Lead Competencies Matrix to Develop Potential Future Leaders of Malaysia

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Abstract: Leaders take calculated risks to reach a challenging goal. To become a leader, certain competencies are required. Selection of leaders is also very vital. The purpose of this study is to understand leadership roles, to determine selection process of choosing the right candidates for potential future leaders of an organization and to obtain competencies which will lead the candidates to get leadership quality. In this study, theoretical research has been conducted based on American Society for Training & Development (ASTD) model and secondary data has been used through existing research publications. A conceptual framework of Leadership selection process and lead competencies matrix model has been derived in Malaysian context. This study suggests that there are three steps in leadership selection process and ten lead competencies which are required to develop for a strategic leadership role to excel organizational performance. Human resource managers can use this selection process and model for developing future leaders. Primary data can be a potential enhancement of this research.

Key words: *Competencies, Model, Leaders, Leadership, Selection, Malaysia*

INTRODUCTION

Leaders do not born; they are being developed through social, cultural and organizational settings. Leadership can be defined as "a dynamic relationship based on mutual influence and common purpose between leaders and collaborators in which both are moved to higher levels of motivation and moral development as they affect real, intended change" [1]. Leadership also defined as "leaders inducing followers to act for certain goals that represent the values and the motivations — the wants and needs, the aspirations and expectations — of both leaders and followers" [2]. Competencies which are measured to develop leaders are leadership skills and behaviours for outstanding performance of an organization. By using a competency-based approach to leadership, organizations can better identify and develop their potential future leaders. There are numerous studies that demonstrate the changing roles of leadership in the twenty-first century. Still, human resource managers, business unit heads and top-level management are all concerned with developing the

competencies they need to become more effective leaders in today's competitive world.

In Malaysia, most of the leaders have competencies, but, how effective is that for the future of Malaysia? How it will comply with diversified next generation, technology, religion, culture and a rapidly changing socio-economic environment? What competencies will lead the leaders from front row and keeping the tempo down the line for next 20 years? Most of the organizations are struggling with internal bureaucracies. It becomes worse for some organizations when the values are written in the company books and published only to satisfy the employees. As a result, the employees always misinterpret most of the values when it comes into action. The consequence of this occurrence affects the organizational performance, and in the long run, impacts the leadership quality. Leaders need to deliver the vision in a clear way so the employees can understand and apply it in their everyday life. According to Conger and Benjamin, leaders should inspire organizational vision and values by building a share-understanding

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of what the organization is about and how it should operate [3].

There are many competencies models which can be applied to the Malaysian organizations. The challenge is to choose the right competency model. The good leaders with the clear vision will benefit an organization in the long run. A prime leadership skill would be to envision some desired future state of being and to inspire others to understand and share that vision [4]. The leader should articulate the values and take full responsibility towards achieving the vision. To ensure that, it is achievable, the leaders can make succession plan for managers or potential candidates. Generally, managers start their career at operational level in an organization. They develop their leadership competencies from leading operational activities and leadership trainings. But, when they go further in their organization, the leadership competencies needed to lead effectively and is different from the job experience and training they've gained at the operational level. The role of managers at the top level is more strategic. Inefficiency or wrong decision at top level can result total failure of the organization. In this paper, the lead competencies are studied from theoretical perspective and a new competencies matrix model has been recommended for the development of potential future leaders of Malaysia.

LITERATURE REVIEWS

Malaysia's leadership has changed significantly over the past fifteen years, moving along with radical changes in information and communication technology era. Many studies have been done that identifies the competencies in effective leadership from various perspectives [5][6][7] which are mostly based on American society and non-Islamic culture. Few have been done to accommodate in the context of Malaysian organizational culture and environment. Religiosity is one of the important aspects of Malaysia where Muslims are the majority. The challenge is selecting the right candidates for potential future leaders. So, the reformation needs to be clearly understood.

We often used to debate on the difference between Managers and Leaders. The roles and responsibilities of a Manager and a Leader are differentiated by many researchers. But, what Norzailan, Yusof and Othman have been said in their study on strategic leadership competencies is quite sceptical. They have distinctively categorized leadership as Strategic leadership which is different from normal form of leadership [8]. Their definition of normal form of leadership matches with Managers which is more concerned with direct subordinates or work groups. Norzailan, Yusof and

Othman elaborated Strategic leadership competencies which involve issues commonly addressed by a company's top management team [8]. Leadership is always a strategic role and cannot be distinctive by normal leaders and strategic leaders. Leaders have a bird's eye view of the company's internal and external capabilities and environment. They need to have a combination of personal disposition and personal competencies. Strategic leaders or simply any leaders need to build up 3 key competencies to be useful in their role, strategic thinking, control politics and transform organization [8]. Among these, strategic thinking consists of a model of 5 elements, systems perspective, intent focused, thinking in time, hypothesis-driven and intelligent opportunism [8]. Developing strategic thinking needs personal willingness, capability and wisdom [8]. A person's willingness to think strategically reflects his/her personal predisposition. Such a person is comfortable with his/her own judgment and does not wait for others to lead. These characteristics have been categorized as need for cognition (NFC) and need for leadership (NFL) [8]. Norzailan, Yusof and Othman proposed that a strategic leader has to be high on NFC but low on NFL. They also proposed that the selection of individuals for leadership must begin with selecting those candidates who more likely wants to be successful in a leadership position [8]. But, only personal willingness cannot be a selection criterion for leadership. It must be based on the capabilities or competencies they posses or have [9]. So, development of the competencies is required for the potential candidates who will be the future leader.

A leader is said to be good if she/he has a successor building up as a future leader. Human resource managers are responsible in identifying potential successors who have the ability and willingness to lead. There are four aspects [9] to be considered in identifying the potential future leaders, (1) giving priority to existing candidates who are in the pipeline, (2) making early identification, (3) identifying competencies and (4) declaring these potential future leaders. Current leaders are responsible to undertake three steps [9] in developing quality future leaders, (1) giving trust to potential leaders, (2) sharing of knowledge and (3) identifying suitable leadership development programs. Potential future leaders are prepared in such way as a replacement for the current leaders in due time. So, leadership succession plan is required to achieve the goal of any organization or a country. In order to do so, competencies need to be developed for future leaders. There are many competencies model which are followed by human resource managers, but the effectiveness of leadership through the competencies need to be structured and measured. This is a continuous development

program to ensure a continued excellence in organizational performance.

In order to develop better leaders in the future, it is important to know the qualities and competencies needed. Many models have been established for competencies among which, the American Society for Training and Development (ASTD) had done within the United States settings. The ASTD-leader-competency model is divided into four main sections, (1) personal leadership, (2) association management, (3) teamwork and commitment and (4) learning and performance (Figure 1). Salleh and Sulaiman applied ASTD model to Malaysian organizational settings and focus on personal leadership competencies where it covers vision, critical thinking, self-confidence and assertiveness and effective communication skills [10. It is important, also, to see how this competency model can be adopted and adapted to different settings of organizational structures in Malaysia. Hence, commonly-accepted leadership theories from the west, and how it is thought to affect other organizational behavioural factors, may not be directly transferable to the Malaysian context [11]. It is important to understand that the competency model can be used to determine a leadership style and quality. A competency model also has been used as an evaluation tool which differentiates virtues in leadership styles. In justifying what the attributes and qualities of the new style of leadership are, it is also important to know the organizational culture and work environment.

Figure 1: Leader Competency Model (ASTD, 2005)

In an open source and technology driven environment, the traditional model of competencies for effective leadership is not effective any more. The inter-relationship between leaders and subordinates is changing. Organizational hierarchies, management authorities are no more competent in the present situation. Leaders have to look beyond their views to influence their subordinates or followers. Silong, Mohamad, Hassan and Ismail proposed new roles and competencies for leadership in public sector of Malaysia. Based on their research [12] findings, a new model on roles and competencies for effective leadership in twenty-first century has been introduced. They have focused on three major behaviors – roles of engaging others, roles focusing on performance and roles focusing on ethics and values [12]. Leaders need to look more on roles that makes people more productive than just looking into their roles that they have been used to. Leaders also need to focus on ethical values, integrity, depend less on formal authority and influencing others more [12]. Collaborative leadership is the key term, based on transparency and accountability [12]. In Malaysia, there is a call for traditional leadership roles in the public sector to shift to more collaborative roles. Those roles are conceptualized in what is termed as collaborative or network leadership roles [13] or the connective leadership roles [14][15][16].

Leadership role is strategic. When top management of a company solves any problem, we call it strategic leadership. A leader has the ability to take challenge of the new environment, takes the proper decision to overcome the situation. Goldman et al. claims that at the strategic level, leaders have the ability to think about the external part and connect it with appropriate ideas [17]. Norzailan, Othman and Ishizaki explained two layers of Strategic leadership competency model. External layer displayed the mixture of previous experience and leadership characteristics which helps to predict the strategic role of leadership [18]. Inward layer demonstrated the strategic competencies of leaders such as Strategic thinking competencies, change management competencies, influence and persuasion competencies and talent development competencies [18]. Changing the habit and thinking the way of managers presented as developing strategies of leadership competencies also the viewpoint towards the firm's core system. It is said that learning experiences are more accomplished way to change the behaviour & mind of mangers and to create new competencies rather than organizing formal training courses [18]. It requires some principles to develop the strategic leadership qualities such as deliberate practice (to do new things, make mistakes, learns from mistakes and repeat the work), experience density (provides them

new challenges, tight deadlines and unique problem to see their management techniques), reflective learning (involving to rethink the same problem by using cause-effect model to find out the solutions) and mentoring (gaining the reflective learning under supervisor) [18].

Dewey conceptualized reflective thinking as involving suggestions, intellectualizing difficulties, using leading ideas to form hypothesis, exercising reasoning and testing of hypothesis [19]. What this entails is a systematic approach to learning about complex problems. There is a lot of awareness on the need for changing leadership roles in the public sector of Malaysia. These changes are pointed out during the discussion in a two-day national workshop on "Traditions of Effective Public Sector Leadership" conducted at Putrajaya, Malaysia on 13-14th December 2007 [13][20][21][22][23]. In the discussion, Tam emphasized that in a highly diverse society such as Malaysia, leadership using the conventional approaches, which is top-down and hierarchical in nature, are not very suitable. On the other hand, they require an "unconventional and a more collaborative approach which involves a major mindset change among key players in how they view and deal with these complex problems" [13]. The discussion indicated that public service in Malaysia require a shift in the practice of leadership from a more traditional, individual approach to a more innovative, collaborative approach. Summing up this sentiment of change, the Director-General of Public Service Department Malaysia said that "business is not as usual"; leaders in the public sector have to change to enhance excellence in public service delivery [22].

The concepts of leadership are applicable for every religion, culture, environment and community. The conventional Western competencies models discussed so far are mostly from conceptual research outcomes. It is formulated from author's own experience, knowledge, values and culture. These models are able to achieve the organizational goals and objectives. But, the main difference between these models and the Islamic model lies in their respective philosophies and values [24]. The Islamic model stands firmly on the divine principles of Al-Quran and Al-Hadith for all Musims Ummah. People get life as a blessing of The Almighty Allah (SWT). Life is a place of learning. As long as we stay in this world, we need to search for the true meaning of our life. Every soul has his/her own reasons to come in this world. We have to find out that reason to make our life a success. No power and wealth will accompany us to our next life. We will be judged upon our actions. Every single action is well-documented which will give proof. Islamic paradigm of leadership stresses the reciprocal enrichment of the leaders and the

followers [24]. Islam says that you, as a leader, pay attention to your followers' needs. In a hadith (no. 2942) reported in Sunan Abu Dawud by Abu Maryam al-Azdi, the Prophet (s) said:

"If Allah puts anyone in the position of authority over the Muslims' affairs and he secludes himself (from them), not fulfilling their needs, wants, and poverty, Allah will keep Himself away from him, not fulfilling his need, want, and poverty."

There are five practices of leadership which are defined [25] as model the way (MTW), inspire a shared vision, challenge the Process, enable others to act, encourage the Heart. But, the attitudes of leaders toward work and work environment is more crucial than to operating the five leadership practices. Though the leadership practices can vary based on cultural movement, the impacts mostly depend on the way of delivery of leader's behaviours. The transition from a managerial leadership role to a strategic leadership role is not always as easy. Across the globe, the nature of work and leadership roles in the private and public sector are changing dramatically. The Hay Group [26] identified different behaviours and competencies related to the new roles. "To be successful in these roles, leaders will need to adopt a new set of behaviours and competencies….. They will require very high influencing skills, political awareness and leadership styles which are both collaborative and engaging. These will be matched with the ability to articulate a cohesive long-term vision, a high drive for results and the skills to effectively hold disparate groups to account for delivery (whom they do not directly or even indirectly manage)" [26]. Leadership theories across cultures suggest that leadership practices are culturally bound [27]. Consequently, leaders need to embed the local culture that gear to the organization environment and make sure that employees can adjust their work climate. A good leader will fully utilize the external environment and drive the organizational performance. With the competency model, organizations need to reform its leadership style from transactional leadership towards becoming more transformational in their leadership. Thus, the challenges facing Malaysian leadership competency, especially in organizations and human resource development aspects, can only be properly addressed on the basis of a thorough understanding of the reforms needed [27].

Globally, organizations are facing trouble to upward their business growth due to the retirements of significant potential leaders. Question is, how to develop the potential leaders. It is more vital to invent the way of leadership development rather than to create leaders. To find out the answer

to this question, some authors used Delphi survey. Five key sections were used to reach the finishing line [28]. First, it followed some literature to formulate the question patterns for the first round of Delphi survey. Second, it provided details explanation regarding the merits of Delphi survey and how it best suited for the research. Third, it explored the issues that found from the Delphi survey. Fourth, a dialogue session about the understanding of leadership development in the twenty-first century has been created. Fifth, it summarized the recommended possible instructions for the second round of the Delphi survey. This Delphi survey finally touched the path of leadership development and said that to develop the skills & abilities of leaders it is obligatory to create opportunities within the organizations [28]. Skills include the problem-solving ability, capability of stakeholder engagement, tolerance of ambiguity, aptitude of contextual analysis and commitment to team development. All the mentioned skills are teaching based and leaders need to go through this aptitude by the learning process. But most important is to know the perfect time to teach them these qualities [28].

To examine the nine-point strategic leadership features of Malaysian Quality National Primary School Leaders (QNPSL) and to specify the inferences of these findings for Malaysian quality education in terms of the current educational management and leadership practices in their mission, a study has been conducted [29]. There were two main objectives to conduct the research. First, to examine the combinations of five organizational capabilities and four individual characteristics of the strategic leaders in the strategic leadership characteristics practice [30][31] within the Malaysian QNPSL (Malaysian Quality National Primary School Leaders) involved in the QSIP (The Quality School Improvement Program). The second objective was to define the strategic leadership characteristics for the QNPSL which represent the strategic leadership characteristics of the Malaysian QNPSL [29]. To conduct this study, total 600 senior management team members from 150 schools were selected to complete the survey. The survey questionnaire comprised of 35 items. Finally, the paper confirmed that the Malaysian QNPSL do not follow the three strategic leadership characteristics out of nine features [29]. Also it mentioned that the Malaysian QNPSL do not pose the wisdom characteristics, which was measured as core

elements of leadership. From Malaysia, UK is not far away. According to Charan et. al., leadership competencies can be developed through training and knowledge sharing during in-job service of organisations [32]. A study done by Gmelch found that only 4% out of the 2,200 education leaders had experience going through leadership preparation programme [33]. Research done on United Kingdom higher learning institutions revealed that 70% of the learning institutions did not have systematic leadership development programme [34]. In the study about appointment of leaders in ten universities in England and Wales, Howson found that most of these universities do not have any precise method of identifying potential leaders or providing leadership development programmes [35].

For any organization, the vital factor is to have potential leaders who can take the responsibility of the company during unstable situation. To achieve this, organizations need to keep updated the leaders regarding the company's overall mission, vision and goals to continue the future survival. Developing the model and measure of effective leadership skills development concerning the organizational efficiency and moderator of knowledge sharing is the main purpose of this study. Most crucial challenges for any organization are to arrange the leadership development programs for future leaders in an effective way. Also, keeping concern the limit of the development process to perform well in future as a leader. Though there is no confirming reference regarding the limit of improvement process of leadership skills. There is a model [36] of leadership skills development, which presented the affiliation between the organizational efficiency and the progress of leadership skills. This model demonstrates the three skills such as transformational, transactional and servant theory of leadership [36] which is used to develop the leadership skills.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

This study aims to obtain information on means of identifying potential future leaders, methods of developing quality future leaders through lead competencies and collaborative techniques. A selection process has been developed based on the literature reviews (Figure 2).

Actions	Measures				Responsibility
Identify potential future leaders	**1. Giving priority to existing candidates**	**2. Early identification**	**3. Find competencies** (i) Strategic thinking (ii) Mind set (iii) Islamic values	**4. Declare potential future leaders**	**Human Resource Managers**
Develop potential future leaders	**1. Deliberate practice** (Letting to do new things, making mistakes, learning from mistakes and repeating the work)	**2. Experience density** (Providing new challenges, tight deadlines and unique problem to see their management techniques)	**3. Reflective thinking** (Involving to rethink the same problem by using causal effect model to find out the solutions)	**4. Mentoring** (Gaining the reflective learning under supervisor)	
Collaboration	**1. Giving trust to potential future leaders**	**2. Sharing of knowledge**	**3. Transparency**	**4. Accountability**	**Current Leaders**

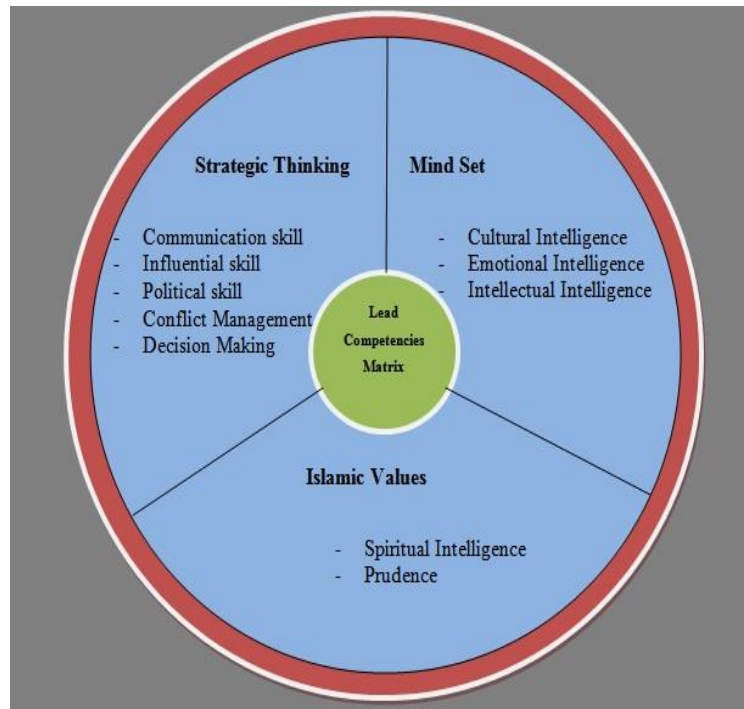**Figure 2: Leadership Selection Process**

Figure 3: Lead Competencies Matrix Model

(Figure 3) shows the lead competencies matrix which has been conceptualised from this study. These competencies, categorised in three key components, Strategic thinking, Mind set and Islamic values will lead to identify potential future leaders of Malaysia. Competencies are intangible items of human quality, but can be measured and developed according to their correct meanings. Cultural Intelligence is one of the best competencies for developing potential leaders. It is a new concept of competency which is under the microscopic lens of research table. Cultural intelligence is quite sensitive in nature, can best be understood in terms of cultural situations, dynamics and the ability to operate closely in a variety of social situations.

Emotional Intelligence means emotional feelings, sense of humour, competencies and own understandings. It is our ability to communicate at the emotional level, understand emotions and emotional situations, and be in tune with our own emotions. Intellectual Intelligence is the knowledge about facts and the concepts behind the facts. It is the ability to learn, understand and apply information to skills and logical reasoning. Spiritual Intelligence means internal belief, nature of reality, religiosity and spiritual relationship with others. Spiritual intelligence comes from deeper meaning of purpose, mixed with improvements in a wide range of important life skills and other competencies. Prudence is one of Aristotle's fundamental qualities.

In other words, it is "wisdom," but it comes from being able to see others' perspectives. Communication Skill is the soft skill of a leader. It is a relationship-oriented aspect of competencies. Influential Skill is about influencing others, so a great leader is a master of social influence, and able to wield power effectively and fairly. Political Skill relates to any sort of crisis management. A potential leader is a good political player, who knows how the game needs to be played. Conflict Management is a skill that involves helping others to avoid or resolve interpersonal conflicts. Decision Making is the ability of knowing when the time to step-in or step-out. It is one of the core competencies for leaders for making good decisions or leading a good decision making process.

CONCLUSION

Leadership promotes organizational vision, goals and shows the way to achieve them. It creates a positive work environment in an organization where all employees are motivated to do their best. As Malaysia entered into the knowledge-based economic era, the industries are continued to develop and the leadership style also need to be changed in due time. Potential future leaders are needed as the country needs higher-level cognitive skills focused on collaborative problem solving [37]. The global economy is being transformed into a knowledge-based economy, where leadership and technology assume to have a major role [38]. So, leadership can be affected by the spread of globalization. In order for an organization to excel, it needs its leaders to take on new styles and competencies of leadership that positively affect the type of quality shown by the leaders. Organizations have invested significant resources in the training and development of its leaders to enhance the competencies, quality, efficiency, effectiveness and productivity of organizations [39]. The competencies matrix developed in this study can be used by human resource managers for the selection of right candidates to become a successful leader. Related empirical data can be collected for future research.

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