

## Teaching Efficacy and Strategic Agility: The Performance of Private Higher Learning Institutions of Malaysia

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To Link this Article: <http://dx.doi.org/10.6007/IJARBS/v15-i4/25295> DOI:10.6007/IJARBS/v15-i4/25295

**Published Date:** 19 April 2025

### Abstract

The objective of this study was to assess how the change management, teaching efficacy influence on successful transformation in the private higher education institutions in Malaysia. The study used Resource Based View theory, Self Efficacy theory and Self Efficacy theory to construct a theoretical framework. A quantitative approach was employed by using a survey of teachers from private higher learning institutions. The results of the study posited a direct correlation between change management and organisational performance. These results of the study found that teaching effectiveness contributed to the performance of private higher learning institutions (PHLIs) in Malaysia. The results of the study contribute to add to the body of knowledge in change management strategy in private higher learning institutions in Malaysia. The study provides valuable inputs for the policy makers in formulating higher education policy in Malaysia.

**Keywords:** Teaching Efficacy, Strategic Agility, Higher Learning Institutions, Private Higher Learning Institutions (PHLIs), and Organizational Performance.

### Introduction

Malaysia has established a strategic objective to position itself as a prominent educational centre within the region, with the aim of increasing the number of international students to 250,000 by the year 2025. In pursuit of this goal, Malaysia seeks to enhance the reputation of its higher education institutions by positioning them as providers of globally recognized and esteemed academic qualifications. According to the Ministry of Education Malaysia (2015), there is an expectation for Malaysian higher education institutions to generate graduates that have excellent employability prospects. This can be achieved through various means, such as enhancing the reputation of public higher education institutions (PHEI) through publications of research, patents, and institutional quality. These efforts are aimed at attracting foreign students to choose Malaysia as their preferred destination for further studies.

The Ministry of Education Malaysia (2015) is also examining the potential for aligning the functions of Public Higher Education Institutions (PHEIs) with those of private higher education institutions. Additionally, the ministry aims to guarantee the long-term sustainability of PHEIs. Nevertheless, given the current economic downturn and subsequent significant reduction in budget, it is doubtful that the Private Higher Education Institutions (PHEI) will be able to realize this ambition. According to Mustafa Kamal (2017), the present scenario for the 20 Malaysian Private Higher Education Institutions (PHEI) is defined by a significant reduction of 19 percent (RM1.5 billion) in their operating expenditures.

#### *Management Challenges of Private Universities of Malaysia*

In the Malaysian higher education landscape, the performance and relevance of private higher learning institutions (HLIs) hold significant importance due to the highly competitive nature of the business (Ahmad & Ng, 2015). The higher education industry in Malaysia consists of a total of 629 institutions, with private Higher Learning Institutions (HLIs) accounting for around 73% of the overall number (Jabatan Pendidikan Tinggi, 2018). As a result of this, private higher learning institutions (HLIs) are regarded as having a substantial impact on the economic development of the country. According to Lewin (2015), educational institutions play a vital role in the development of skilled and competent individuals, thereby enabling the nation to enhance its global competitiveness by moving up the value chain.

Table 1

*Number of PHEIs in Malaysia, 2015–2021*

Types of PHEIs	2015	2017	2018	2020	2021
University	63	53	53	51	53
University College	38	37	38	37	37
College	402	280	380	338	335
International Branch Campus (IBC)	10	10	10	10	10
Total	513	480	481	436	435

Source: Tham and Chong (2023)

The significant expansion of the higher education system has led to an increase in options for individuals seeking higher education. However, this expansion has also created growing concerns regarding the quality of higher education. According to Mukherjee et al. (2017), the considerable growth of the higher education industry has resulted in a restricted pool of skilled individuals and graduates who may not possess the necessary global competitiveness, which contradicts the nation's ambitions for human capital development. It is imperative for local Private Higher Education Institutions (PHEIs) to adopt optimal competitive strategies in order to ensure long-term viability (Chin et al., 2024). Educators play a crucial role in shaping the outcomes of educational and instructional endeavors.

#### *Teaching Efficacy*

The concept of teaching efficacy plays a crucial role in elucidating the factors that influence teachers' motivation to educate and the subsequent impact on their instructional outcomes. Improving the teaching efficacy of educators has the potential to enhance their confidence in the classroom, foster greater student engagement, facilitate regular exploration of novel teaching methodologies, and promote students' capacity for learning and innovation (Liu, Du,

& Lu, 2023). Previous research has examined the teaching efficacy of instructors (Wang & Sui 2023) with the aim of investigating strategies to enhance teaching effectiveness and assessing the impact of improved teaching efficacy on instructional outcomes. The study's results indicate that establishing a logical and scientific framework and implementing strategies to enhance instructors' effectiveness in instructing are viable and effective approaches for ensuring instructional quality. Several scholars have conducted research on strategies to enhance teaching effectiveness in educational settings, focusing on several aspects such as academic discipline and internal and external factors (Zhou, 2018; Wu, 2019; Er, 2020; Wang, 2021).

### *Strategic Agility*

Strategic agility is derived from the competencies possessed by individuals. In order to achieve their objectives, organizations must possess strategic agility, which enables them to adapt and respond effectively to dynamic environments. Organizations that possess strategic agility have the capacity to proactively anticipate changes rather than only reacting to them. This enables them to swiftly make strategic decisions and promptly implement them in order to effectively navigate the complex and dynamic nature of these changes (Muthuveloo, 2015). The impact of strategic agility on organizational performance in unstable business environments is generally good. Previous research has demonstrated that individuals have a vital role in the strategic agility of organizations (Oyedijo, 2012). The role of human resources or personnel is crucial in determining the degree of organizational agility. In order to enhance the level of organizational agility, it is important to provide training and establish accountability among individuals inside universities. The study conducted by Khavari et al. (2016) focuses on the concept of organizational agility rather than strategic agility. The concept of organisational agility is commonly understood as a comprehensive notion in which agility is contingent upon multiple organisational elements. Additionally, strategic agility is considered an integral component of the management process inside the company strategy (Walter, 2020). According to Muthuveloo (2015), organizations that possess strategic agility are better equipped to effectively respond to rapid changes in a dynamic business environment through prompt decision-making and efficient implementation. Individuals that play a crucial role in the formulation and implementation of corporate strategy, as well as contributing significantly to the overall performance of an organization, are considered indispensable and their replacement entails substantial costs (Barney & Arian, 2001). Individuals of this nature are commonly referred to as "transformers" or "star performers" inside their respective organizations. Valuable resources are attributed to their capacity to furnish organizations with a distinctive advantage over their competitors. Despite the significance of transformers in facilitating optimal organizational performance, numerous organizations have challenges in retaining these individuals, resulting in their departure to rival entities (Branham, 2001; Murray et al., 2015).

### *Teaching Efficacy and Performance*

Numerous previous studies have examined the various factors that influence teaching efficacy and the mechanisms through which it is formed. Some of these studies have indicated that teaching efficacy plays a crucial role in elucidating teachers' motivation and behavior in the classroom, as well as its impact on their enthusiasm for work and the effectiveness of their teaching (Lu, 2017). According to Stronge (2018), a proficient educator must possess a comprehensive understanding of scientific and cultural subjects, as well as the capacity to

incorporate novel pedagogical concepts, adeptly employ diverse teaching methodologies, and demonstrate successful instructional skills. The concept of teaching efficacy is manifested in various aspects of the teaching process, specifically pertaining to teachers. These aspects encompass teaching engagement, teaching strategies, classroom behavior, teachers' abilities, teaching emotions, and teaching beliefs. This notion has been explored and discussed in the works of Er (2020) and Stevenson (2020).

### *Strategic Agility and Performance*

Research on the agility concept within the higher education sector in Malaysia is still at its infancy stage. Under the Malaysian higher education context, there are limited studies on agility, even less on strategic agility. Menon and Suresh (2020) used the total interpretive structural modelling (TISM) in their study and revealed that leadership, human resources strategies and organisational structure were the most significant factors contributing towards agility of universities and colleges in Malaysia. Yusoff et al. (2019), through literature review, analysed agility as a moderator for the marketing function and brand equity among private HLLs in Malaysia. They recommended private HLLs to have agile marketing so as to recruit high quality students and staff but admitted this was relatively an under explored construction. Nonetheless, this is only a conceptual paper without any empirical evidence. The current study intends to position strategic agility as a mediator instead of a moderator because strategic agility has been known to influence organisational performance (Junni et al., 2015; Oyedijo, 2012). Examining strategic agility as a mediator or a crucial link between people and organisational performance will be able to contribute significantly to the body of knowledge as new insights could be gained into how private HLLs, through the types of people and AMO practices, will be able to achieve the much-needed strategic agility, which in turn increases their organisational performance.

Ghasemy et al. (2018) discovered through a qualitative inquiry on 235 academic leaders from 25 universities in Malaysia that the top four main issues faced by these HLLs are (i) staff affairs management, (ii) finance, budgeting, grants and fundraising, (iii) time management, and (iv) achieving goals, KPIs and standards. What was interesting is that challenges under staff affairs management encompass shortage of local academic talents and negative staff behaviour. This means people as a resource is a major concern for Malaysian HLLs and could explain their poor performance as indicated in the environmental scanning. As such, the current study would be able to provide new insights into the linkage of people and organisational performance via strategic agility. According to Pucciarelli and Kaplan (2016), strategic agility enables organisations to have flexibility and fluidity in developing and deploying resources to address the occurrences of dynamic changes. Nevertheless, strategic agility has not yet attracted the attention of the higher education researchers, as most research on strategic agility is based on manufacturing or IT contexts. Despite this, under current dynamic times, private HLLs undeniably need strategic agility to sense out market threats, seize potential opportunities, and shape internal resources and capabilities (Junni et al., 2015; Mukerjee, 2014). Having strategic agility makes a difference for organisations to outperform one another (Oyedijo, 2012). Therefore, the study posits that strategic agility is the crucial link between people and organisational performance. Organisations that develop their people have greater opportunities to leverage strategic agility, which in turn helps organisations to respond appropriately to the uncertainties and disruptions happening in the business environment, thus achieve strong organisational performance.

**Findings and Discussions**

The result of the study indicates that there is a positive correlation between elevated levels of instructional efficacy and improved organisational performance. Teaching effectiveness, which refers to the confidence and ability of faculty members in effectively providing instruction, has a significant impact on the educational achievements of institutions. The presence of a positive association indicates that when educators have confidence in their teaching abilities and utilise effective teaching methods, it immediately results in enhanced organisational performance. This discovery emphasises the significance of ongoing professional development and assistance for faculty members to improve their teaching abilities and effectiveness.

The study found that there is a positive correlation between teaching efficacy and strategic agility. Strategic agility pertains to an organization's capacity to promptly and efficiently adapt to alterations in the external surroundings. The positive association indicates that a strong belief in one's ability to teach effectively leads to increased ability to quickly and effectively adjust to and address changing educational needs. This discovery emphasises the interdependence between the quality of teaching and the ability of an organisation to adapt. It suggests that improving the effectiveness of teaching can also strengthen an institution's capacity.

The results of the study demonstrate that strategic agility has a positive correlation with effective change management approaches. Organisations that possess a high level of strategic agility are better equipped to effectively execute and oversee changes, a crucial aspect in a swiftly changing educational environment. The significance of cultivating strategic agility to improve change management capacities is shown by this link, allowing institutions to stay competitive and adaptable to new challenges and opportunities.

The results of the study indicate that strategic agility has a substantial impact on organisational success. Organisations that demonstrate a high level of strategic agility are more effectively prepared to adjust to changes, capitalise on opportunities, and minimise risks, resulting in enhanced performance outcomes. This discovery highlights the crucial importance of strategic agility in promoting organisational success, indicating that PHLIs should give priority to initiatives that improve their agility and adaptability.

**Implications of the Study**

The findings of this study have numerous significant ramifications for Private Higher Learning Institutions (PHLIs) in Malaysia.

*Theoretical Significance*

This study investigates the influence of teachers' teaching efficacy and strategic agility on the performance of higher education institutions in Malaysia. This study validates and expands the application of strategic agility theory, self-efficacy theory and resource-based view theory, and verifies the research results of teaching attribution of teachers' teaching at the higher education. The relationship between these three variables have not explored comprehensively in the context of private higher learning institutions in Malaysia. This study confirms the significant influence of strategic agility on increasing the performance of higher education institutions. The findings of the study have bridged the research gap on strategic



agility in the higher education context. Teachers attribute their teaching success to their teaching abilities, efforts, beliefs, or strategies, which can stimulate strong teaching motivation and enthusiasm and result in effective teaching, influencing teaching efficacy and achieving success in education.

### **Practical Significance**

The results of this study have significant consequences for Private Higher Learning Institutions (PHLIs) in Malaysia. There is a direct and indirect relationship between strategic agility and organisational performance of private higher education institutions in Malaysia. The result of the study confirms that strategic agility and teaching efficacy have a strong effect on the management of private higher learning institutions of Malaysia. The private HLIs will be able to increase their organisational performance through the presence of strategic agility. Past experiences have highlighted the weaknesses of private HLIs which involved financial losses, poor rankings globally, and poor graduate employability (Chan & Muthuveloo, 2018). The current study has provided evidence that private HLIs should acquire strategic agility. Specifically, private HLIs in Malaysia should develop the strategic agility to optimise their organisational performance and sustain business growth in current dynamic business landscape to achieve the Malaysian Education Development Plan (PPPM) 2013 - 2025 policy in improving performance of the educators in line with the needs and challenges of the 21st century. Continuous professional development can greatly enhance teaching efficacy and lead to major improvements in organisational performance in line with MOE's commitment to producing high quality educators as it is the most significant factor in determining student outcomes. The higher learning institutions should be able to allocate resources towards training and development initiatives that provide educators with the necessary expertise and self-assurance to deliver instruction of exceptional quality. The higher learning institutions should give priority to implement measures that improve their capacity to adjust to emerging difficulties and capitalise on new possibilities. By comprehending and utilising these connections, PHLIs can improve their performance and attain long-lasting success in the constantly changing educational environment.

### **Conclusions and Recommendations**

The results of the study indicate that strategic agility and teaching efficacy are essential for preserving competitiveness and adaptability to change management and performance in the higher learning institutions of Malaysia. The study suggests that to improve the PHLIs strategic agility, they should implement adaptable planning procedures that enable modifications in reaction to shifts in the external surroundings. This can encompass scenario planning, contingency plans, and iterative planning cycles, cultivating an environment that promotes innovation can improve the ability to quickly adapt and respond to strategic challenges. The PHLIs should promote and incentivize academics and staff to engage in innovative experimentation with novel ideas and methodologies, while ensuring that they have access to the requisite resources and support.

Creating cross-functional teams can improve agility by combining varied viewpoints and specialised knowledge. These teams have the ability to collaborate on strategic projects and initiatives, which allows the institution to effectively address difficult challenges. Establishing a culture that encourages ongoing learning is crucial for maintaining strategic agility. Institutions should offer teachers and staff the chance to participate in professional

development, attend conferences, and join learning communities. Utilising data to guide decision-making can improve strategic adaptability. Organisations should allocate resources to develop data analytics capabilities in order to collect, analyse, and interpret data, thus empowering them to make well-informed and prompt decisions.

The study emphasized the significance of strategic agility and organisational performance. In order to optimise the effectiveness of leadership development and strategic agility, it is advisable for PHLIs to implement integrated methodologies. Leadership development programmes must be synchronised with the institution's strategic objectives to guarantee that leaders possess the necessary skills and knowledge to propel strategic initiatives and accomplish organisational goals. Institutions should establish comprehensive development programs that combine strategic agility enhancement, including modules on strategic thinking and innovation. Institutions should facilitate opportunities for educators to obtain feedback from their peers, mentors, and stakeholders, as well as to engage in introspection regarding their experiences and acquired knowledge. Institutions (PHLIs) in Malaysia can enhance their effectiveness in teaching, improve their practices in managing change, and develop strategic agility, resulting in improved organisational performance. There are many private higher learning institutions and centers are located in different states in Malaysia. The study has focused on private higher learning institutions of Malaysia. Future studies could cover the diversity of issues, variables, locations and size of the private and public college and universities.

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