

**PERSPECTIVES ON THE VALUES IN UNIVERSITY ADMINISTRATION  
~ REFLECTION ON EMPIRICISM THROUGH CRITICAL PARADIGM ~**

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**Abstract**

The current educational environment is characterized by a high level of competitive pressure, which is the result of meritocratic policies and the multifaceted resources available. Universities are encouraged to use measurable, often instantaneous, accomplishments to demonstrate their self-accreditation. Consequently, the university administration strives to establish a mundane institutional reputation by focusing on quantitative but superficial metrics, including project grants, apparatus upgrades, and paper publication. In order to candidly envision the future of institutions and engage in a more in-depth discussion of the fundamental objectives of university education, there is a limited amount of reflection on the values of current university development. Consequently, this investigation employs literature analysis approaches to synthesize the subsequent issues: (1) the obstacles to empiricism and performanceism in university environments, (2) the reflection of administration values in contemporary universities, and (3) the proposed strategies for enhancing the fundamental values of university administration.

**Keywords:** higher education, administration value, mundane institutional reputation, university administration

**1. Introduction**

In the present day, universities generally endeavor to improve their academic performance and institutional ranking in order to address a variety of challenges and peer competition, as well as to establish an academic reputation (Birnbaum, 2004; Kayyali, 2023). Educational authorities frequently undertake multifarious supportive projects and competitive approaches to accelerate university reform and quality improvement. Universities in Taiwan, just like those in any other country, consistently engage in a series of dynamic quality improvement movements, such as Internationalization Plan, Excellent Teaching Plan, Exemplary University of Science and Technology, and Deep Plowing Projects, in order to meet the urgent demands and global competition (Liefner, 2003; Liu & Cheng, 2005; Huang, 2011). The allocation of funds for

these incentive movements is predominantly based on measurable indexes to identify a small number of competitive universities (Orr, 2005). The meritocracy is unknowingly established and maintains its dominance in both governments and universities, with the international university ranking and the academic performance of faculty members serving as indicators of the universities' reputations and the accomplishments of their members (Alma et al., 2016). The international university ranking system prioritizes alumni achievement, the number of Nobel Prize recipients, the number of academic publications, and the number of SCI, SSCI, and EI paper citations, among other factors (Aryee et al., 2007; Islam, 2025). Thus, administrative authorities in universities accordingly underscore any visible and countable performance more than, even unconsciously ignore, the core missions and social contributions of university education (Bourdieu, 2003).

Furthermore, The Ministry of Education in Taiwan established the Higher Education Evaluation and Accreditation Council in 2005 to facilitate the dynamic implementation of university evaluations under its supervision (Kezar & El-Khawas, 2003; Shyu & Huang, 2017). The evaluation criteria and implementation ensure university quality; however, they also promote homogeneity and adverse constriction among universities (Lepak et al., 2007; Sabagh & Moshtari, 2025). Certain extreme advancements in academic achievement take place within institutional contexts, occasionally diverging from original goals and social values.

This fact raises a significant issue regarding the displacement of educational goals due to parochialism. When institutions prioritize their specific and short-term self-interests, they may inadvertently neglect their overarching mission and misalign their objectives (Merton, 1968). University faculty members collectively abandon the ethical standards of their academic professions, including issues like fabrication and plagiarism, and uncritically execute their required tasks under this incentive mechanism (Mulenga & Shilongo, 2024). It often dominates within a bureaucratic organizational system, placing excessive emphasis on adherence to conventional norms and ethical standards. This study aims to systematically examine the reflective perspectives related to campus phenomena influenced by meritocracy, achievement competition, and goal displacement, as outlined in the conceptual framework (Figure 1)

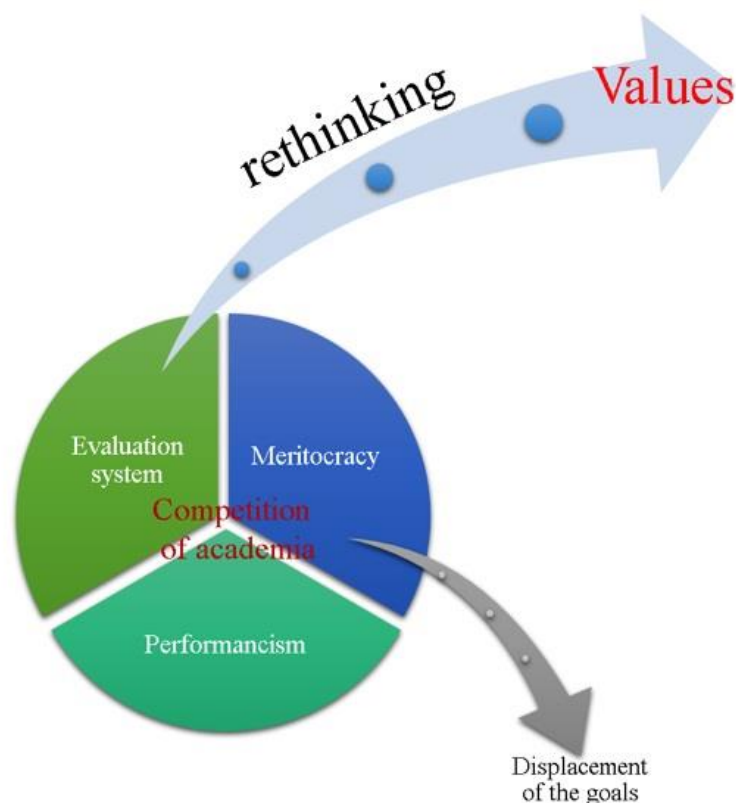


Figure 1. The initiation and evolution of the educational administration values  
The initiation and subtraction of educational administration values.

## 2. Methodology

Given that the objective of this study is to systematically examine the reflective perspectives related to campus phenomena influenced by meritocracy, achievement competition, and goal displacement, as outlined in the conceptual framework, literature analysis approaches was deemed an appropriate analysis approach.

Literature analysis approaches extend beyond merely analyzing the findings of a study or the central premise of a non-empirical work. Instead, optimally, it involves analyzing every component of the work, including the title, literature review section, conceptual framework/theoretical framework, procedures used, results section, and discussion section. This approach, where the purpose of the review is not to cover all articles ever published on the topic, but rather to combine perspectives to create a new theoretical model. A literature analysis synthesizes data and perspectives from multiple empirical studies, allowing it to tackle research problems with a robustness that no single study can achieve. Additionally, a literature analysis plays a crucial role in integrating study findings to develop theoretical frameworks and construct effective conceptual models.

In this research, analysis was conducted at the level of the entire research paper to identify which of the research papers addressed university administration values and related concepts. The literature search focused on the Scopus database. The keyword search criterion of having ‘administration value’ and higher education’ or ‘university’ and ‘fundamental values of university administration’, in either the title or abstract.

### 3. Results and Discussions

#### 3.1 The empirical performanceism in current university administration and its challenges

Intense pressure from external competitions and internal ones constantly exhorts current university administrators to promote their institutional achievement with vigor for survival and reputation (Luijten-Lub et al., 2005; Frank & Meyer, 2024). Practical and superficial performance becomes the countable achievement index representing faculty members' contribution and educational quality; consequently, the empirical performanceism dominates institutional development and policies.

##### 3.1.1 A retrospect on the performanceism implemented to university administration

The performanceism is a managerial principle which scarcely cares the accredited performance and measurable achievements of individuals and/or organization. Managers believing in performanceism stringently associate peoples' behaviors and/or achievements with their extrinsic rewards and punishments for better performance and achievement growth of both individuals and institution (Fryer et al., 2009). This merit system might facilitate academic institutions to reach fundamental and even target requirements, however, might doubtfully benefit the realistic quality of universities due to its formalism focusing on measly achievement more than substantial qualities including pragmatic goals, capable personnel, effective approaches, and feedback mechanism (Stoker, 2018).

The educational administration takes the full responsibility to search for and integrate various of resources for better university achievement, service coverage and quality, and exclusive effectiveness and efficiency (Liguori et al., 2012), particularly while universities encountering challenges and pursuing survival and even revitalizing in this competitive era (Liefner, 2003; Oplatka & Hemsley-Brown, 2004; Zhou et al., 2022). This goal-oriented performanceism dominantly counts individuals' performance contributing to indexed goals and inevitably ignores, and even dispirits, other categories of achievement which may be highly contributive to long-term development of humanity, society, and science. University faculty members under the performanceism and meritocracy are consistently compelled to narrow their professional visions and alleviate academic enthusiasm barely following requested index and neglecting their social duties. The endeavors in non-profit fields, such as fine arts, liberal arts, and fundamental sciences could be unchivalrously discouraged, even they should be constructive to heuristic individuals, societies, and technologies. This favoritism diminishes faculty members' enthusiasm and even warps the institutional development and academic values.

##### 3.1.2 The distortion of the empirical performanceism in educational settings

When organizations evaluate their performance and/or achievements by quantitative data which are obtained through empirical approaches (Chien, 2023), it implies the empiricism dominates

the ideology that any performance and/or achievement resulted from empirical methods should be reliable, scientific, and objective to verify social phenomena (Chien, 2023). However, the performanceism emphasizes more on the measurable, might be superficial, information and phenomena than synthetic investigation and/or reflections deeply explaining the nature of fact and its structural factors behind (Teddle & Tashakkori, 2011). It inevitably ignores, and even dispirits, other categories of achievement which may be highly contributive to long-term development of humanity, society, and science. The endeavors in non-profit fields, such as fine arts, liberal arts, and fundamental sciences could be unchivalrously discouraged, even should be encouraged for heuristic individuals, societies, and technologies. The real mission and values of university education seem to be inevitably neglected (Hodgkinson et al., 2005; Grant, 2021). Consequently, university administration under the performanceism simply becomes direct but biased, and limitedly fosters the policies and/or approaches which reach the indexed goals immediately, however, not realistically facilitate university's long-termed development neither original mission. This favoritism diminishes faculty members' enthusiasm and even warps the institutional development and academic values.

It is noteworthy that, while the empirical performanceism overwhelming the critical paradigm on campus, the university administration seems lack of self-reflection on routine works for factual missions and better merits of higher education (Figure 2) (Teddle & Tashakkori, 2011).

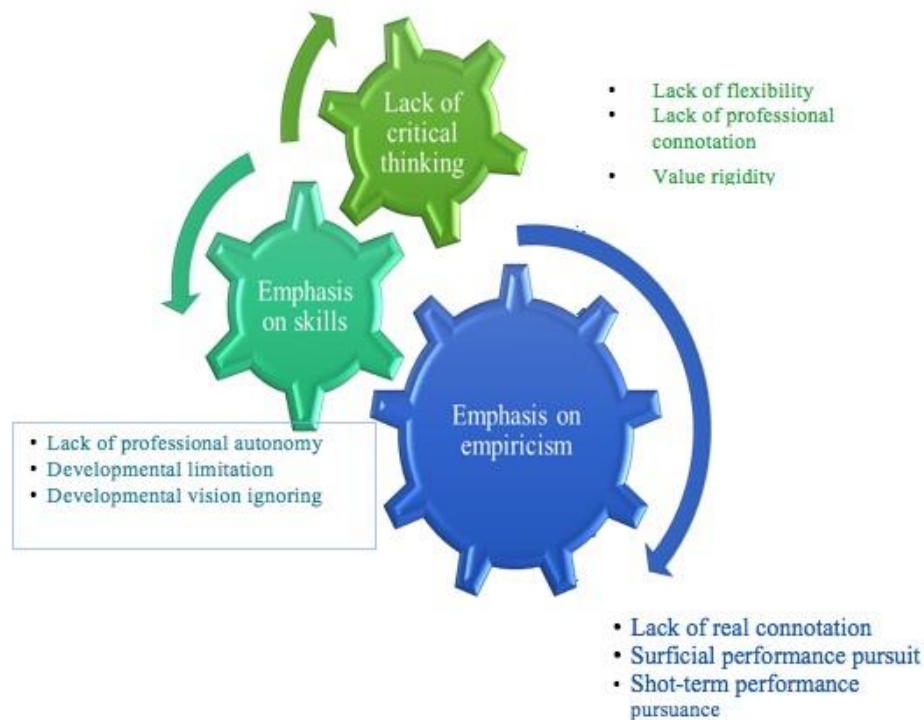


Figure 2. The evolution and potential risks of the educational administration

### 3.2 The critical paradigm for self-reflection

The critical paradigm highlights the continuous self-examination and improvement processes to reflect and expose social phenomena for better approaches and achievement quality (Creswell & Miller, 2000; Cortese, 2003; Popkewitz, 2011). The educational administration taking the critical paradigm encourages people to pursue progressive professional connotation and value rigidity of public administration with humanity, creativity, and continuous evolution. This is the essence of university spirits: to create active campus environment for faculty members and students to advance knowledge, and to apply and validate academy to society reciprocally (Vasilescu et al., 2010; Giuffré & Ratto, 2014). The endeavors limited to competitive achievement, which might be short-sighted and unsustainable, could be management myopia and hurtful to university quality, academic nature, and even to faculty members' sense of value.

Synthetically, the versatile pressure forces universities to take some evolutionary policies for better performance and achievement in this competitive era. Currently, the empiricism, emphasizing quantitative performance, overwhelms critical paradigm which encourages institutions to undertake self-reflection for developmental engineering. Universities in Taiwan generally highly value on the empirical results such as faculty's performance, university ranking and funding, more than academic value, university missions, and contributions to the

society (Merton, 1968; Kezar & El-Khawas, 2003; Chen & Chang, 2021). University administrators should deeply deliberate some valuable issues including the evolutionary roles of universities to students, general public, society, and entrepreneurs in this transformative era (Joyner & Payne, 2002; Steele & Rickards, 2021; Akour & Alenezi, 2022). It seems a right time to change the defensive routine, administration rigidity, and potential risk for sustainable self-development of universities (Kingma, 2014).

### 3.4 The perspectives on values in university administration

Universities are value-oriented organizations purporting to integrate individuals with various professionals so as to achieve their maximum potential and perform social responsibilities in the real world (Polyakova, 2022). Administrators are not only charged with professional duties but also respond to social expectations in a manner of administrative values. That is, the values of administration should be a core issue intensively concerned.

According to Hodgkinson's *Perspectives on Values in Administration* (Hodgkinson, 1991), three levels of values include subrational values, rational values and transrational values (Figure 3).

#### 3.4.1 Subrational values

Subrational values in administrations represent personal subjective consciousness resulted from previous experiences, cognition, preference, and/or specific memory which are generally not validated but self-recognized (Sun, 2011). These subrational values are the lower level and unitary value caring about personal profits and even spontaneous emotions, usually lack of logical and rational judgement (Eldridge, 2007). Administration approaches based on subrational values could be limited to emotional, even, biased decisions and narrow vision.

#### 3.4.2 Rational values

Rational values are the objective values on the bases of accredited criteria, logical analyses, laws, and social normality (Cunningham & Cordeiro, 2000; Abdrasulov et al., 2023). People with rational values in administrations generally advance from subrational ones by means of scientific analyses, cognitive socialization, and value compromise.

In administration leadership, the rational values could be delivered from two approaches: consequences and consensus (Hodgkinson, 1991). Consequence-oriented rational values lead administrators to reach rational decisions considering the performance, efficacy and efficiency of the consequences. The consensus-oriented rational values lead people to compromise with group consensus usually emphasizing group thinking and team harmony (Eldridge, 2007). Individuals with the rational values could get rid of personal prejudice and combine the views of colonies into their considerations. It is worth of noting; rational values easily lead individuals to follow the group's compromising at the costs of long-term visions and original

goals.

### 3.4.3 Transrational values

Transrational values are the highest values on the administrative moral model and grounded on major principles and ethics. Individuals with transrational values usually take their senses of value, aesthetic, and religious notions to make decisions rather than any external requirements, or scientific and logic reasoning (Hodgkinson, 1991). The administrative leaders with the transrational values not only follow their core values ingrained in people's mind but also consider objective facts to administer the organizations (Begley & Stefkovich, 2007). Furthermore, they draw up the organizational strategies through reflection and critical thinking to reach sublime performance. Thus, the transrational values foster leaders to envision the future and cross over the current demands.



Figure 3. Value perspectives in Administration (revised by Hodgkinson, 1991)

## 4 Conclusions and Suggestions

It seems the time to see a solid unity throughout the university and unanimously move forward in this globalized era. The versatile pressure resources flintily oppress current university administrators to instinctively pass over faculty members for surface academic performance even short of efficiency, real values, and what is more developmental stagnation (Scott & Usher, 2010). These academic elites, surpassing the first level of subrational values, generally take the objective perspectives of rational values and effective approaches to expose



competitive capabilities through qualitative achievements such as research grants, paper publications, and students' enrollment numbers (Aryee et al., 2007). Consequently, this intellectual community, including administrators and faculty members, form a typical patterned behavior and collectively fall into the quagmire without consciousness; they impetuously strive for the goals deviated from their actual missions. Only the excellent leaders with visions and transrational values distinguish and rectify it; they should accountably build friendly campus environment for self-reflection, critical paradigm, and innovative challenges with humanity (Zaccaro et al., 2001; Starratt, 2005; Msila, 2021). Academic leaders in universities need more than rational values and encourage colleagues to pursue professional achievement behind secular norms with professional autonomy and self-actualization (Farh et al., 2014; Chang'ach, 2019; Giridharan, 2025).

The intellectual community on campus is a group of social elites who can pursue academic achievement, implement knowledge into social values, and educate youngsters more than surficial paper publications while they sense achievement, recognition and well-being (Sergiovanni, 1992; Shosh, 2023). They pursue academia with morality, justice, and eternal values behind figurative, but may shallow, required achievement. Thus, the university administration should commit some innovative approaches to promote its faculty's value perspectives and envision forward their academic roles to the society employing the criticism paradigm rather than empiricism.

To carry out the missions of the universities in this era full of versatile competitions and diverse values, university administration is recommended to commit the following approaches: (1) To reach the faculty members' consensus on university eternal goals with global visions, knowledge renovation, and humanistic concerns. University has its conventional academic duties to pursue eternal knowledge advancement through research, and to educate students with career pursuit proficiency, creative competency, critical reflection, and social enthusiasm. In this autonomous academia, elite professionals are entrusted to investigate unknown world and pioneering issues rather than manufacturing performance (Lewis & Heckman, 2006; Knouse, 2007). Aggressive adventure should be encouraged in various professional fields and human civilization; (2) To encourage university teams, including staffs and faculty members, to undertake continuous self-reflection on administration policies and approaches for long-termed academic achievement through both individual and collective professional development. University is an academic institution with professional autonomy and innovation dynamics. This institution, throughout whole history, leads human societies to develop in the fields of cognitive knowledge, moral ideology, scientific technology, social paradigm, and realistic approaches. This university achievement results from its members' persisting self-reflection and evolutionary transmutation for eternal advancement with humanity more than requirement limitation. Administration policies supporting members' professional development are essential to accelerate and facilitate the self-improvement on campus (Klein, 2010; Hizi, 2019); (3) To

upgrade academia social responsibilities through integrating professionals in various fields, entrepreneurs, and governmental resources for sustainable dynamics reciprocally benefitting all partners. University is relied to promote social development through practical researches on local particularities and specific projects with local communities and entrepreneurs. High connection between universities and local communities is essential to academically advance university achievement and practically benefit society with reciprocity (Marginson, 2011; Alzyoud & Bani-Hani, 2015; Fitzgerald et al., 2023). That is, academic achievement is derived from the realistic problems local communities encounter and applied to the innovative approaches reciprocally benefitting them.

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