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## Leadership Challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century: Professional Attitude and Critical Thinking Skills

**ABSTRACT:** The 21<sup>st</sup> century is marked by globalization have reshaped the world. This condition is a challenge for leaders to manage the organization in a professional manner. On the other hand, professionalism reap cynicism that the professional standing as defendants, because they are more concerned with status and wealth, even beguiling and instead of helping their clients. The purpose of the article is to provide an overview of professional leadership. Therefore, the author did a literature study in depth, especially related to critical thinking and professionalism on the leader. This article, by using the qualitative approach and theoretical review method, tries to examine pertaining the leadership challenges by identifying what is the professions and professional; professional leaders; and critical thinking. The result study shows that leadership becomes a vital necessity for a manager to ensure the achievement of organizational goals. Therefore, a leader needs to have a professional attitude and critical thinking skills. The attitude of the professional leader seems in managing the complicatedity of the problem. While critical thinking skills to be one of the must-have in an effort to take a decision on the complicatedity of the problem. Critical thinking is considered to response to the challenges of a leader in the act, a choice between interest groups, and the attitude of professionalism. Professional attitude and critical thinking skills are leadership challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> century to resolve the complicatedity of the problem.

**KEY WORD:** Leader; Professional Attitude; Critical Thinking; Challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century; Decision-Making.

**RESUME:** "Tantangan Kepemimpinan Abad ke-21: Sikap Profesional dan Keterampilan Berpikir Kritis". Abad ke-21 ditandai oleh globalisasi telah mengubah dunia. Kondisi ini merupakan tantangan bagi para pemimpin untuk mengelola organisasi secara profesional. Di sisi lain, profesionalisme menuai sinisme bahwa profesional berdiri sebagai terdakwa, karena mereka lebih peduli dengan status dan kekayaan, bahkan memperdaya dan bukannya membantu klien mereka. Tujuan artikel ini adalah untuk memberikan gambaran tentang kepemimpinan profesional. Oleh karena itu, penulis melakukan studi pustaka secara mendalam, terutama berkaitan dengan pemikiran kritis dan profesionalisme pada pemimpin. Artikel ini, dengan menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif dan metode kajian teoritis, mencoba untuk meneliti tentang tantangan kepemimpinan dengan mengidentifikasi apa itu profesi dan profesional; pemimpin profesional; dan berpikir kritis. Hasil studi menunjukkan bahwa kepemimpinan menjadi kebutuhan vital bagi seorang manajer untuk memastikan tercapainya tujuan organisasi. Oleh karena itu, seorang pemimpin perlu memiliki sikap profesional dan kemampuan berpikir kritis. Sikap pemimpin yang profesional nampak dalam mengelola kerumitan masalah. Sedangkan kemampuan berpikir kritis menjadi salah satu yang harus dimiliki dalam upaya mengambil keputusan atas kerumitan masalah. Berpikir kritis dianggap sebagai tanggapan terhadap tantangan seorang pemimpin dalam bertindak, pilihan antara kelompok kepentingan, dan sikap profesionalisme. Sikap profesional dan keterampilan berpikir kritis adalah tantangan kepemimpinan abad ke-21 untuk menyelesaikan kerumitan masalah.

**KATA KUNCI:** Pemimpin; Sikap Profesional; Berpikir Kritis; Tantangan Abad ke-21; Pengambilan Keputusan.

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## INTRODUCTION

The 21<sup>st</sup> century is marked by globalization have reshaped the world. This condition is a challenge for leaders to manage the organization in a professional manner. On the other hand, professionalism reap cynicism, as expressed by Dadang Supardan (2013) and Hollis Lowery-Moore, Robin M. Latimer & Vanessa M. Villate (2016), that the professional standing as defendants, because they are more concerned with status and wealth, even beguiling and instead of helping their clients (Supardan, 2013:1; and Lowery-Moore, Latimer & Villate, 2016). The leader is regarded as a position to realize the interests of the group, so that any commitment to a size of professionalism because these two things are closely related. As disclosed by Alpheus Thomas Mason (1946) and Daryl Koehn (2001) that profession as an occupation for roommates. The necessary preliminary training is intellectual in character, involving knowledge, and to some extent learning, as distinguished from mere skill, the which is pursued largely for others, and not merely for one's own self, and in the which the financial return is not the accepted measure of success (Mason, 1946; and Koehn, 2001).

Alpheus Thomas Mason (1946) also emphasized the close relationship between professionalism and commitment to serve others well (Mason, 1946). The leader is a managing profession. French sociologist, Emile Durkheim (1925 and 1937), as cited also by Tomas Englund (2003) and James R. Lincoln & Didier Guillot (2004), argued that the profession will represent a balance which can maintain and develop democracy. Emile Durkheim also suggests that professions should constitute a link between the central authority/state power and the development of civic morals by individuals/citizens (Durkheim, 1925 and 1937; Englund, 2003:77; and Lincoln & Guillot, 2004).

Professional term is sometimes applied anywhere on anyone who shows style, skill, or even cunning high. The cynicism views in professional predicate is expressed by

Simon Smith (2000), as cited also by Ivor F. Goodson & Andy Hargreaves eds. (2003), that every profession is a conspiracy against the people (Smith, 2000; and Goodson & Hargreaves, 2003:7). Truly, the profession is a public recognition to enhance one's life, which in turn, has been thought to require *scientia*, the term used by Daryl Koehn (2001), namely "*passion or perfection resulting from the union of something intelligible and intellectual power*" (Koehn, 2001).

Edward W. Said (1998) said that intellectual is defined as an individual endowed with talent present, express, and articulate messages, views, attitudes, and philosophy (Said, 1998:xxv). While Antonio Gramsci (1971) categorizes professionals into the organic intellectual. But the fact is not all intellectuals devoted themselves as agents of change. Even some of the intellectuals who are only concerned with the individual or organization (which in this context is a political party) and berkorporasi with power (*cf* Gramsci, 1971; and Monasta, 2000).

In fact, a true leader, also an intellectual, has a much-needed role in the life of a country so large and their contribution to growth changes. In this context, Antonio Gramsci (1971) was also deeply influenced by the ideas of Vladimir I. Lenin (1965). For Vladimir I. Lenin (1965), the intellectual has a central role over what he describes as the party's front line or vanguard party (Lenin, 1965). This means that the leader became a teacher (be a good example) is requested to behave professionally, regardless of party interests as well as political interests (*cf* Lenin, 1965; Gramsci, 1971; Mandel, 1983; and Monasta, 2000).

Although empirically, it is not easy, because it de facto, a group is required as a container and group aspirations led him/her to become a leader. The group as a means for someone to actualize their ideas. Thus, individuals will join the group when their interests are threatened. Organizations that have these interests will seek to influence the policies of various parties. However, the interest in question should be in the common interest, including moral

values make it happen (Gilman, 2005; and Downe, Cowell & Morgan, 2016).

To be a leader is able to separate the interests of the organization with the attitude he/she should take, a leader must have the ability to think critically. In this context, Rene Descartes (1984), a French philosopher, as cited also by Bertrand Russell (2007), gives an expression about "*cogito ergo sum*", which means: "I think, therefore I exist" (Descartes, 1984; and Russel, 2007). Bertrand Russell (2007), then, explains as following here:

After laying a solid foundation, Descartes began to erect a building science, the "I" that proved there was inferred from the fact that I think, therefore I am when I think, and just at that moment. If I stop to think, there is no evidence of existence. I was thinking something, a substance whose whole essence or nature and form of the mind. Therefore, the soul from the body entirely and it is easier to know than the body, so it seems no body (Russell, 2007:740-741).

Studies conducted by Michael A. Hoyt & Clara L. Kennedy (2008) resulted in the construction of meaning of leadership from the participants, they want leaders who more cooperative, such as listening to the opinions of other people, being respectful (Hoyt & Kennedy, 2008). Listening and responding to the actions of the subordinate's opinion requires the ability to think, then leader of reasonable use his mind bestowed by God, to contribute to the advancement of human life. Thinking is a form of existence of its existence. Leader in making decisions not just on the basis of political interests of the party, but he must think critically, namely think more deeply about the issues and logical reasoning. Critical thinking, as the basis of change, is embody professionalism (*cf* Hoyt & Kennedy, 2008; and Kolzow, 2014).

Professional leadership, until today, is still a real issue, because people still have hope a good performance from the leader. Leaders must, according to Oren Harari (2003), "*consciously work to stay in touch with the best ideas of the people they lead*" (Harari, 2003:1); so, according to Brian D. Kush

(2009), it needs to choose the right people in its mission, because "*mission is about defining your purpose*" (Kush, 2009:9).

This article, by using the qualitative approach and theoretical review method (Hart, 1998; Camp, 2001; Maxwell, 2004; and Munhall & Chenail, 2008), tries to examine pertaining the Leadership Challenges by identifying what is the professions and professional; professional leaders; and critical thinking.

## FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

### *About the Professions and Professional.*

The term of "profession", originally, meant a limited number of jobs are the jobs that exist only in the pre-industrial era in Europe, which make income people, able to live without being dependent on trade or manual work (Fryers, 2006; and Supardan, 2015:542). Law, medicine, and religion are the three classical professions, but officials of the army and navy, then, be put into the profession. The process of industrialization is associated with major changes in the structure of this old profession, and with the growth of new jobs rapidly, many of these jobs then get professional status. Changes in the structure of the work is reflected in the effort to define the traits or characteristics of a modern profession. The approach is sometimes referred to as a feature or register and check list (Dezalay & Sugarman, 1995; and Jacob, 1999).

Profession can be meaningful as a confidence (to process = to trust) or conviction (to belief in) on a truth or credibility of a person. Profession as a work that claims to technical competencies, allowing ethical professional behavior, confirms the exclusive monopoly of knowledge, standards, and accompanied by a big responsibility. In the view of the French sociologist, Emile Durkheim (1925 and 1937), as cited also by Tomas Englund (2003), suggested that professions should constitute a link between the central authority or state power and the development of civic morals by individuals or citizens (Durkheim, 1925 and 1937; and Englund, 2003:77). In the view of Emile

Durkheim (1925 and 1937) and others, the profession will represent a balance which can maintain and develop democracy (cf Durkheim, 1925 and 1937; Dezalay & Sugarman, 1995; and Jacob, 1999).

Sunaryo Kartadinata & Nyoman Dantes (1997), by quoting the opinion of E.H. Schein & D.W. Kommers (1972) and also cited by Arif Rohman (2009), define the profession a little differently. According to them, the professions are a set of occupation that have developed a very special set of norms deriving from their special role in society. A set of skills developed specifically intended as a specific set of skills, not everyone does, it requires precision and perseverance, as well as demanding expertise and high responsibility (Schein & Kommers, 1972; Kartadinata & Dantes, 1997; and Rohman, 2009:159).

H. McBer (2000) and Maria Liakopoulou (2011) identified professional characteristics into five groups, namely: (1) *Professionalism*: commitment, confidence, trustworthiness, and respect; (2) *Thinking*: analytic and conceptual thinking; (3) *Expectations*: high disposal of achievement of objectives, for permanent disposal comprehension of reality, e.g. the students, the order, and undertaking of initiatives; (4) *Leadership*: flexibility, accountability, and passion for learning; and (5) *Relations with Other*: fertile interaction with involved in the educational process, skills of the common work, and comprehension (McBer, 2000; and Liakopoulou, 2011:67).

Many professionals argue that they want to use their skills to help many people. There are two categories of providing professional services, i.e. black box and knowledge based (Dawson, 2005:26). Black box, in the form of professional services, provides such services without seeing the process. Clients only focus on the results. While knowledge based, namely professional services based on knowledge. Thus, clients can improve. Professionals, sometimes, think that his/her clients want him/her to be smart and he/she did. But this is not enough, a professional should be willing to engage with clients (cf McGuire,

2003; Dawson, 2005; and Zhang, 2009).

**About the Professional Leaders.** Leaders are recognized by and trying to influence his/her followers to realize his/her vision. Leaders are defined as guiding and directing on a course and as serving as a channel (Nahavandi, 2008:10). Leadership is based on three things: leadership is about initiation; leadership involves people (followers) providing leadership; and direction to resources, behaviors, and energies towards the achievement of goals (Baah, 2015:100).

Based on these two definitions, the leader not only provide guidance but also serves, he/she played an active role in the group. Leaders use their influence to lead others by a particular action or towards achieving a specific goal, so that a leader should respect to the qualities, competencies, and behaviors that the make them great (cf Northouse, 2007; Hoyt & Kennedy, 2008:204; and Thrash, 2012).

While Syaiful Sagala (2009) and David R. Kolzow (2014) said that leadership is the ability to influence the behavior of superiors and subordinates in the organization of group behavior (Sagala, 2009; and Kolzow, 2014). This opinion stressed that a leader has a personality, capability and capacity to lead, and no interaction. So, in this leadership process, there is someone who influences the activity of the so-called leaders, no person or group of people who are affected in certain situations (Tittmore, 2003; and Kolzow, 2014).

Although the criteria for determining who qualifies as a professional is highly diverse but, according to Daryl Koehn (2001) and Dadang Supardan (2015), there are five characteristics of the so-called professionals, namely: (1) licensed by the state to perform a particular action; (2) a member organization of actors who both have voting rights promulgate standards and/or ideals of behavior and discipline each other for violating the standards; (3) have the knowledge or skills "esoteric", which is only known and understood by certain people which are not owned by members of other communities; (4) has

autonomy in carrying out their work, and the work was not greatly understood by the wider society; and (5) to the public in public to pledge to provide assistance to those in need, and consequently have a responsibility and a special task (Koehn, 2001; and Supardan, 2015).

To be able to move these sub-ordinates, a leader must have the knowledge and professional proficiency. There are five professional qualifications must a leader have in the 21<sup>st</sup> century is: visionary, inspirational, self-sacrifice, integrity, decisive, and performance oriented (Muenich & William, 2013). In addition, a leader must have a value in itself, which is where these values may be used by others to describe myself as a leader. Those values held by a leader, present through thoughts and actions (Tittlemore, 2003; and Kolzow, 2014).

Brian D. Kush (2009) provides that there is some values in a leader, like: honesty, creativity, audacity, loyalty, professionalism, appreciation, relationships, listening, courage, promptness, responsiveness, simplicity, and enthusiasm (Kush, 2009:9). Those values may not necessarily wholly owned, this is all just not practical. However, a leader can be trained and empower those values that can be internalized in him/her, because of good leadership has morally good and effective (Levine & Boaks, 2013).

Moreover, in the face of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, a leader must face a variety of complicated problems. In this context, Tora K. Bikson *et al.* (2003) provide a number of skills that should be possessed by a leader, namely: (1) Substantive depth, i.e. professional or technical knowledge; (2) Managerial ability, with an emphasis on teamwork and interpersonal skills; and (3) Strategic international understanding (Bikson *et al.*, 2003).

Pertaining the cross-cultural experience, without substantive depth, leaders cannot make informed decisions about the risks and opportunities. Managerial skills, necessary not only to work with different partners but, in an organization, that is a lot of decisions. Strategic international

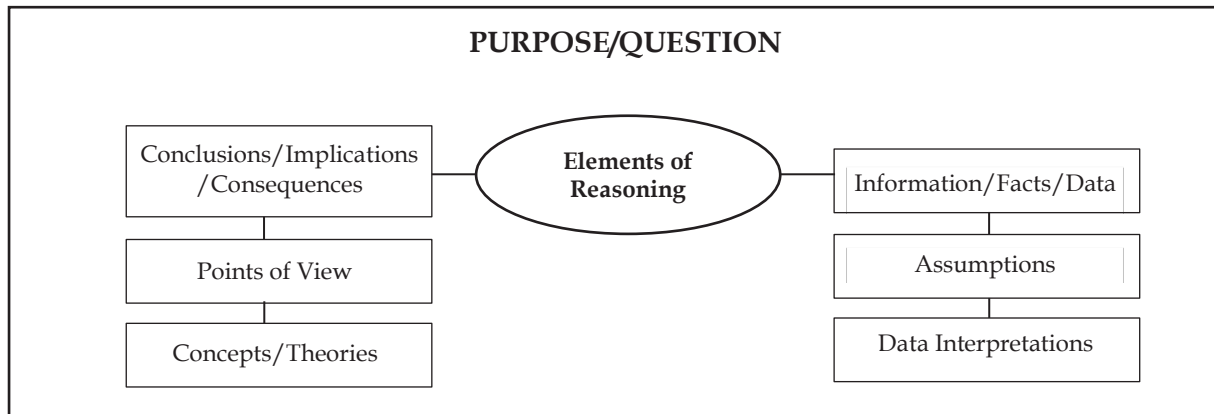
understanding is important for leaders to have a strategic vision of where the organization is going and put it in a global context. Cross-cultural experience acquired not only through academic course, but require some effort to learn about other cultural elements (*cf* Bikson *et al.*, 2003:12; and Prewitt, Weil & McClure, 2011).

Professional leaders contains a deeper meaning that he/she is willing to lead and work to take the initiative, with intelligence and inspire others. Professional leader should be able to face various challenges, such as those disclosed by Ronald A. Heifetz & Donald L. Laurie (1997) and Simon Smith (2000) that a leader, above or below, with or without authority, has to engage people in confronting the challenge, adjusting reviews their values (Heifetz & Laurie, 1997; and Smith, 2000:20).

Responding to this, the leader must have the characteristics, namely: (1) dealing with the organization by destination; (2) take greater risks and for a longer time, because he/she decided his/her own alternatives to solving the problem and its supervision; (3) can make strategic decisions; (4) can build an integrated theory with experience; (5) can communicate information clearly and quickly; (6) can view the organization as a whole and integrate functions, and (7) can connect their work with the organization and the environment as well as discover things that are mean (Drucker, 1993; Sagala, 2009; and Notar, Uline & Eady, 2008).

In addition to the above, the new competencies required for a leader, and includes: (1) *Knowledge*: understanding and recalling or facts, information, and concepts necessary for successful performance; (2) *Skills*: behaviors, including higher-order cognitive or interpersonal process, involved in the effective execution or management or specific tasks; and (3) *Attitudes*: socio-emotional or affective feelings and dispositions, including level of motivations to carry out tasks as well as orientations to coworkers and team processes (Bikson *et al.*, 2003:26).

Syaiful Sagala (2009) formulated a leadership that embraces the professional



**Figure 1:**  
Thinking Process  
(Source: Matt Baker & Rick Rudd, 2001:175)

paradigm, which must meet: the correct process; the right structure; the right; the correct information; the correct decision; and the remuneration awards are right (Sagala, 2009). However, the most important figure is the professional leader of a high work ethic, though in fact there is no good leadership for all situations, meaning that every leader has the advantages of each. With a high work ethic, then, the leader will have a strong influence to establish themselves and the organization (Gilman, 2005; and Sagala, 2009).

If an organization is defined as a state, then, a leader must have the character of a statesman. In this context, Fauziah Rasad (2009) classifies the character of a statesman, namely: moral; wise; assertive; have integrity; humble; visionary; consistent; hard worker; fair; democratic; upholding human rights; have the capability; strategic thinking and systemic; promote the interests and/or the general welfare; and followed and respected by the national and international communities (Rasad, 2009).

**About the Critical Thinking.** The concept of critical thinking first appeared in the nursing literature in the 1980s. Now, critical thinking has become a very popular term. Indeed, people are already thinking about critical thinking and has examined how to teach for nearly a hundred years (Ortiz, 2007; and Lai, 2011).

Thinking is a process that produces

knowledge. Thinking becomes an important issue in view of the complicatedity of the social problems that exist. In thinking, reasoning activity occurs that is the thinking process to draw conclusions (Petress, 2004; Ortiz, 2007; and Lai, 2011). The thought process can be described in figure 1.

Based on the figure 1, there are elements of reasoning which consists of seven components that will guide the process of reasoning. These components include the objectives thoughts or questions, information, and/or facts about the questions; assumptions are made about the question; interpretation of facts and data collected; theories and concepts related to the question; the viewpoint of thinkers; and finally an assessment of the conclusions drawn with an emphasis on the implications and consequences of the decisions reached as a result of the thinking process (Baker & Rudd, 2001; Cederblom & Paulsen, 2006; and Mulnix, 2010).

John Dewey (1981), a philosopher, psychologist, and educator of USA (United States of America), is widely regarded as the “father” of modern critical thinking. John Dewey (1981), as cited also by Thelma Riddell (2007), define critical thinking as following here:

[...] active, persistent, and careful consideration of any belief or supposed form of knowledge in the light of the grounds that support it and the further conclusions to the which it tends

[...] it includes a conscious and voluntary effort to establish belief upon a firm basis of evidence and rationality (Dewey, 1981; and Riddell, 2007:122).

John Dewey (1981) would like to explain that we have to take a pause and think in making decisions. This pause is necessary for the reasoning. In the context of professional leadership, critical thinking required of a leader that he wants to think deeply about the problems with logical reasoning. Thus, critical thinking can be defined as an activity in analyzing ideas or ideas more specifically, sharp, assess, and develop towards a more perfect (*cf* Dewey, 1981; and Pring, 2007).

Critical thinking is basically reflective thinking to decide. One well-known contributor to the development of critical thinking tradition is Robert H. Ennis (1995)'s definition, which has been circulated widely in the areas of critical thinking, as reasonable and reflective thinking that is focused on deciding what to believe or do (Ennis, 1995:360). So, according to Robert H. Ennis (1995), critical thinking is thinking that is reasonable and reflective that can be interpreted by our reorganized into action higher, think actively and carefully, so that we can focus and make decisions about what to believe or do (Ennis, 1995).

Thus, critical thinking is not only to the process of thinking, but came to the decision-making. In critical thinking, E. Glaser (1941) and A. Fisher (2008) registered, there are 12 critical thinking skills, as follows: (1) recognize the problem; (2) finding ways that can be used to address these problems; (3) collecting and collating the information required; (4) identifying the assumptions and values that are not expressed; (5) understand and use precise language, clear, and distinctive; (6) analyzing the data; (7) assess the facts and evaluate the claims; (8) recognize their logical relation between the problems; (9) to draw conclusions and commonalities required; (10) examine the commonalities and the conclusions that a person take; (11) reconstruct patterns of a person's belief is

based on a broader experience; and (12) to make an accurate assessment of things and certain qualities in everyday life (Glaser, 1941; and Fisher, 2008:7).

Critical thinking involves the act of asking for the idea that we face. The activities of asking this, there is a dynamic process of reasoning, the process of filing, and searching questions about the statements and conclusions. A professional leaders are required to have the ability to think critically. This ability is also often paired with problem-solving skills and reasoning abilities. Critical thinking skills is regarded as a leader, because he/she was the organizer country (Fisher, 2008; and Purvis, 2009).

In addition, critical thinking is necessary for a leader, based on the premise that every leader will be faced with the selection and decision-making in dealing with matters of life; and basically every human being is born with the ability to make rational decisions. With a critical attitude possessed leaders, they expected their intellectual functioning, because his/her life every man is an intellectual (Gramsci, 1971; and Said, 1998). The decisions made by the leaders of the implications of critical thinking, which these skills should be trained, developed, and practiced (Lai, 2011; and Murawski, 2014).

In making decisions, made through several stages, that is studying the problems, formulate problems clearly, make a list of objectives based on the needs, determine the necessary means, and finally select the objectives to be achieved under consideration (Sumantri, 2003). Decision making is a skill that must be possessed by a leader in determining the choice based on the alternatives developed (Sumantri, 2003; Antonakis, 2009; and Selart, 2010).

Leaders, should really wise decision-making in administrative tasks, can determine who really is a priority and be responsible if goals are not achieved. Rational decision making is the main task of the leader. Thus, decision-making based on evidence that has been collected and evaluated objectively (Damanik & Hill, 2013). For that, a leader needs rational

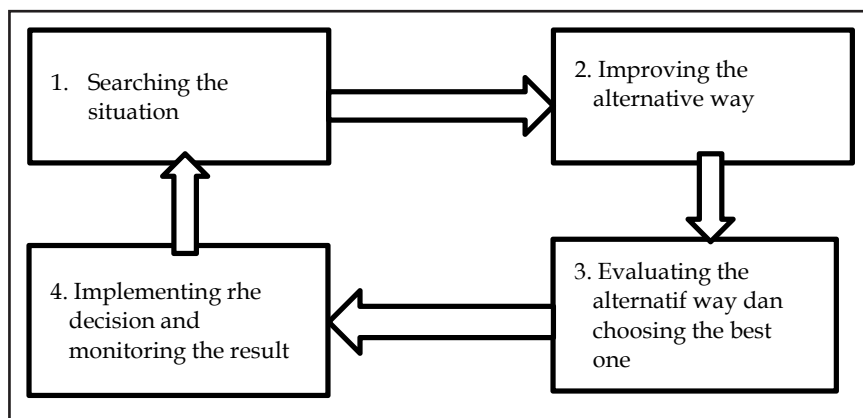
consideration as asserted by R.D. Mann (1959) and Syaiful Sagala (2009), which includes: (1) the purpose of the organization; (2) the existing resources; (3) detailed information about the function of the working system; (4) allocating resources based on the funding priorities; and (5) must understand the management of funds (Mann, 1959; and Sagala, 2009).

Rational considerations in decision-making is done by a leader influenced by the strong belief held. This strong belief can use managerial approach. This rational decision-making process involves four stages as shown in figure 2.

The first stage in the decision-making is the observation of the situation. At the stage, the leader defines the problem, diagnose the problem, and set goals. Furthermore, in the second stage, leaders develop alternatives. The stage is quite simple for programmatic decisions, but complicated enough for a non-programmatic decisions. Thus, a leader can count on brainstorming of subordinates. The third stage, the leader develops several alternatives and evaluate each alternative. The last step is to implement decisions and monitor the results. Once the best alternative is selected, the leader made a plan to deal with the requirements and problems that may be encountered in the effort to make it happen (Stoner *et al.*, 1996; Antonakis, 2009; and Cummings & Worley, 2009).

## CONCLUSION

Based on conceptual studies above, the thinking is essential in connection with the critical thinking and professionalism on the leader. A leader must be professional, the main interest of the nation should be more than the political interests of the party. Especially in the face of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, a



**Figure 2:**  
Rational Decision-Making Process  
(Source: James A.F. Stoner *et al.*, 1996)

leader will face many complicated problems that he/she had sued to have the ability to think critically, so that it can deliver the community and the nation towards progress.

Critical thinking itself is defined as an activity in depth with logical thinking and reasoning in solving various problems. Leaders must create a social construct that produces the power of the mind. With critical thinking, a leader will be able to make decisions quickly and accurately, so that he/she was able to become professional leaders, namely lead and work.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>**Statement:** Herewith, I affirm that this article is my original work and not a product of plagiarism, and that the article has not been submitted, reviewed, or published in another scholarly journal. Upon acceptance for publication, I will not withdraw my article from the *SOSIOHUMANIKA* journal.

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### **A Leader's Framework for Decision Making**

(Source: <https://hbr.org>, 2/5/2018)

Based on conceptual studies above, the thinking is essential in connection with the critical thinking and professionalism on the leader. A leader must be professional, the main interest of the nation should be more than the political interests of the party. Especially in the face of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, a leader will face many complicated problems that he/she had sued to have the ability to think critically, so that it can deliver the community and the nation towards progress.