflect important ingredients of creating strong partnerships. The instrument reveals the quality of relationships between leaders and members and the degree of partnerships.

Another instrument designed to measure leadership practices is the Leadership Practices Inventory (LPI) developed by Kouzes and Posner (1987; modified in 1997). The LPI consists of 30 statements which describe five leadership practices: challenging the process, inspiring a shared vision, enabling others to act, modeling the way, and encouraging the heart.

#### Statement of the Problem

The term “leadership” had a totally different meaning in Mongolia during communist rule and did not necessarily empower senior executives to take charge of total organizations. In former socialist countries, the term “leadership” was applied only to the ruling communist party, party organizations, and party leaders and members. “Leadership” at a personal level was understood on the basis of a person’s having ambitious plans, providing a good example and demonstrating exemplary moral and ethical behavior. Personal leadership also implied being a role model in the work place as well as in one’s social and personal life. Only those people who persistently demonstrated the best performance, showed ideological stability, and behaved in an ethical manner could gain party membership and then only after thorough procedural examinations.

In the case of the higher education institutions, a faculty member who was productive, had good evaluations from peers and students, did not violate any moral standards and did not have a record of ideologically suspicious actions could be accepted as a member of the party. The best party members were elevated to administrative positions. The leadership capacity of people in administrative positions was evaluated by how well the organization reached centrally dictated outcomes. Party leaders were responsible for initiating policy, selecting appointees to administrative positions, and controlling the implementation of party policies.

With the onset of democratic changes in 1990, the one party system was abolished and the meaning of the term leadership was altered dramatically. Today, the meaning of leadership has shifted to a person who is in a managerial position. This change in mindset is taking time. People in leadership positions in the public sector, as well in private business, are in the early stages of learning about leadership. Leaders in higher education institutions are no exception in this regard.

The current situation of higher education in Mongolia can be characterized as lacking clear policy at the system level, as well as at the institutional level. The development of visionary and effective leaders for higher education is very important. Until now, however, leadership practices among higher education leaders have not been examined. Without baseline data about the leadership practices of educational leaders it will be difficult to assess how much those leaders actually adapt in the future. Therefore, this study was designed to investigate the leadership practices of higher education leaders in Mongolia.

#### Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to explore leadership practices exercised by higher education leaders in Mongolia from the perspective of American leadership concepts. The study was based on leaders' practices. That is, the study examined how leaders conduct themselves as administrators and how their leadership practices are perceived by their subordinates.

#### Research Questions

Specifically, this study was designed to explore the following research questions:

1. To what extent do Rectors of higher education institutions in Mongolia exhibit the five leadership practices measured by Kouzes and Posner's (1997) Leadership Practices Inventory (LPI)?
2. To what extent do the Deans of colleges or faculties at higher education institutions in Mongolia exhibit the five leadership practices measured by the LPI?
3. To what extent do Department Heads as leaders of academic units in higher education institutions in Mongolia exhibit the five leadership practices measured by the LPI?
4. Are there differences in leadership practices among Rectors, Deans, and Department Heads?

5. Are there differences between the LPI-Self and LPI-Observer scores on leaders of Mongolian higher education institutions?
6. Are there differences in leadership practices employed by leaders in public and private institutions of higher education in Mongolia?
7. Are there differences in leadership practices between leaders who were appointed to the leadership position after the advent of democracy in 1996, leaders who were appointed between 1990 and 1996 when there was a coalition government, and leaders who started their tenure during socialist time (pre-1990)?

#### Significance of the Study

The present study had significance for both future practice and future research. In terms of practice, several constituencies might benefit from the results of the study. For example, higher education leaders in Mongolia might benefit from the study. The results informed them of current leadership practices. They might use this information to improve upon their leadership scores. Rectors, Deans, and Department Heads who participated in this study may learn what particular leadership practices need to be improved. If leaders of Mongolian higher education want to improve leadership skills and serve their institutions as effective leaders, they need to develop leadership practices. Leadership development is self-development and the results of this study might assist Mongolian higher education leaders in their self-development efforts (Kouzes & Posner, 1997).

There might be some implications for the Ministry of Education. The present study provided staff in the Ministry with data about the leadership practices of higher education leaders. One way of improving leadership capabilities is through training current and future leaders of higher education institutions. The Ministry may use the results of this study to examine what types of leadership training are needed. They might also use the results to design a system of reviewing the performance of leaders based on a periodic administration of the LPI.

Faculty members who participated in the study might also benefit from the results. The study provided them with information about leadership practices. They could use this knowledge in their interactions with students, colleagues and partners in research projects.

The study also had significance for future research. This study examined leadership practices among higher education leaders at a single point in time. Future scholars might wish to

study leaders longitudinally to see if their leadership practices change over time. Another study might use the same methodology of this study but in other settings. For example, the methodology could be used to assess the leadership practices in government agencies or in elementary and secondary school systems. Such studies would broaden the information available about leadership in general in Mongolia, not just leadership in higher education.

This study employed only one instrument that enabled the researcher to look at frequencies with which leaders engaged in leadership practices from the perspective of American leadership practices. Other researchers could use alternate leadership instruments such as LMX 7 and LBDQ XII to examine relationships between leaders and members of an organization or how these relationships change over the time.

#### Limitations of the Study

As with all research projects, the present study was not without limitations. First, the study focused on leaders of the higher education system in Mongolia and leadership practices of administrators at the institutional, college, and departmental levels. The unique characteristics of Mongolian institutions of higher education may render inter-organizational comparisons inappropriate.

A second limitation had to do with the generalizeability of the results. The study was confined to higher education institutions in Mongolia. The findings of this study may not be generalized to leaders in other transitional countries, such as those of Eastern Europe.

A third limitation related to the instrument used to collect data. The LPI (Kouzes & Posner, 1997) was written in English and translated to Mongolian for purposes of this study. While the LPI has been used outside of America before, and while every effort was taken to ensure an accurate translation to Mongolian, it is possible that the meaning of some items was lost in translation. If that occurred, the results might have been skewed.

Despite these limitations, however, the present study was useful. It provided baseline information about the practices of Mongolian higher education leaders. It also offered insight into how those leaders were viewed by their subordinates. As Mongolian higher education adapts to a democratic system, data such as those elicited in the present study will provide much needed information about the Mongolian higher education system.