Leadership Development Failure: Responsibility of Top Management

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Abstract

Leadership crisis is a major issue among countries and organizations; few real leaders do exist while majority are cliché and followers. This article investigates on leadership failure and asks one main question: why leadership development programs have failed in developing leaders. To answer the question, a combination of descriptive and analytical approach has adopted, using secondary data, and supported by author experience. The article concludes that leadership failure is due to current executive branch because top management determines what kind of leaders the organization want. Top management is copying not creating leaders; they own the decision over developing programs; tools, process, perspective, types and characters of leaders. Top management wants potential leaders to follow instead of thinking out of the box and developing their own style. It easy to manipulate people and push them to follow using the power of authority: reward- punishment, and money manipulation, however, this does not mean exercising real leadership. Developing leadership requires freedom of thinking, real implementation of good governance principles, accepts differentiation, and value human diversity. In addition, the article has clarified the definition of leadership. Leaders are those who enjoy and able to use their mind traits- intercultural and personality characters to persuade others.

1. Introduction

The world suffers from leadership crisis [1, 2], about 86% of respondents in a survey conducted by World Economic Forum believe that the world faces global leadership crisis [2]. Leadership crisis appears when so called leaders cannot solve problems or fail in handling people, organization, and countries issues [3]. Crisis leads to leadership failure; its range from conflicts among organizations, corruptions, challenges in national politics, economic problems, to international conflicts [4]. Leadership development programs have become the warmest topic in business. Organizations see development programs as essential for success. With huge demands, Leadership programs have become a big business. Business that is managed by business schools or/ and consulting companies [5]. Development programs are important to overcome leadership crisis and lack of leadership. However, these programs may not successful due to systemic problem inside the public political system or company current system. Programs are manipulated and controlled by the executive branches i.e. the government and the top management [6, 5]. Among all of these problems, few effective leaders can be seen [7].

Role of Leaders among organizations and countries are complicated due to its links to people life aspects and theories. Some see leaders role is to motivate and stimulate people minds. Some argue that they have to persuade, and other might see their roles in shaping people mind and

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behavior in which equal to makes coherent – similar copies of people. Leadership is tested in time of crisis, when it is most needed [7].

The overall article objective is to illustrate the dangers of continue dealing with leadership as a mechanism of coping people as the top management wants, turning potential leaders to follower. The important of this article is to put leadership programs on its right tracks for their role in on going development and rising quality of people live, solving problems, reducing challenges. The paper aims to explain the role of top management in leadership failure. The main question why do leadership development programs failed in developing leaders. To do so, its important to stop on the definition of leadership, needs of leadership among several kinds of organization, traits of leaders, how developing leaders with attention to training - development programs. The assumption is that leadership crisis occurs because of the organization management in decision of formulated (mindset, understanding, approach, benfits) definition - roles – processes – leadership training programs, and plans. This research investigates on leadership crisis that exists because of top management attitude in copying leaders; seeking to create cliché instead of real leaders.

Follows the introduction, the article has five sections: it illustrates the methodology and provides literature review, presents more data on related topics and programs, followed by findings and analysis, discusses and present results, and last section draw the conclusion.

2. Research Methodology

In terms of methodology, the research uses both descriptive and analytical approaches; describing and analyzing of qualitative data that is available from secondary resources i.e. books, research articles, media reports, and some info on leadership programs, all supported by author experience. Analyzing available data over many related topics: leadership development needs, program measurement, programs ownership with emphasis to decision-making and top management. The main limitation of this research is absence of human participants, and dependency on secondary data.

3. Leadership, a Complex Topic

Leadership is a complex topic, understanding it depends on the way and angle scholars look over it. The concept of leadership is related directly to decision-making and therefore people- groups interests. Leadership has direct relation over organizations performance [8], (thier failure or success [9], while failure reflects lack of leadership. Lack of leadership means that skills and values are missing, needs to

be developed. Shortage in leaders means organizations have few and needs to create more. While leadership crises or crisis in leadership means that decision-makers are not able to solve problems and also enable to develop future leaders. Leadership crisis is a major issue among many countries including the Middle East [1].

3.1. Leadership Crisis

Several reasons are behind leadership crisis. The first reason is the political system that dominated by one political party. This system seeks stability by promoting self-interest, self-discipline, and fighting self-thinkers potential leaders [10]. Stability in political system aims to protect the benefits and interests of current decision-makers in which continue personal interest i.e. corruption. Dana, a Palestinian scholar explains the role of what called 'leaders' in the ongoing corruption. He argues that corruption is rooted in the political systems that formulated by what so called leadership [11]. Leadership crisis means inability or failure to achieve goals and mission. The term of leadership crisis first time used by "Trotskyists to describe the fundamental problem holding back the working class from political power in the epoch of imperialism." [24]. Leadership in the time of crisis refers "to the capability to lead under extreme pressure" [12]. It examines skills that leaders have at time of emergency [13]. In time of crisis, leaders should work on five guiding principles: prioritize people well-being, exercise appropriate responsibility, address needs of all stakeholders, explained fully honesty and ethical guidelines, be available and visible, and open communication with all impacted parties [14].

3.2. Leadership: Domination and Styles

The executive branch dominates legislative bodies - parliament, general assembly and governing body - board of directors among organizations. This domination refers to weak governing body, a domination of political party or one-person leadership model [15].

Leadership is crucial for setting and maintaining clear ground rules, building trust, facilitating dialogue, and exploring mutual gains. Leadership also is important for embracing, empowering, involving stakeholders and mobilizing them to move collaboration forward [16]. Several types of leadership styles and therefore type of leaders; the most appropriate leadership style depends on leaders functions, the followers and the situation. Leadership style defined as "the way a person uses power to lead other people." [27]. With about twelve styles mentioned in literature, leaders hold authority and decision-making [27].

A self-organizing leadership model has introduced to give leaders opportunity to decide their plans according to current situation and available data associated with the needs and

related relationships. Also, self-organizing model has used in enhancing social corporate responsibility when dealing with local communities [17]. Implementing this model gives current and potential leaders a space to exercise free-thinking.

3.3. Definition of Leadership

All definitions of leader does include the confidently to influence people and let them follow [28]. This definition misses the tools of how letting people follow. Motivation theories teach managers how to use several tools in leading and controlling people. Further to inspiration, best leaders must mediate, listen and consult others opinion before making a decision, team builder, can make difference, recover from damage, and turned crisis to potential opportunity [2, 12]. In addition, real leaders stimulate people intellectually, value diversity, acknowledge differentiation and creativity, and enable freedom creativity. Managing by example is the best way to influence others by leaders characteristic, this means leading others should depends on leaders characteristic but not their powers and authorities [18].

3.4. Governmental Leadership Development

Federal and local governments across the world have leadership development programs. These programs are pipelines in providing future leaders to different managerial levels; usually 3-4 programs to match managerial levels of that specific government. Programs have plans, curriculum and methods of delivery that includes: lectures, workshops, national and international visit, practical field proejcts, presentation, visiting, and mentor activities.

Leadership programs call for changes, develop and enhance organizational capability, and work to achieve strategic objectives, and promote innovation. Programs management set criteria and requirements. Some governments offer leadership development program for free, this is the case for all programs in the gulf countries; United Arab Emirates (UAE), Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Kuwait, and Oman. In some countries, USA, Australia and Canada, participants in some government programs should pay tuition fee to participate. Leadership programs run by private sector in the world are paid programs.

Applications have to be filed by individuals whom are interested; while nomination signature is required from direct managers and the responsible department. In Gulf countries, without official nomination, the application cannot be processed and it considered incomplete. Leadership programs have processes in addition to criteria and requirements for applicants. Assessments are done in several steps: tests, personal - psychological, languages, professional tests, and interview carried by the programs management [19, 20].

4. Findings - Development Program & Tops Management

Countries with weak legislative branch, or ruled by one political party provides an opportunity to top management to manipulate organizations. Executive branch plays the gatekeeper role; they manipulate and shape potential leaders beliefs [21]. Top management continues current approach to shape- copy leaders in the way ensuring potential leaders follow same pattern and keep same personal benefits. However, leaders should bring change to benefit organizations and society. Leadership programs teach participants how to fight resistance and those who does not like changes. Managers mostly use tools that depend on reward and punishment, an authorization power to stop resistance, as they own the decision-making. However, in practice persuading is a limited usage tool by top management

4.1. Leadership Development/Training Programs

Leadership development programs range from useless to useful. Researchers in general acknowledge the important of programs to develop leadership capabilities but they criticize mostly the programs [22, 5]. They argue that there is a mismatch between leaders needs and the development programs, goals, design, methods, and content.

Crisis or failure in leadership exists in all programs and covers government, women, youth, and political development programs. For example, leadership programs succeeded in increasing women participation in work and increased numbers of women in all management levels and organization boards. Despite this fact, leadership programs have failed in developing women leadership skills. In addition, increase numbers of media reports, organize many forums, networking activities, raising women self-image does not change reality of women real leadership [6].

This section presents the findings on why some leadership development programs have failed in developing leaders. Here are some reasons:

4.2. Mismatch Between Needs and Programs

Primary used method in programs does not bring or creates type of leaders that organizations and public need. This due to unsuitable used methods that mostly are classrooms, lecturing…etc. The needs are for: intuitive, dynamic,

collaborative, and grounded emotional intelligence. So, to make leadership development programs work, make it practical development programs, experiential; and influencing participants'. Interpreting what Rowland said, the call for experimentally program, or a 'living laboratory' of leadership development program means that programs are designed from the top management in which do reflect it needs but not the real need of public and organizations [22].

4.3. Not Valuing Diversity

Valuing diversity appears solely in documents, however, it should included in both laws and practices. values should be reflected in ways of people thinking, documents, plans, rules, implementation, in development programs, and changing the mentality of programs participants. Valuing diversity starts from acknowledging and dealing with differentiation in understand the needs of employees, dealing with them in fairness way, and including not excluding them from the development programs. Diversity should also be a serious matter in all leadership development programs including women leadership programs. Diversity does help in both ways, develop women and prepare men to take a role in developing women leadership [6]. To do so, there is a need of changing mentality; this change should come from the executive branch, the top management who have power over leadership programs.

4.4. Programs Ownership

The owner of leadership programs is the executive branch or top management in organizations. Because top management own leadership programs, they exercise their power over the design, approach, methodology, methods, setting real values, development process, and controlling [5]. Top management exercise their power instead of understand the needs of organization and stakeholders.

4.5. Programs as Product

Dealing with leadership development programs as a product means the focus is on the programs itself but not what these programs should brings. In other words, executives become too focused on the products rather than the problems that need to be solved Programs become products not a tool and therefore focusing on accomplishing the implementation not the outcome. Ready illustrate this issue that top management begins to view leadership development as code for products that are divorced from business issues and sold by consultants to line managers looking for quick answers and want to help managers at any cost [5]. Seeking answers is acceptable but managers should understand that development programs cannot brings immediate answers as the development process requires changing in people' mind, their perspectives, attitudes, and practices [23]. It's the issue for

top management first to change their perspective and implementation towards leadership development programs.

4.6. Measuring Programs

Organizations plan their activities and programs, set objectives, formulate key performance indicators (KPI) and metrics. These metrics that most organizations are using to assess the effectiveness of leadership development efforts lead them in a wrong away [5]. The philosophy that dominated many organizations cultures is that the initiatives cannot be measured has no value. It sounds reasonable assumption at the beginning but later will discover that these KPIs and metrics do not apply on leadership programs. Development program is not product; metrics have divorced from the purpose of these programs. Also, programs aim to make qualitative changes, so measuring outcome and impact needs time.

The above reasons explain why development programs failed in developing leaders; make it clear that the problem is in the exertive branch, top management hands. Top management has turned the pragmas to a product in away that lost it purpose. A product measured by how many applications submit, candidates enrolling, participants continued in programs, participated in activities, how many lectures-seminars have been conducted, a list of quantitative metrics which is inadequate to measure programs success.

The risk lies after graduating from weak leadership program, trainees will occupy core positions in organizations and move forward in pipeline of succession plans. Program' graduates will follow what their predecessor did. Thus, the result is failure in Leadership development programs [25].

5. Discussion and Results

This article argues that the executive branch, top management of organizations responsible of leadership failure in developing leaders. Leadership program instead of becoming a tool in progressing organizations, it becomes a tool in controlling people, narrow their vision and control their perspectives. Top management is the decision-maker, responsible in managing and solving problems. Because top management own the program, this led them to deal with programs as a product, and they focus on measuring product – when it starts and end, how many participants, workshops-quantitative measurement, look over the output, immediate objectives and ignore the purpose of leadership programs which are the outcomes and impact.

The need for the development is absolute, however, development programs does not mean narrowed it to training or list of classroom sessions. Leadership programs in some booklets looks like more instructions and tips [26]. In

addition, for some scholars, leadership become cliché' [23]; they are criticizing the huge focus and promotion on leadership programs, sounds that commercial reasons behinds the promotion dynamo. Leadership programs succeed in increasing women at work and all management levels but still they do not have real participants in decision-making process and low impact. In addition, women leadership event has increased, forums and workshop, enlarge women network. However, development does not rely on forum and sponsorship event. Raising women self-image does not change reality of real leadership [6].

Moreover, diversity is a serious matter in all leadership programs, in both at the programs enrolment and in leading others. Acknowledging and valuing diversity are important in the enrolment process. Women and men, married and single, coming from poor or rich family, high or low incomes, rural or urban based, agreed or disagreed with managers, … etc [6]. Furthermore, developing leaders needs freedom to think without limitation and out of the box. However, programs structure and philosophy does not encourage thinking especially in the government where the loyalty is measured by employees' agreement or hypocrisy with top management.

Good governance principles should be included in the process of developing and managing programs. However, in some government programs, departments' participation in decision-making ranges from nothing to limited. Program ownership might justify their position towards limited stakeholders participation by ensuring confidently and competition. Sound like false excuse aiming to exclude main stakeholders from any role in decision-making. When decision-making is limited within hands of few 1-3 people, two main things will happen: increasing both the possibility for programs failure and criticism from departments.

Within the discussion of good governance, transparency, disclosing informing to staff is essential for developing leaders. Some government preforms security check for program applicants. Security checks in implementation means how loyal are candidates to top official. This check used to exclude some applicants for leadership program although they are government employees. If these applicants are accused of any lawful action, they should suede in courts. In some countries like gulf countries, UAE and Qatar are included, programs management ask for official nomination to allow candidates participate in leadership programs. It can be seen that asking for line manager and the department nomination is reasonable due to work load and availability to replace staff members during the program especially if the program required full working days attendance. Moreover, development programs usually are free of charge. Participants in some countries receive many incentives but participants does not asked to reflect their interests by at least

writing a motivation letter to convince programs' management in enrolling at programs. The ease entry into leadership development programs shows lack of applicant motivation and later expected to be low commitment. The most important issue is that after participants graduation, they will occupy advanced positions among organizations in which they are unqualified to occupy. Here leadership programs become a disaster.

Leadership program aims to make changes for the sake of developing organizations and countries, solve problems and enhance people's wellbeing and happiness. However, top management drive programs to opposed directions on ground of loyalty and continue current stability. Leadership crisis starts from what kind of changes does people and organizations seek and who decide this changes i.e. decision-makers. Top management is the decision makers and they have full responsibility over programs; they copy 'leaders' according to their version and measurements. Thus, cycle of copying similar leaders will continue aiming for stabilizing current systems without real changes over organizations that main stakeholders are seeking.

Top management should promote and apply critique enviorment at all phases of program development and implementations. This will help in promote positive criticism in workplace. Good governance should implement and take place in all phases and programs management. Note the impact of controlling potential leaders and programs assures continuing current problems.

Finally, for the definition of leadership, leaders cannot rely over their official power. Among organizations, a wide used of reward-punishment tools in which represents the authority that managers' exercised. Leadership associated with respect and many additional personal traits such as honesty, transparency, encourage participation and engagement, promote cooperation, have a vision and able to share this vision, able to persuade, independent thinkers, open minded, have moral, able to bring change, and can define people - stakeholders rights and recognize their interests. Thus, this explanation goes with the definition of American novelist Wallace. Wallace defines the real leader is "help us overcome the limitations of our own individual laziness and selfishness and weakness and fear and get us to do better, harder things than we can get ourselves to do on our own." [23].

6. Conclusion

Top management, the executive branch is responsible for leadership development failure; they are the program owner and decision-maker over organizations and programs. Top management wants potential leaders to be follower not independent thinkers. However, leaders are those who can

persuade others, using their mental capabilities, intellectual skills, not because of their power or authority.

Reasons why development programs failed in developing leaders have been illustrated and discussed. These reasons are: freedom of thinking, valuing and exercising good governance, determine the program needs with main stakeholders. Few important results, organization should emphasis on the process of developing leaders not dealing with programs as a product, paying attention to the outcomes, long-term impact instead of focusing on output and short-term quantitative measurements. This paper has developed using secondary sources while there is a need for empirical researches over leadership development programs to have accrued findings for better scientific contribution.

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