

02/02/2016 - Global Expert Series "Developing Leadership Qualities"

Bismillahirrahmanirrahim

Assalamualaikum Warahmatullahi Wabarakatuh,
Good Morning and Salam 1Malaysia.

YBhg. Tan Sri Dr. Mohd Irwan Serigar bin Abdullah,
Secretary-General, Ministry of Finance;

YBhg Dato' Dr. Mohd Isa bin Hussain;
Deputy Secretary-General (Investment),
Ministry of Finance;

YBhg. Datuk Seri Hashmuddin bin Mohammad,
Deputy Secretary-General (Management),
Ministry of Finance;

YBhg. Dato' Siti Zauyah binti Md. Desa,
Deputy Secretary-General (Policy),
Ministry of Finance;

Senior Officials from the Royal Customs Department, Accountant-General's Department and
Valuation and Property Services Department;

Officers and Staff of the Ministry of Finance;

Ladies and Gentlemen.

OPENING REMARKS

1. First and foremost, allow me to record my sincere appreciation for the invitation extended to me for the Global Expert Series for 2016. It is indeed an honour for me to be given the privilege to speak this morning. I have not had any opportunity to address all of you before, but as they say, there is no better time like the present.

2. Before I go on, I would also like to congratulate the Ministry of Finance for coming up with this initiative as part of the Treasury Transformation Programme. Needless to say, the Global Expert Series is a wonderful platform for the sharing of ideas, and I am especially delighted to be able to do so this morning with officials from Treasury and related agencies.

THE MEANING OF LEADERSHIP

Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen,

3. Today, I will be speaking on the topic “Developing Leadership Qualities”. If you do a quick search online of the word “leadership”, you will find that it will provide 641 million results on Google. “Leadership qualities” will yield 572 million results, and the phrase “developing leadership qualities” comes up to about 50 million results. This goes to show that there is a plethora of articles, books and opinions on the topic of leadership and its attributes for success. But what is leadership?

4. The simplest definition of leadership is summed up as follows: “**the action of leading a group of people or an organisation**”. I believe that if you think back to your younger years, even before you started your working life, many if not all of you would have had opportunities where your leadership skills were harnessed.

5. For example, teachers would have identified those among us who had leadership potential to become prefects, class monitors or the like. If you were the first born in your family, most likely you would have naturally undertaken the leadership role when it comes to your siblings, or your parents would have steered you into that role. And as adults, we are not

only leaders at the work place, but also leaders in our families, and our communities. Some of these roles were entrusted upon us, where as some of us volunteered to be leaders.

6. My point in relating these examples is this: **we are all leaders, at different levels, in different environments**. And great leaders **can** and **always** makes a difference!

LEADERS ARE MADE, NOT BORN

7. Now, there is always that constant debate of whether a leader is born or whether a leader is made; the question of “either you have what it takes to be a leader, or you don’t”. I personally believe that a leader can be nurtured, that a person can transform himself or herself to become a better leader with specific developmental activities. For example, if we look at the training of individuals in the uniformed forces, we can see a stark improvement in leadership capabilities after undergoing mandatory training. For youths, this is also evident in programmes such as the National Service, as well as “Program Remaja Berwawasan” under the National Blue Ocean Strategy.

8. Bringing this closer to the work place, we as public officials can also improve our weaknesses and strengthen our leadership capabilities through developmental programmes. Concentrate on developing three to five strengths, but do not over-extend yourself. **Focus on getting from “good” to “great”**, because becoming an extraordinary leader is not impossible. You just have to know what areas to focus on and start from there. Also, be mindful that **the best leadership lessons may not come in a formal setting**.

EVOLVING PUBLIC SECTOR

Distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen,

9. As civil servants, we are motivated by the desire to serve the public, where we link our personal actions with the overall public interest. The desire to serve is one of the highest

human callings that we possess and as public servants, I know that this desire is amplified, where we sincerely want to make a positive difference for the country and for the *rakyat*.

10. There is no doubt that the **public sector is evolving**, whether we like it or not. To illustrate this, the 2015 UNDP Global Centre for Public Service Excellence publication “From Old Public Administration to the New Public Service: Implications for Public Sector Reform in Developing Countries” highlighted that:

(i) the role of Government has changed from “**rowing**” (implementation based on politically defined objectives) to “**steering**” (serving as a catalyst to unleash market forces), and now to “**servicing**” (negotiating and brokering interests among citizens);

(ii) when before, under the Old Public Administration, civil servants were **responsive to clients and constituents** and under the New Public Management responsive to **clients**, the New Public Service calls for civil servants to be **responsive to citizens**; and

(iii) in achieving policy objectives, we have moved from **administering programmes through Government agencies** in Old Public Administration to **creating mechanisms and incentives through private and non-profit agencies** under New Public Management, to **building coalitions of public, non-profit private agencies** under New Public Service.

ESSENTIAL LEADERSHIP QUALITIES FOR PUBLIC SERVANTS

11. This being said, I am of the opinion that the **leadership qualities of public servants also must change and evolve** to meet the present needs and demands of our citizens. For example, in driving transformation in any organisation, the role of the leader is to **drive the vision forward** and get **everyone on board and on the same page** to achieve the set goal, without over-reliance on consultants. It is not enough for the leader to change and improve work processes to increase efficiency, but there must be a **complete shift in mindset of its people** in tandem with those process changes. Leaders must motivate, promote a culture of creativity

and openness in the organisation while sustaining the momentum of these changes so that the people, the **soul of the organisation**, are also geared towards achieving the same goal.

12. Hence, I take this opportunity to highlight a few leadership qualities that I hope you can all strive to develop to become an extraordinary leader in the public service:

(i) Be a **leader with strong, personal character**, as **character is the essence of leadership**. Follow through on commitments, keep your word, be honest, make decisions with the good of the country and organisation in mind **without any personal agenda**, and be open, transparent and accountable;

(ii) **Inspire creative and innovative thinking** to adapt to changing circumstances. This will ensure that the organisation survives and thrives over time. Remember to also stimulate creativity and innovation not only during bad times, but also during good times;

(iii) **Continue to grow** and **enhance your competencies**, so you are a leader with substance and respected by those you work with. **Read, read and read** and expand your knowledge, observe what traits and characters leaders you admire have and strive to improve yourself everyday;

(iv) Be a **caring and compassionate leader** when dealing with your colleagues, subordinates and the *rakyat*. Particularly, put yourself in the the other person's shoes and look at things from their perspective. Undertake more "Search and Serve" initiatives for the *rakyat*, and do not forget to "Search and Serve" in your own organisation;

(v) **Have humility**, which can be the bridge to build positive and collaborative relationships with people from all walks of life, and every race and creed; and **learn from feedback**. Become the kind of leader that people would follow voluntarily, even if you had no title or position; and

(vi) Most importantly, be a leader who **listens**, who not only listens to good things, but also to honest opinions, ideas, criticisms and complaints. Be a receptive listener who will take what you have heard and turn them into action.

THE HALLMARK OF LEADERSHIP: DEVELOPING FUTURE LEADERS

Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen,

13. Apart from the qualities I have highlighted, I am a firm believer that as a successful leader, the hallmark of any leadership is in **developing future leaders** who can continue the plans that have been set, long after we are gone. Being a good leader means **not forgetting to develop your own people**. To this end, some general and common trends of countries' approaches in developing future leaders gathered by the Organisation of Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) can be considered:

(i) Define a competence profile for future leaders;

(ii) Identify and select potential leaders: Given the competence framework for future leaders, the next step is to identify and select potential future leaders, whether to select future leaders from outside or to nurture them within the public sector.

(iii) Encourage mentoring and training: Once potential leaders are identified and selected, we have to train them continuously. Specialised institutions for leadership development such as INTAN and RSOG can assist in providing leadership training.

(iv) Keep leadership development sustainable: develop a **comprehensive programme from the whole-of-government perspective** is essential for developing future leaders.

TRENDS IN THE FUTURE OF LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

14. It is also important that we take cognisance and keep abreast of trends for the future of leadership development:

- (i) A shift from **“horizontal” development** i.e. competencies, to **“vertical” development** i.e. on development stages. Where “horizontal” development can be “transmitted” from an expert, “vertical” development must be earned for oneself;
- (ii) **Transfer of greater developmental ownership to the individual.** Instead of believing that someone else is responsible for their development (for example, human resources or their manager), the individual now is in the driver’s seat of their own development;
- (iii) **Greater focus on collective rather than individual leadership,** transitioning from the old paradigm in which leadership resided in a person or role, to a new one in which leadership is **acollective process** that is spread throughout networks of people; and
- (iv) **Much greater focus on innovation in leadership development methods.** We are now in an era where rapid innovation will be needed for organisations to experiment with new approaches that combine diverse ideas in new ways, and where technology and the web will both provide the infrastructure and drive the change. Needless to say, organisations that embrace the changes will do better than those who resist it.

15. I am open to suggestions on how we can develop future leaders and have succession planning in place, not only in MOF but also in the public service. Thus, I hope to hear some ideas on this later in the Q&A session.

CLOSING REMARKS

Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen,

16. I have spent some time this morning speaking to you on what a leader is, and what leadership qualities that is essential as a public servant. I have also outlined some ways how the development of future leaders can be undertaken. I hope it has been useful, and that you will

continue to hone your skills as an effective leader in all aspects of your life, be it professionally or personally.

17. Once again, I would like to record my appreciation to YBhg. Tan Sri Dr. Irwan Serigar, Secretary-General of the Ministry of Finance for inviting me to speak at this Global Experts Series. Congratulations also to the team at Treasury who have made this event a success.

Thank you. Wabillahitaufig Walhidayah Wassalamualaikum Warahmatullahi Wabarakatuh.

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