

Short Communication

Leadership and International Collaboration of Institutions Toward World Class Education

Fahrizal Nover *, Kaspul Anwar Us, Fridiyanto Fridiyanto

Universitas Islam Negeri Sulthan Thaha Saifuddin Jambi, Indonesia

*Correspondence Author: Fahrizal Nover

Jl. Jambi - Muara Bulian No.KM. 16, Simpang Sungai Duren, Kec. Jambi Outer City, Muaro Jambi Regency, Jambi.

✉ fahrizalnover9495@gmail.com

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Abstract. In the era of globalization and increasing competition among higher education institutions, Universitas Negeri Jakarta (UNJ) is striving to achieve the status of a World Class Education (WCE) institution. This study aims to explore how leadership and international collaboration at both institutional and human resource levels contribute to the realization of WCE at UNJ. Utilizing a qualitative descriptive approach, data were collected through in-depth interviews with university leaders, international office staff, and academic personnel, alongside analysis of institutional documents. The findings reveal that visionary, transformational, and distributed leadership plays a crucial role in fostering internationalization strategies, including academic mobility, global research partnerships, and cross-border curriculum development. However, the study also identifies significant challenges such as limited institutional synergy, inadequate international literacy among staff, and underdeveloped monitoring systems for sustainable collaboration. The research emphasizes the need for integrated leadership models and systematic human resource development to enhance global competitiveness. Ultimately, the synergy between effective leadership and strategic international cooperation is essential for positioning UNJ as a globally recognized university.

Keywords: World Class Education, Higher Education Leadership, International Collaboration.

1. Introduction

Globalization and the increasing competition among universities at the international level demand Universitas Negeri Jakarta (UNJ) to continuously improve its quality and competitiveness toward achieving the status of a World Class Education (WCE) institution. Two crucial aspects that play a vital role in achieving this vision are effective leadership and active engagement in international collaboration—both at the institutional and individual (human resources) levels. Visionary, adaptive leadership that can mobilize all elements of the university is the foundation for formulating and implementing internationalization strategies. Meanwhile, international cooperation opens up opportunities for UNJ to enhance the quality of research, teaching, academic exchange, human resource development, and global visibility. Higher education plays a strategic role in building national competitiveness in the era of globalization [2]. Universities are no longer merely centers of teaching and local research but are expected to compete on the global stage through adherence to global education standards, reputable research, and international academic networking. In this context, the concept of World Class Education (WCE) serves as a strategic policy direction sought by many higher education institutions, including UNJ.

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One of the key factors in achieving WCE is the availability of effective and strategic leadership at all institutional levels. Leadership in higher education is not merely administrative but should also inspire transformation, drive systemic efficiency, and foster role-based collaboration. Tony Bush emphasized that in the context of higher education, transformational leadership is highly relevant as it nurtures shared visions and strategic values necessary to drive institutional innovation and internationalization [3]. Leadership at UNJ—ranging from the rectorate and deans to department heads—plays an important role in facilitating and accelerating the campus internationalization process. Without supportive leadership, international initiatives tend to be symbolic and unsustainable. In fact, to become a world-class university, a higher education institution must build an academic ecosystem that is open to global collaboration, oriented toward international research outcomes, and supportive of outbound human resource mobility.

One of UNJ's strategies in its WCE framework is to build international collaborations, including faculty and student exchanges, joint research, double degree programs, and training programs for administrative staff. These collaborations are not only institutional but also involve the capacity development of individual HR. Through partnerships with institutions such as China Central University (China), Curtin University (Australia), and the University of Konstanz (Germany), UNJ actively provides access for faculty and staff to global education standards and best practices. Nevertheless, the main challenges UNJ faces in fostering international collaboration are not limited to external factors such as regulations and funding but also include internal factors such as leadership capacity, HR international literacy, and institutional synergy across departments. Many collaborative programs fail to continue due to lack of coordination and collective ownership of internationalization initiatives. This indicates the need for more participatory and distributed leadership strategies, where roles and responsibilities are not only centered on top leaders but also involve department heads and individual lecturers or administrative staff as key actors [4].

While transactional leadership plays a role in ensuring administrative compliance and work targets, it is insufficient to drive the cultural change needed for internationalization. On the other hand, transformational and distributed leadership approaches—emphasizing long-term vision, collective participation, and systematic HR development—are strategic choices for building institutional readiness toward WCE. Alan Bryman stated that effective university leadership is that which fosters a climate of mutual trust, collaboration, and openness to bottom-up initiatives [5]. On the other hand, internationalization efforts also require the strengthening of HR professionalism [6]. Lecturers are expected not only to be academically productive but also to be capable of networking, collaborating across cultures, and engaging in international projects. Administrative staff are likewise expected to understand the governance of international cooperation and deliver digital and multilingual academic services. Therefore, international collaboration at UNJ directly impacts the global competency development of HR, which in turn supports the creation of an academic climate aligned with the WCE vision [7].

Thus, the synergy between transformative and collaborative leadership, alongside focused and sustainable international cooperation, becomes a strategic pillar in UNJ's transformation toward a world-class university. The fundamental issue lies in how leadership characteristics at UNJ—across all structural levels—can orchestrate international collaboration systematically, and how these partnerships contribute to strengthening HR capacity within the WCE framework.

This study aims to analyze how leadership at various levels within the UNJ structure facilitates or hinders the initiatives and implementation of international collaboration. In addition, this study also seeks to identify the types of international cooperation that have been carried out by the institution and HR at UNJ, and how they impact HR professionalism and the university's overall competitiveness in the context of WCE. A comprehensive understanding of these two aspects is expected to provide strategic recommendations for UNJ to strengthen its position in the global higher education landscape.

2. Method

This study employed a qualitative descriptive approach to explore the leadership dynamics and international collaboration strategies of institutional and human resources (HR) development at Universitas Negeri Jakarta (UNJ) in its pursuit of World Class Education (WCE). Data were collected through in-depth interviews with university leaders, heads of international affairs offices, and academic staff involved in global partnerships. Additionally, document analysis of strategic plans, international cooperation reports, and relevant institutional policies was conducted to triangulate the findings. Thematic analysis was used to identify key patterns related to leadership practices, institutional policies, and HR initiatives that support UNJ's global competitiveness [8].

3. Results and Discussion

3.1 Strategic Leadership Practices at Universitas Negeri Jakarta (UNJ) Toward World Class Education (WCE)

Strategic leadership at Universitas Negeri Jakarta (UNJ) plays a pivotal role in navigating the institution toward achieving the vision of World Class Education (WCE). Over the past few years, UNJ leadership has adopted a future-oriented approach, emphasizing academic excellence, global engagement, and organizational transformation. This leadership model aligns with contemporary frameworks that highlight adaptability, innovation, and participatory governance [9]. Data from interviews with top management reveal a strong commitment to institutional reform, international collaboration, and performance-based management. These efforts are not only aimed at improving global ranking but also at enhancing the internal capacity of academic and administrative systems. Such commitment underscores the essential role of visionary leadership in driving sustainable internationalization.

One of the most prominent initiatives driven by UNJ's leadership is the reinforcement of global benchmarking in curriculum development and research management [10]. The university leadership encourages faculties to align their programs with international accreditation standards such as AUN-QA, ABET, and ISO 21001. Through institutional policies, the rectorate provides support for curriculum redesign, international publications, and collaborative research with overseas institutions. According to the Vice-Rector for Academic Affairs, UNJ has launched a roadmap for academic reform that incorporates international standards, interdisciplinary approaches, and digital innovation. These policies are supported by financial incentives and training programs that build the competencies of faculty and staff. This alignment demonstrates that leadership at UNJ is not only aspirational but also operationally active in pursuing WCE.

Leadership at UNJ also actively promotes digital transformation as a key pillar of educational modernization. The leadership understands that digitalization is no longer

optional but a prerequisite for global competitiveness in higher education [11]. Investment in learning management systems, digital classrooms, online course offerings, and research repositories has significantly increased since 2021. Interviews with ICT administrators suggest that this digital push was catalyzed by the COVID-19 pandemic, which prompted the institution to reimagine teaching and learning formats. Today, UNJ integrates hybrid learning models and digital assessment systems to ensure flexibility and scalability in academic delivery. These technological investments reflect a strategic response by leadership to the demands of global education markets [11].

Moreover, leadership at UNJ has strengthened participatory governance by involving faculty, staff, and students in policy planning and evaluation [12]. This approach fosters a sense of ownership and alignment with institutional goals. For example, the strategic planning sessions conducted annually now include representatives from each faculty, administrative unit, and student council. This inclusive model helps surface insights from the ground level and enables adaptive decision-making. According to feedback from faculty interviews, this participatory leadership style has improved internal communication and trust within the institution. It also cultivates an academic culture that supports innovation, equity, and accountability—key values in a globally oriented university [13].

A notable leadership initiative has been the development of an international affairs office that functions as a central coordination unit for global partnerships. This office, established under the direct supervision of the Vice-Rector for Cooperation and Institutional Development, serves as the main liaison between UNJ and its foreign partners. The unit manages student and staff mobility, facilitates joint research agreements, and handles visiting scholar programs. By centralizing international functions, UNJ leadership ensures efficiency and strategic alignment with its WCE goals. In interviews, staff from this unit highlighted the importance of institutional synergy in enhancing the visibility and reputation of UNJ abroad. The internationalization strategy is also embedded in leadership development programs within the institution [14]. UNJ has created structured pathways for developing future leaders among its academic staff through global fellowships, study visits, and leadership bootcamps. These initiatives aim to cultivate a leadership pipeline that understands global trends, institutional benchmarking, and transnational academic culture.

According to the HR department, participation in international leadership forums has empowered mid-career academics with the vision and skills needed to scale up global programs at home. This forward-looking approach contributes to long-term sustainability of internationalization initiatives at UNJ [15]. In terms of policy support, UNJ leadership has institutionalized global performance indicators across faculties and units. Each department is encouraged to report on metrics such as international student enrollment, joint publications, and international conference participation. These indicators are integrated into annual performance evaluations and resource allocation processes. As explained by the Director of Planning and Quality Assurance, this system creates a performance-oriented culture that reinforces WCE targets. It also helps units to self-reflect and design strategies that align with the broader institutional vision [16]. Leadership at UNJ is also committed to equity and inclusivity within its international agenda.

The university has implemented scholarships and support services for students from underrepresented regions, including Southeast Asia and Africa. Programs such as cross-cultural training and language assistance are available to ensure smooth adaptation of foreign students and staff. This initiative demonstrates that global leadership at UNJ is

not merely symbolic but also oriented toward building inclusive and diverse academic communities. The institution recognizes that true internationalization is not only about mobility but also about creating an intercultural environment on campus [17]. Another example of strategic leadership is the emphasis on international publication and research visibility. UNJ's top management has launched initiatives to support faculty in publishing in Scopus-indexed journals, participating in global academic networks, and collaborating in cross-border research. According to interviews with researchers, financial and mentoring support has improved dramatically over the past three years. Leadership has also partnered with global publishers and indexing agencies to conduct workshops and peer-review training. This initiative has increased the number and quality of publications, thus improving UNJ's global research footprint [18].

Strategic leadership is evident in UNJ's response to global rankings and accreditation. Rather than focusing solely on numerical rank, leadership at UNJ prioritizes structural improvements that are aligned with international standards. The university now participates in global benchmarking exercises and submits data to systems like QS Stars and Times Higher Education Impact Rankings. However, leadership emphasizes the importance of authenticity and substance in data reporting, as opposed to superficial compliance. This approach has earned respect from external assessors and enhances institutional credibility. UNJ's leadership also supports international alumni engagement as a strategic tool for global influence [19]. The university has launched a global alumni network platform that connects graduates working in international organizations and academic institutions. These alumni serve as informal ambassadors of UNJ, providing testimonials and facilitating academic exchanges. According to the Public Relations Office, these connections have led to new research partnerships and student exchange opportunities. This leadership-driven initiative showcases the long-term thinking embedded in UNJ's global strategy [20].

At the core of UNJ's leadership approach is adaptability in the face of uncertainty. With global higher education evolving rapidly due to technological disruption, geopolitical shifts, and demographic changes, leaders at UNJ adopt scenario-based planning and agile responses. For instance, during the pandemic, the university quickly transitioned to online operations while maintaining quality standards. This ability to pivot while maintaining strategic focus is a hallmark of effective leadership in WCE-oriented institutions. Leadership at UNJ also reflects the national agenda of international competitiveness in education. By aligning its vision with Indonesia's higher education policies and global development goals such as SDGs, UNJ contributes to both national and global priorities. Institutional leaders are frequently involved in policy dialogues, government advisory boards, and regional education summits. These engagements enable UNJ to position itself as a thought leader and influencer in Southeast Asian higher education. Finally, the integration of ethics and integrity in leadership practices reinforces UNJ's commitment to quality and transparency. Leadership codes of conduct, regular audits, and transparent reporting systems are institutionalized to prevent academic misconduct and promote accountability. Faculty members and students are encouraged to uphold academic integrity in all aspects of academic life. This ethical foundation supports the long-term reputation of UNJ as a credible and values-driven institution on the global stage.

3.2 Institutional Collaboration and Global Partnerships at UNJ

One of UNJ's core strategies to advance toward World Class Education (WCE) involves broadening institutional collaborations through global partnerships. According to the official International Office page, Universitas Negeri Jakarta actively collaborates

with universities worldwide—including MoUs with institutions across Asia, Europe, and North America. For instance, UNJ recently signed an agreement with Bingöl University in Turkey to strengthen education and research cooperation. These partnerships aim to facilitate joint research, student and faculty exchange, dual-degree programs, and international conferences. To date, more than 50 MoUs have been initiated since 2017, though only a select number have progressed to long-term, sustainable collaborations. This disparity highlights the need for stronger follow-through and dedicated implementation mechanisms to translate agreements into action.

Strategic collaborations are vital for enhancing UNJ's international profile and academic performance [21]. For example, a partnership with Universiti Teknologi Malaysia's Institute of Bioproduct Development (UTM IBD) resulted in 50 co-authored publications over a three-year period—a testament to productive research cooperation. Additionally, collaborations with other regional universities have enabled student exchange and joint curriculum development, enriching academic experiences for both staff and learners. These interactions have facilitated knowledge transfer, capacity building, and benchmarking opportunities. Aligning UNJ's curriculum and research focus with global standards supports accreditation efforts and participation in international rankings.

Despite these efforts, many collaborative programs still face structural and operational challenges. For example, the lack of dedicated follow-up teams for each MoU often leads to stagnation of projects after the initial signing ceremony. In several cases, bureaucratic hurdles related to credit transfers, visa processing, and scheduling have delayed implementation. Additionally, differences in academic calendars and language proficiency levels complicate student exchange logistics. Interview findings from faculty members suggest that many potential collaborations are halted due to lack of administrative alignment and limited funding. To overcome these obstacles, UNJ needs stronger coordination mechanisms and resource allocation for partnership management [22].

The university has made progress by joining international education networks such as the ASEAN University Network (AUN), University Mobility in Asia and the Pacific (UMAP), and SEAMEO. Membership in these platforms has increased opportunities for collaboration, funding, and visibility in regional education forums. Through these networks, UNJ has participated in curriculum benchmarking, faculty mobility, and collaborative policy dialogues. Furthermore, UNJ has leveraged these networks to invite international experts and scholars to deliver guest lectures, workshops, and training sessions. These exchanges enrich the academic environment and build institutional reputation. They also offer students exposure to global academic trends and challenges.

Another significant step taken by UNJ is the establishment of dual degree and joint supervision programs. In collaboration with selected partner universities, students can now enroll in integrated programs that lead to degrees from both institutions. This model not only enhances academic mobility but also provides international credentials that are recognized in multiple countries. According to student feedback, these programs offer valuable academic and cultural experiences that increase their employability in the global job market. Faculty members involved in joint supervision report greater motivation, exposure to new research methodologies, and access to international funding. Such programs signal UNJ's readiness to operate at the level of global higher education standards.

UNJ also emphasizes student exchange and outbound mobility as part of its internationalization efforts. The university provides scholarships and logistical support for

students to study abroad through programs like Erasmus+, LPDP, and the Indonesia International Student Mobility Awards (IISMA). Between 2021 and 2023, over 150 UNJ students participated in short- and long-term exchanges in countries such as Germany, South Korea, Japan, and the Netherlands. These experiences not only enrich students' academic portfolios but also enhance intercultural competence and personal growth. Returning students often become ambassadors of global culture on campus, sharing knowledge and inspiring their peers to pursue international opportunities.

Conversely, UNJ also welcomes international students through inbound mobility programs and summer schools. These students contribute to campus diversity and create opportunities for cross-cultural dialogue. However, the number of inbound students is still limited due to insufficient promotional efforts and the lack of multilingual resources. Interviews with international students suggest that although they appreciate UNJ's hospitality and academic quality, they face difficulties in navigating bureaucratic procedures and finding courses in English. Therefore, improving international student services and increasing English-medium instruction are critical steps forward. These enhancements will support better integration and retention of foreign students.

4. Conclusion

The journey of Universitas Negeri Jakarta (UNJ) toward becoming a World Class Education institution is marked by strategic leadership, a commitment to international collaboration, and continuous capacity building of its human resources. Despite facing various structural and operational challenges, UNJ demonstrates progress through international partnerships, cross-border research, and adaptive leadership models that align with global education standards. The institution's ability to harmonize its local academic values with global expectations—while investing in collaborative networks and digital innovation—positions it as a promising contender in the global academic arena. Moving forward, sustained leadership commitment, evidence-based policymaking, and inclusive global engagement will be critical to realizing UNJ's aspirations as a world-class university.

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6. Declaration

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