LEADERSHIP IN NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS (NGOs)

Dr. Kuldip Singh
Faculty of Administrative Science and Policy Studies,
Universiti Teknologi MARA Sarawak
E-mail:*kuldip@sarawak.uitm.edu.my*

ABSTRACT

Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) have become influential development agents in the developing world in recent decades through their so-called "sustainable" activities. This study aimed to examine leaership style in Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) in Kuching. Data was collected from 120 employees in 27 NGOs. Leadership was measured by Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (MLQ) developed by Bass (1985). Results of the instrument's Cronbach Alpha measurement show that the score of reliability is above .90 which indicates an acceptable level. The results indicate that the dominant leadership style in NGOs is transformational. This study provides insights on leadership in NGOs. The findings of this study may help NGOs to enhance its leadership capabilities and leadership development programs for the NGOs leaders to develop their leadership capacity. Limitations and recommendations are also discussed..

Keywords: Leadership styles, Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire, MLQ, NGOs, transformational leadership, transactional leadership.

INTRODUCTION

The emergence of civil society organizations throughout the world has been noteworthy over the past decade. NGOs (including nongovernmental, faith-based, and community-based organizations) are playing an increasingly important role in tackling the world's greatest challenges – from HIV/AIDS and the environment, to poverty and inequality. Skilled organizational leaders are absolutely essential for successfully addressing these challenges and navigating the rapidly changing environments in which NGOs operate. The benefits of leadership strengthening within NGOs are many. Strong leadership in the NGO context can result in an inspired and empowered staff, programs and projects that are consistently infused with the essence of the organization's mission and vision, and a "big picture" orientation that is married to concrete action. Effective leadership can also increase an NGO's legitimacy in the eyes of donors, partners, and beneficiaries, thus potentially contributing to greater organizational sustainability, more effective and strategic partnerships, and higher quality delivery of services. In Malaysia NGOs play a vital role in the transformation of Malaysia towards a developed nation in 2020. This being the case leadership in NGOs is an important aspect that need to be reserached emprically. However, little attention has been given to leadership in NGOs.

Therefore, the aim of this study is to address this gap by conducting a empirical study of leadership in NGOs in Kuching.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Overview of NGOs

Kaldor (2005), Schiller (2005), and Gray et al. (2006) stated nongovernment organizations (NGOs) and civil society organizations have been established in significant numbers worldwide in the past decades. While play more importance roles in social services, the NGOs are becoming more practical, flexible, and less strict. The organizations are trying to develop better working environments to gain credibility among policy makers aiming to improve their reputation in the society.

A non-governmental organization (NGO) is a not-for-profit, voluntary citizens' group, which is organized on a local, national or international level to address issues in support of the public good. Task-oriented and made up of people with a common interest, NGOs perform a variety of services and humanitarian functions, bring citizens' concerns to Governments, monitor policy and programme implementation, and encourage participation of civil society stakeholders at the community level. They provide analysis and expertise, serve as early warning mechanisms and help monitor and implement international agreements. Some are organized around specific issues, such as human rights, the environment or health.

NGO's have therefore played major roles in various societies all over the world. They have been effective in highlighting pertinent issues that affect societies concerning environment, safety, consumerism, freedom of expression, human rights, poverty, welfare and the like. They have also participated in rescue works on those afflicted by wars and natural catastrophes complementing the efforts of national governments and international agencies. Most of them are non-profit oriented since they generally receive funds from philanthropists and public donations.

Although initially inspired by the strong desire to help others, many NGO's are active in championing issues on behalf of the public but are not in a position to actually implement projects to overcome the problems at hand. In that case they are only interested to make the public aware of the problems and sometimes the dangers society is facing. They have generally succeeded in creating so much awareness and publicity through their vigorous campaigns that the governments have no choice but to quickly take the necessary steps to overcome the problems. They act as trouble shooters and pressure groups for the public to the extent that they appear to be very antagonistic towards governments.

In some cases, NGO's undertake special projects for the society because the government may not be in a position to effectively do so for various reasons. First, they are generally not affiliated to the government and hence enjoys the independence and autonomy which government departments and agencies do not. Secondly they are apolitical and are therefore relatively free to highlight issues that are of concern to the government. Thirdly, those involved are normally people with very strong commitment to the cause. These volunteers are generally not interested in any form of material reward or even recognition, except in the insatiable feeling of satisfaction that they have rendered

some service and be useful to others. Their works are complementary to the government efforts. Some have been given recognition by governments and receive tremendous moral and material support from both the public and governments. More and more of such NGO's have been established which are dedicated for many socially productive activities. Their roles are becoming increasingly significant in many societies because the tasks the governments were expected to do in the last three to four decades will have to be taken over by non-profit community organisations or NGO's.

The Role of NGOs

Increasingly, the existence of NGOs is proving to be a necessity rather than a luxury in societies throughout the modern world. I believe that the history of the 20th century persuasively demonstrated the inability of the welfare state and free enterprise to create just and sustainable societies. Prompted by the inadequacies of the state and the market, citizens across the globe have developed organizations of civil society – NGOs – to help address a wide variety of social needs.

NGOs have three primary roles in advancing modern societies. First, NGOs provide opportunity for the self-organization of society.NGOs enable citizens to work together voluntarily to promote social values and civic goals which are important to them.They promote local initiative and problem-solving.Through their work in a broad array of fields – environment, health, poverty alleviation, culture & the arts, education, etc. – NGOs reflect the diversity of society itself.They are established and sustained by individuals working collectively in their communities. By empowering citizens and promoting change at the "grass roots", NGOs both represent and advance the pluralism and diversity that are characteristic of vibrant and successful modern societies.

Second, NGOs preserve a unique and essential space between the for-profit sector and government. Clearly private enterprise is efficient at producing goods and *private* wealth.Government is best when it focuses on providing and managing *public* goods.The nonprofit, nongovernmental sector helps fulfill the *common* good.A vibrant third sector provides a fulcrum for balancing the state and the free market.This middle ground is an essential arena for promoting additional checks and balances in society.Only independent organizations can serve as watchdogs of both government and business. At the same time, NGOs can build creative and productive partnerships across and among the three sectors – partnerships that draw on the unique strengths of each to advance the common good.

Finally, NGOs enable experimentation and social change by taking on challenges that that the public and private sectors simply can't or won't. Civil society organizations are able to take risks that are economically unacceptable to business and politically unacceptable to government. In modern societies across the globe, countless innovations pioneered by NGOs have subsequently been adopted as government policy.Numerous models of service delivery that are considered "best practice" today were devised, tested, and improved over many years of experimentation by NGOs.In addition, NGO advocacy campaigns induce reluctant governments to adopt policy reforms and force improvements in business practices.

As modernizing economies increasingly shift to free markets and private enterprise, they often experience a decline in social cohesion and an increase in economic and social inequity. In these circumstances the nongovernmental sector has proven to be an

essential mitigating force that helps create a healthier balance between the potential excesses of capitalism and the inefficiencies and limited resources of the state.

Transformational and Transactional Leadership

Ebrahim (2003) and Hardy (2007) found that leadership in NGOs is different from leadership in the for-profit sector where the NGOs have a social purpose such as environmental groups, human rights organizations, organizations that fight against poverty and underdevelopment or provide medical assistance in emergencies. Their clients (beneficiaries) are different from the people who contribute time and resources; as such they are also called non-membership organizations

Leadership researcher James MacGregor Burns in 1978 wrote a book entitled simply *Leadership.* In this Pulitzer Prize-winning book, Burns made an important distinction between two types of leadership orientations: transformational and transactional. On the surface the distinction appeared to be simple enough. Some leaders "transact" with followers to get things done, setting expectations and goals and providing recognition and rewards when a task is completed. Burns linked transactional leadership to what he observed through the years in many politicians' behavior in terms of how they "got things done." Transactions were typically based on satisfying both the leader's self-interest and the self-interest of his or her followers.

Burns observed transformational leadership in leaders who did the opposite of transactional leaders, initially defining transformational leadership as the opposite of transactional leadership. According to Burns, transformational leaders engage followers not only to get them to achieve something of significance, as he described them as visionary change agents, but also to "morally uplift" them to be leaders themselves. Central to Burns's theoretical distinction was the fact that he described such leaders as being morally uplifting and being more concerned with the collective interests of the group, organization, and society as opposed to their own self-interests. Burn's view is that transformational leadership is more effective than transactional leadership, where the appeal is to more selfish concerns. An appeal to social values thus encourages people to collaborate, rather than working as individuals (and potentially competitively with one another). He aslo views transformational leadership as an ongoing process rather than the discrete exchanges of the transactional approach.

Building his model based in transactional leadership, Bass first focused on previous literature in psychology pertaining to the use of "contingent rewards" as the basis for describing how leaders set up contractual exchanges with their followers. Specifically, transactional leadership is based on the assumption that "if you produce the desired behavior" then you will receive the "contracted award." The quid pro quo (something for something) relationship represents a psychological exchange in the sense that the leader clarifies the expectations, and the follower delivers, receiving the contingent reward. On the negative side, if the follower does not deliver, and if the leader spells out the penalty for not delivering in advance, then contingent reward becomes contingent punishment.

Based on the literature in psychology on behavioral reinforcement theory, Bass was able to clarify in more concrete terms the construct of transactional leadership and its component constructs, which he labeled "contingent reward" and "managementby-exception," the latter being more associated with "if you don't stay on target," here's what you won't get. Bass defined transformational in terms of how the leader effects followers,

who are intended to trust, admire and respect the transformational leader. He identified three ways in which transformational leader:

- Increasing their awareness of task importance and value;
- Getting them to focus first on team or organizational goals, rather than their own interests;
- Activating their higher-order needs.

Bass has noted that authentic transformational leadership is grounded in moral foundations that are based on four components:

- Idealized influence
- Inspirational motivation
- Intellectual stimulation
- Individualized consideration.
  ... and three moral aspects;
- The moral character of the leader
- The ethical values embeded in the leader's vision, articulation, and program (which followers either embrace or reject)
- The morality of the processes of social ethical choice and action that leaders and followers engage in and collectively pursue.

METHODOLOGY

A survey design was used to reach the research objectives. The specific design was the cross sectional design, where a sample is drawn from a population at a particular point in time (Shaughnessy & Zechmeister, 1997). About 270 questionaire were distributed to employees in 27 NGOs. In Kuching.. About 120 employees returned back the questionnaire giving a response rate of 44%.. Leadership was measured by Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire developed by Bass (1985) . Results of the instrument's Cronbach Alpha measurement show that the score of reliability is above .90 which indicates an acceptable level. The number of registered NGOs in Kuching is 926. which is categorized into 13 categories and 27 were selected as sample for this study. All category will be represented by at least 1 NGO. Each NGO was sent 10 questionnaires to be filled by their respective members.This is summarized in Table 1.

Table 1: .Number and Category of NGO'S Registered in Kuching 2007

1.	Social and Recreation	239	
2.	Social Welfare	99	
3.	Religious		153
4.	Women		14
5.	Commerce		115
6.	Politics	6	
7.	Education		8
8.	Occupation		56
9.	Environment		5

10.	Sport	98
11.	Culture.	107
12.	Youth	4
13.	General (others)	22
	Total number of NGO's	**926**

Source: Registrar of Society, Kuching (System I-ROS 2007)

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Demograhic Profile

        The respondents were equally divided between males (55.8 percent) and females 44.2 percent). Majority of respondents are aged between 30 and 50 years old (48.7 percent). Regarding ethnicity about 27.5 percent of the respondnets are Ibans followed by Malays 26. 7 percent. Most of the respondents are SPM holders (46. 7 percent).as for the occupation of the repondents are Others (32.5 percent) followed by clerks (24.2 percent). Majority respondents earned between RM1,000 to RM3,000 (47.5 percent). This is summarized in Table 2.

NGO Profile

        As for the profile of NGOs majority of the NGOs have about 100 members (45.8 percent). Regarding years in existence most of the NGOs have been in operation for more than 15 years (51.7 percent). As for categories of NGOs about 26.7 percent were Social and Recreation followed by Religious (20 percent) and General (15. 8 percent). This is summarized in Table 3.

TABLE 2: REPONDENT PROFILE: (N= 120)

ITEMS	Number	Percentage (%)
GENDER Male Female	 67 57	 55.8 44.2
AGE 18-29 years 30-40 years 41-50 years Above 50 years	 11 50 41 18	 9.2 41.7 34.2 15.0
ETHNICITY Malay Iban Chinese Bidayuh Others	 32 33 24 24 7	 26.7 27.5 20.0 20.0 5.8

EDUCATION LEVEL		
SPM	56	46.7
STPM	8	6.7
DIPLOMA	25	20.8
DEGREE	23	19.2
PROFEESIONAL	6	5.0
OTHERS	2	1.7
OCCUPATION		
Professional	21	17.5
Tenchical	12	10.0
Executive	19	15.8
Clerical	29	24.2
Others	39	32.5
INCOME		
Below RM1,000	24	20.0
RM1,000- RM3,000	57	47.5
RM3,000- RM5,000	29	24.2
Above RM5,000	10	8.3

TABLE 3: NGOs PROFILE

ITEMS	Numbers	Percenatge (%)
SIZE/MEMBERSHIP		
Below 50	36	30.0
50-100	19	15.8
101-200	14	11.7
201-300	17	14.2
301-400	5	4.2
401-500	20	16.7
Above 500	9	7.5
YEARS IN EXISTENCE		
1-3 years		
2-6 years	10	8.3
7-10 years	14	11.7
10-15 years	10	8.3
Above 15 years	24	20
	62	51.7
CATEGORY		
Social & Recreation	32	26.7
Political	6	5.0
Religious	24	20.0
Sport	8	6.7
Culture	3	2.5

Education	9	7.5
Commerce	7	5.8
Welfare	6	5.0
Occupation	6	5.0
General	19	15.8

Results shows that the dominant leadership style practiced in NGOs is transformational leadership style (M= 3.14 , SD .667). Regarding the dimensions of transformational leadership the highest mean is for inspirational motivation (M= 3.28,SD .774) followed by Idealized influnce behaviour (M = 3.26, SD .774). The mean for transactional leadership is (M=2.96, SD.568). Tthe highest mean is for Contigent reward dimension (M= 3.20, SD .787) followed by management by exception (active) (M= 3.12, SD.736). This indicates that the main leadership style in NGOs is transfromational which focus on inspirational motivation and influence behaviour. This is summarzed in Table 4.

TABLE 4: MEANS OF MAIN CONSTRUCTS (N=120) (SCALE 1-5)

Constructs	Mean	Standard Deviation
Transformational Leadership	3.14	.667
• Idealized Influence (Behaviour)	3.26	.774
• Idealized Influence (Attributed)	3.11	.777
• Inspirational Motivation	3.28	.774
• Intellectual Stimulation	3.11	.761
• Individual Consideration	2.94	.732
Transactional Leadership	2.96	.568
• Contigent reward	3.20	.787
• Management by Exception (Active)	3.12	.736
• Management by Exception (Passive)	2.56	.742

CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS

This study concludes that leaders of NGOs in Kuching practices transfromational leadership style in managing their organizations which consist mostly of social and recreational and religious bodies. Considering that the most of the NGOs have been in existence for more tha 15 years it can be assumed that it has been effectively managed by its transformational leaders. Leadership is an essential element of NGO success and wields the greatest influence when it is exercised at *all levels* of the organization and extends beyond the traditional "boss/ subordinate" relationship. Leading without authority means drawing not on power derived from one's formal position in an organization, but on power that comes from knowledge, personal characteristics, or opportunities

The insights from this study can be used to develop leadership development programs for NGOs leaders in Kuching as a step in developing human capital in NGOs. In

addition the management of NGOs can also look at leadership succession issues in NGOs. The relevant authorities also can use the findings of this study as input to enhance the effectiveness of NGOs.Therefore, the factor such as leadership style could be a major tool to encourage NGOs leaders to lead more effectively the NGOs. Leadership development programmes designed for NGO leaders must as a consequence incorporate best practice and current experience rather than using traditional approaches to leadership training.This study has a number of limitations namely the small sample of NGOs covered in the study and and low response rate. This limits its generalization to other NGOS in Sarawak.Future study on NGOs can study servant leadership or challenges faced by NGOs leaders.

REFERENCES

Bass, B. M. (1985). *Leadership and performance beyond expectations.* New York: Free
    Press

Burns, J. M. (1978). *Leadership.* New York: Harper & Row.——

Ebrahim, Alnoor: (2003). *NGOs and Organizational Change: Discourse, Reporting and
    Learning.* U.K.: Cambridge University Press

Kaldor, M. 2005, *La sociedad civil global*, Una respuesta a la Guerra , Barcelona:
    Tusquests Editores

.
Schiller, B. 2005, *Business-NGO Partnerships*, London: Ethical Corporation.