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## Creative leadership and motivation of university employees

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### Abstract

High quality work of scientific, pedagogical and administrative staff of universities is conditioned by their high motivation and conviction about the meaningfulness of their contribution to the science, students, and society. A deeper examination of academic motivation, made through analysis, synthesis, comparison and generalization of theoretical knowledge on leadership and motivation, indicates that motivation is influenced by many objective and subjective, quantitative and qualitative factors. Quality of managers' influence, respectively creative content of leadership and general managerial facilitation that managers utilize in affecting work behavior and performance of employees can be include to the strongest factors which affect the motivation. Paper is intended to investigate the motivation of universities members and its conditionalities. Methodological part of the paper contains the results of sociological questioning conducted on a sample of 122 employees of University of Zilina and focuses on examining dependence of the leadership style performed from the part of managers and the strength of motivation perceived by the university members. Specifically, three basic leadership styles are examined: authoritative, neutral and participative, versus three basic dimensions of the motivation: motivation to quality work; motivation to increase own knowledge and skills; and motivation to submitting new proposals. Applying chi-square test, the dependence of leadership style and level of motivation was confirmed in all three motivational dimensions; application of creative, participative leadership causes a higher degree of motivation. Subsequently, there is investigated in the paper whether the strength of motivation is also influenced by creating an atmosphere of trust, belongingness and encouraging to new proposals by the manager, and whether creating such a positive atmosphere is affected by the quality of leadership style. Through the use of Pearson's test and Kendall's test, dependence was also confirmed. Conclusion of the paper presents a set of recommendations which might be contributive for the universities executives when strengthening the motivation of universities members and improving their competitiveness and contribution to society and its progress.

Keywords: university employees and managers; leadership; motivation; survey, dependence;

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## 1. Introduction

In current, very dynamic conditions, university teachers and managers can be understood as the knowledge workers. This term was used firstly through P. Drucker a few decades ago, and now represents the high-qualified employees who dispose by the most important working tool – i.e. knowledge (1999). Knowledgeable, and most importantly, effective employee, not only has specific knowledge and skills but also a high level of motivation (Rosak-Szyrocka, 2014); it is a virtual axiom that human action is a consequence of cognition and motivation or, put another way, knowledge and desire (Locke, 2000). Based on these ideas, we can state that knowledge, creativeness, and wisdom become the crucial factors of success and progress of every university. This is just the motivation that is the basis, source, accelerator, as well the peak of/for valuable outputs of all academicians.

When trying to define the motivation, many various viewpoints or understandings should be used. For example, the motivation describes forces acting on or within an organism to initiate and direct behavior, explains differences in the intensity of behavior, and indicates the persistence of behavior (Petri & Govern, 2013). In other view, motivation is inner state of soul of man which is initiating him or set him in motion (Berelson & Steiner, 1964) because it contains the profile of motives of every individual. From an intensification point of view, motivation determinates to what level (how strongly, how intensively) the individual will be devoted to reaching felt needs or defined goals. Additionally, motivation represents a system of ways, principles, habits, etc., that are used by an individual when creating the goals, priorities and basic directions of his or her present and future effort. Simultaneously, motivation reflects a complex of inborn or acquired (learned) manners of reactions to heterogeneous instigations and situations, and explains also a system of relationships and attitudes to oneself, other individuals or groups, organization, responsibility, own development, etc. (Blaskova & Grazulis, 2009).

Effective motivation requires not only arousal or energy but also guidance by an effective and cognitive system that is susceptible to distraction or depletion (Ryan, 2012). An idea is interesting that in addition to extrinsic and intrinsic motivation, also an ego-involved type of motivation exists. According to Gagne & Deci (2014), this motivation is not prodded by outside factors, such as rewards and punishments, and although it is internally driven, it is not the same as intrinsic motivation. In contrast to intrinsic motivation which is measured with the free-choice, in ego-involved motivation people's feelings of worth are dependent on what they do or how they do it, so people feel pressured or controlled to do what would make them feel worthy. From the viewpoint of goal achievement, Locke (2000) deals interestingly with a prioritization of human needs: "People have the power to prioritize their needs in different ways, based on their chosen values,".

In our opinion, the individuals are really unique, they differently connect or, on the contrary, even fight with their own egoism, altruism, love, dreams, disappointments, fantasies, live-roles, etc., and their behavior is often constant, often persistent, often variant, depending on concrete demands, necessities, and/or opportunities. A described deduction represents a 'dynamical motive-variousness' and is absolutely typical especially for the university teachers.

The aim of paper is to focus attention to the creative leadership of university teachers and employees, in terms of a comprehensive, multicomponent and harmonized style of strengthening and improving their motivation. Based on theoretical analysis, comparison, synthesis, generalization, induction, deduction, and utilization of the questionnaire survey results conducted at the University of Zilina, paper examines the impact of three basic leadership styles applied from the part of managers on an intensity of employees' motivation. It also examines whether the motivation is influenced by other (associated with creativity) element/process of developing and motivating human potential: creating a climate of trust and encouraging to new proposals, and whether the creating such a positive atmosphere is influenced by the quality of leadership style. Confirmation of all assumptions is then an inspiration for defining the managerial recommendations at the end of the paper.

## 2. Transformational and transcendental leadership in relation to the motivation

In the best organizations (including the best universities), everyone is encouraged to act like a leader. Leaders act in ways to develop and grow people's talents, including their leadership capabilities (Kouzes & Posner, 2012). We can consider the importance of leadership from the viewpoint of both the students and the teachers. From the perspective of students' leadership, it is very important to have good leaders in student teams. They have significant influence on creativity of work and motivation of other students in team (Soviar, Varmus & Kubina, 2015). From the perspective of teachers and employees of university, leadership is a highly sought-after and highly valued commodity (Northouse, 2016) and represents the critical component to great performance (Kouzes & Posner, 2015). It includes impact, i.e. leads to a change in preferences (Sokoł, 2015).

In order to react efficiently to the changes, it is important to rally the leaders that would be able to identify and tackle the problems arising in the institution *creatively and innovatively*, would possess competencies of leadership, management of changes, strategic thinking and other (Adamoniene & Petrauskiene, 2014). In outlined sense, creative leadership focuses on the creation of space for self-expression: a fair reward for work, strengthening the pleasant feeling of a job well done, experience of joy and recognition of achievement (Jedinak, 2011). It means, the management should invoke the feeling of satisfaction in the subordinates, which would depend on the results of their work; and development should be ensured by paying more attention to the application of *transformational leadership* principles in practice (Grubliene, Gedvilas, Venckevicė & Grigolienė 2015). The beginnings of this type (or quality level) of leadership are assigned to Burns – he analyzed relationships between leaders and followers and defined the theory of transformational leadership (1978). These thoughts were later modified and completed by Bass (1985). In 2006, in co-authorship with Riggio, they defined this term in follow way: "Transformational leadership motivates and inspires followers with challenge and persuasion, providing both meaning and understanding (i.e. inspirational motivation); this one is intellectually stimulating, expanding the followers' use of their abilities, and is individually considerate, providing the follower with support, mentoring, and coaching," (Bass & Riggio, 2006). Important is the transformational leadership has to be authentic – it must incorporate a central core of moral values (Bass & Steidlmeier, 1999).

Although the transformational leadership is really very inspirational and potentially very attractive, we can take into account also another, more sophisticated style of leadership: *transcendental*. Transcendental leadership is unique style or qualitative level of leadership and is full of value inspirations, i.e. enthusiasm, heartiness, honesty, trust, responsibility, creativity and instigative fantasy of leader, and because of these excellent features and competences, put high demands on such a leader. This means, transcendental leadership develops and cultivates the personality and motivation of the leaders, and based on this, accelerates the quality and dynamics of personalities and motivations of the followers of such a leader.

Transcendental leadership is both follower-centered and leader-centered process (Liu, 2007). Sanders, Hopkins & Geroy's (2003) model suggests that a leader's development will be focused onto three dimensions of spirituality: consciousness (mind), moral character (heart), and faith (soul). Transcendental leadership uses values, attitudes, and behaviors (altruistic love, hope/faith, vision) to intrinsically motivate followers, thus increase followers' senses of spiritual survival, i.e., calling (life has meaning, to make a difference) and membership (interconnection, be understood, be appreciated), and the resulting positive organizational outcomes (Fry, 2003; Fry, Vitucci & Cedillo, 2005).

Transcendental leader promotes unity by providing fair extrinsic reward, appealing to the intrinsic motivation of followers, and developing their *transcendent motivation*: the motivation to do things for others, the motivation to contribute (Cardona, 2000, p. 204). The influence on transcendental, intrinsic and extrinsic motivation is emphasized also by Liu (2007) – but it must not be applied in a manipulative way, and thus is more effective than transformational leadership in motivating followers. In addition, the list of four contributions of transcendental leadership stated by Barney,

Wicks, Scharmer & Pavlovich (2015) might be considered as very inspirational: 1. Transcendental awareness (beliefs, assumptions, values, and accepting responsibility); 2. Seeing of things in new ways (sense of otherness); 3. System-level change (helping others in a global shift of consciousness); 4. Power of education (raising the aspirations of young people in their searching a new transcendental world); (pp. 2–13). More concretely, an achievement the level of transcendental leadership is based on tuning three instruments of knowing: the open mind, the open heart, and the open will (Scharmer & Kaufer, 2013). We can say the utilization of these opportunities/necessities can help the transformational leader in becoming the transcendental leader more easily. When applying creative leadership at the universities, the experience of Purg (2013) might be positively used: “We include the methods of leadership development based on *arts* into the teaching. Our school is designed as an environment for creative leadership, as a place where managers will come order not only to learn but also because to be inspired,“. We can complement that such a creative, original leadership is primarily based on a strong, unshakeable leader’s personality and a readiness of employees to be good partners and followers for their leader.

Creative and motivating leader should also establish working conditions that enable creativity, cognition and efficiency (Sokoł, 2015). Creative, great leaders must be visionary (Navickaite, Daciulytė & Urbanovic, 2015), motivate people through persuasive communication, be an example (Williams, 2005), have to have ability to learn (Kouzes & Posner, 2015), dispose by a charisma (Bryman, 1992; Barbuto, 2005; Hay, 2006; Bass, 2008, etc.), empathy (Finlay, 2005; Pavlovich & Krahnke, 2012), tolerance (Simonet & Tett, 2012), and spirit of community (Aldon, 2005). Charismatic leaders consistently possess traits of self-monitoring, engagement in impression management, motivation to attain social power, and motivation to attain self-actualization (Jung & Sosik, 2006), intelligence, self-confidence, determination, integrity, and sociability Northouse (2016).

From the perspective of *transformational* leadership: “Leaders behave in ways that allow them to serve as role model for their followers. The leaders are admitted, respected, and trusted. Followers identify with the leaders and want to emulate them; leaders are endowed by their followers as having extraordinary capabilities, persistence, and determination,” (Bass & Riggio, 2006). It means, the true leader is person who, by work and/or personal example, markedly influences the behaviors, thoughts, and/or feelings of a significant number of their fellow human beings (Gardner & Laskin, 2011). Cunningham & Cordeiro (2009) claim that a school principal acting as a transformational leader creates conditions and motivates teachers to consult and discuss each other about the continuous improvement of student learning, choosing teaching and learning methods, allows teachers to take the responsibility for introduction of teaching and learning innovations. And, from the perspective of transcendental leadership, the best way of creating such a leadership is by example (Cardona, 2000).

In almost all of mentioned above opinions of recognized authors was found that the leadership is connected, and we can emphasize that even *necessarily built* on the role-model behavior of the leader and positive impact on teachers’ motivation. The more hard-working, creative, responsible and motivating is the leader, the more hard-working, creative, responsible and motivating will be his or her followers – teachers, colleagues, partners in work, students. This indicates the role-model behavior, which can improve the motivation, is based on the collegiality, partnership, and even brotherly spirit. But, this unique behavior is done not only for good relations, feelings and satisfaction of leader and teachers. These positives *serve as a creative platform* for the strongest as possible motivation, the highest as possible performance, the most innovative as possible ideas, the most valuable as possible outputs, etc. In other words, the highest as possible level of both the teachers’ and the leader’s effort is inevitably expected and demanded through the transcendental leadership.

Because the leaders and the followers are part of the leadership process, it is important to address issues that confront followers as well as issues that confront leaders. Leaders and followers should be understood in relation to each other (Northouse, 2016). Concretely, an optimal balance between a managing and spacing, control and allowing freedom of decision in the manager’s supervision is needed (Benco, 1998) but it is obvious that too much of control negatively affects motivation (Sokoł,

2015). This means the positive motivators, i.e. motivational approaches, processes, forms, tools, measurements, events, etc., should be applied. Unfortunately, according to Ryan (2012): “We have many habitual and over learned behaviors that can be performed *without intention or conscious control*. Our attitudes and motives can be, to different degrees, implicit,”. Based on this knowledge, there grows the importance of creativeness, role-model behavior, facilitation, help, and support from the side of leader – inconspicuous, subthreshold examples of positive practices and cultivated work behavior must be permanently implanted into the working environment at the universities.

### 3. Methods

For research in area of creative leadership and motivation of university employees, it was used a questionnaire survey conducted at the University of Zilina in Slovakia. This questionnaire survey was focused to detect the dynamics and content of the decision-making processes inside the human potential motivation. We researched the managers’ decisions during motivating their employees, what motivational tools are considered as the most effective, what factors and events had the impact on employees’ existing motivation, how strong their motivation is, etc. In this paper we were concentrated on examining the impact of the chosen leadership style on the level of motivation to perform high-quality work, to increase the level of knowledge and skills and to propose new suggestions. As we can assume existence of correlation between leadership style and creation of an atmosphere of trust and honesty, we also studied whether the creation of a trust atmosphere has the impact on motivational levels and how big this impact is.

#### 3.1. Results and findings of the survey

122 employees of University of Zilina participated in the survey. First of all, we focused on the exploring style and character of leadership. Table 1 shows amount of men and women who responded to the question related to leadership style they encountered, respectively how is managers’ approach to their employees (what leadership style they use). The most applicable style is participative and is applied by 73.8% of university managers.

**Table 1. Frequency of Men and Women who Answered What Leadership Style is Applied on them**

	Participative	Neutral	Authoritative	Total
Women	53	14	1	68
Men	37	14	3	54
Total	90	28	4	122

Managers’ and employees’ answers on this issue are slightly different, almost 20% fewer employees than managers perceive participative leadership style (managers: 88.9%, employees: 69.5%). This gives space to managers for improvement of correct leadership style application.

In relation to the topic of this paper, we examined relationship between the applied leadership style and creating a trust, friendliness and openness atmosphere from managers’ part. Right these elements – trust, friendliness and openness – are considered as key attributes of creative leadership. To verify validity of mentioned relationship we used Pearson’s and Kendall’s correlation tests (Table 2 and 3). Selected significance value was set at level Alpha = 0.01. Using both tests the correlation coefficient reached higher level, in Pearson’s correlation test the value is 0.563 and in case Kendall’s correlation test is 0.453. These values indicate that association is strong enough, what means relationship between creating a trust, friendliness and openness atmosphere from managers’ part and leadership style applied by him or her.

Based on this relation is needed to consider what leadership style managers use to their employees because inappropriate approach leads to the creation of uncomfortable and unpleasant atmosphere

in the workplace (as also questionnaire survey demonstrated) which largely causes the lower level of motivation.

**Table 2. Pearson's Correlation Test**

		Leadership style	Creating atmosphere of trust
Leadership style	Pearson Correlation	1	.563**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	122	122
Creating an atmosphere of trust	Pearson Correlation	.563**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	122	122

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

**Table 3. Kendall's Correlation Test**

		Leadership style	Creating atmosphere of trust
Kendall's tau_b	Leadership style	Correlation Coeff.	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.453**
		N	122
Creating an atmosphere of trust	Leadership style	Pearson Correlation	.453**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000
		N	122

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

Next we were finding out the relation of leadership style from managers' part and the power of motivation experienced by members of the University in three dimensions, namely: motivation to quality work; motivation to continuously increase their own professional knowledge and skills; motivation to propose new suggestions and ideas, through chi-square test (Tables 4 and 5).

**Table 4. The Frequency of Characters Between Leadership Style and Level of Motivation to 3 dimensions**  
Motivation to Quality Work

		High	Rather high	Average	Rather low	Low	Total
Leadership style	Participative	31	51	8	0	0	90
	Neutral	6	14	6	0	2	28
	Authoritative	1	0	1	2	0	4
	<i>Total</i>	38	65	15	2	2	122
Motivation to raising the level of knowledge and skills							
Leadership style	Participative	18	54	17	1	0	90
	Neutral	5	15	6	1	1	28
	Authoritative	1	0	0	2	1	4
	<i>Total</i>	24	69	23	4	2	122
Motivation to submission of new ideas							
Leadership style	Participative	11	50	25	4	0	90
	Neutral	3	8	12	3	2	28
	Authoritative	1	0	1	1	1	4
	<i>Total</i>	15	58	38	8	3	122

**Table 5. Chi-square Test for Leadership Style and Level of Motivation to 3 Motivational Dimensions**

	Value			df			Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)		
Pearson Chi-Square	72.582 <sup>a</sup>	46.814 <sup>a</sup>	23.830 <sup>a</sup>	8	8	8	.000	.000	.002
Likelihood Ratio	28.274	22.375	20.804	8	8	8	.000	.004	.008
Linear-by-Linear Assoc.	14.859	9.135	11.0236	1	1	1	.000	.003	.001
N of Valid Cases	122	122	122						

All the calculated chi-square values were with degree of freedom 8 and significance level 0.05% which means that determined tabulated value, used for comparison with calculated value, is 15.507. Since the calculated chi-square value for all three dimensions of motivation was higher than tabulated value, we can confirm the relation between the application of leadership style and the level of perceived motivation. Based on this survey we can also conclude that employees who are led through participative leadership style achieve higher motivation level than those who are led through neutral or authoritative leadership style. Employees under participative leadership style achieve rather high enough to high motivation level while with application of neutral leadership style the motivation decreases to average level and with authoritative leadership style motivation reaches even low (inadequate) level. Therefore, every manager should consider properly what leadership style he or she will choose to apply, as this decision will affect the motivation level of all employees in the future.

Next step was to explore whether the power of motivation (in mentioned three dimensions) is influenced by creating the trust, friendliness and openness atmosphere (Tables 6 and 7).

**Table 6. The Frequency of Characters Between Creating Trust and Level of 3 Motivation Dimensions**  
**Motivation to Quality Work**

		High	Rather high	Average	Rather low	Low	Total
Creating an atmosphere of trust	Yes	26	27	4	0	0	57
	Usually Yes	10	34	6	0	0	50
	Sometimes	0	3	5	1	1	10
	Usually No	1	1	0	0	1	3
	No	1	0	0	1	0	2
<b>Total</b>		38	65	15	2	2	122
Motivation to raising the level of knowledge and skills							
Creating an atmosphere of trust	Yes	17	30	9	1	0	57
	Usually Yes	7	32	11	0	0	50
	Sometimes	0	4	3	3	0	10
	Usually No	0	2	0	0	1	3
	No	0	1	0	0	1	2
<b>Total</b>		24	69	23	4	2	122
Motivation to submission of new ideas							
Creating an atmosphere of trust	Yes	10	30	13	4	0	57
	Usually Yes	4	25	19	2	0	50
	Sometimes	0	2	5	2	1	10
	Usually No	1	0	1	0	1	3
	No	0	1	0	0	1	2
<b>Total</b>		15	58	38	8	3	122

All the calculated chi-square values (Table 7) were with degree of freedom 16 and significance level 0.05% which means that determined tabulated value, used for comparison with calculated value, is 26.3. The calculated chi-square value for each dimension was higher (motivation to quality work:

86.392; motivation to raising the level of knowledge and skills: 82.921; motivation to submission of new ideas: 50.333) so the relation was successfully confirmed.

**Table 7. Chi-square Test for Creating an Atmosphere of Trust and Level of Motivation to 3 Dimensions**

	Value			df			Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)		
Pearson Chi-Square	86.392 <sup>a</sup>	82.921 <sup>a</sup>	50.333 <sup>a</sup>	16	16	16	.000	.000	.000
Likelihood Ratio	47.259	38.507	32.320	16	16	16	.000	.001	.009
Linear-by-Linear Associat.	22.302	19.884	13.244	1	1	1	.000	.000	.000
N of Valid Cases	122	122	122						

### 3.2. Discussion and comparison with other surveys

Based on our research we can argue that high motivation level was reached by those employees, for who is created the trust and friendliness atmosphere with the opportunity to realize their own creation and to apply their new ideas, i.e. employees who managers apply creative leadership towards. Our survey results closely correspond with the results of survey performed by Figurska in 2015. On the sample of 210 respondents, she focused onto the searching determinants of knowledge workers engagement. Pay equivalent to the employees input in work, good atmosphere at work, opportunities for career development, appropriate relationships with people (in particular with superiors), opportunities for knowledge and skills development are factors which have the greatest influence on the employees decisions about changing a place of employment or staying in the organization they work in (2015).

On the other hand, using a sample of 290 employees and their supervisors from Korean companies, Shin & Zhou (2003) found the transformational leadership is positively related to employee's creativity, follower's conservation a value moderated that relationship, and intrinsic motivation mediated to contribution of the interaction of transformational leadership and conservation and partially mediated the contribution of transformational leadership to creativity. Also another survey might be pointed out: survey of Gupta & Singh (2015). Authors collected data from 482 scientists in Indian R&D laboratories and tested hypothesized relationship between leadership and creative performance behavior. Study found evidence for both direct and indirect relationship between searched variables. In addition, justice perceptions partially mediate the relationship between leadership and creative performance.

Additionally, Navickaite, Daciulyte & Urbanovic (2015) performed a survey on the sample of 379 Lithuanian teachers and confirmed the necessity of transformational leadership at schools. The teachers believe that school principals act as transformational leaders: they create conditions to experiment, try new innovations, encourage members to attain school success, empower different school teams to act, and consult the school community before. However, most of the principals do not create favorable environment for distributed leadership.

In our opinion, all mentioned above results (excepting the low frequency of leadership distribution) can be considered as very interesting for universities too.

### 4. Conclusion

Previous theoretical and empirical discussion indicates that it is possible to confirm the parallel between the creative leadership and the quality and even the strengthening motivation to creativity of the academic staff. The more creative, the more imaginative and friendlier will be the leadership and cultivation impact on staff – that is, the higher the motivation of leader will be towards the implementation of real, true and creative leadership, the greater the motivation and more valuable creativity of employees will be reached. In the context of known effects of *socio-motivational*



*reciprocity*, a mention may be made that such an escalation effect can also operate in reverse: the stronger the motivation and creativity of employees and the more joy they experience from their work and cooperation with their leader, the stronger will be the motivation of leader to continue in applying creative leadership and motivating his or her employees and other managers.

It is appropriate to apply modern, especially creative and inspirational measures for the real fulfillment of reciprocity between the creative leadership and the strengthening motivation at universities, e.g.:

- Maintaining a dignity and expressing esteem.
- Respecting a freedom of thought and scientific inquiry.
- Assistance in reducing administrative burdens and removing de-motivational elements.
- Working out and applying motivational strategies and effective motivation programs of the university.
- Creating and implementing a thorough system of motivational core and support processes.
- Sensitive intervening when the motivation is slackened and help in solving private problems.
- Education and training of leadership and motivational skills of the universities managers.
- Expert advice for managers and employees in the case of leadership conflicts and imperfections.
- Psychological guidance in the case of interpersonal conflict and burn-out syndrome.
- Performing creative, informal meetings for encourage the teamwork and academic synergies achievement, etc.

On the other hand, creative and motivating leadership (transformational or even transcendental) cannot do without employees – followers who are ready to handle such a high level of partnership. Employees must be very well equipped in intellectual, personality and psychological characteristics and competences, allowing for succeed in leadership-follow relationship successfully, and beneficially to both parties. Unfortunately, if they are not able to participate in such a sophisticated leading, they will not reach metes which are expected. On the contrary, the leader may even suffer the disappointment of his or her unfulfilled leadership influence. Also employees may be disappointed because on the one hand, failed to meet the expectations of their superiors, and on the other hand, did not reach such intellectual and psychic power that would result in/from their work and relational satisfaction, career prospects, further open cooperation, higher bonuses, higher image of the university, etc.

Stated differently, the failure in creative leadership can be very frustrating. However, it is also clear that success in the creative and motivating leadership can bring excellent results for the leader him/herself, his/her staff, the whole university, and even the development of the region or country.

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