

New Challenges for Senior Leadership Enhancement for Improved Public Management

by

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Introduction

One reflection of the growth in recent concern about the issue of enhancing leadership capacity is that at least a few countries have undertaken new initiatives aimed at addressing this subject. In places as diverse as Canada, China, Malaysia, South Africa and the United Kingdom, various kinds of programs have been initiated which are designed to enhance the competencies of one or another sectors of governmental leadership.¹ In some cases, these efforts have involved working with elected officials and in other cases appointed officials and senior civil servants. Likewise, in some instances, they have involved national level officials and, in others, sub-national officials.

Nevertheless, while leadership capacity enhancement may be an issue of much concern, in a number of countries, in many places financial, institutional and organizational factors often serve to inhibit the initiation of significant efforts to address this subject. In other cases, factors ranging from the complexity of the task, to the reality that those who might initiate such programs are reluctant to suggest to people who have achieved governmental leadership positions that they might need them, also inhibit their development. When these factors are combined with the fact of the very great time demands on people in leadership positions and the reality that, with some good reason, many individuals who have achieved such positions feel that they have already demonstrated a considerable knowledge and understanding of the most important dimensions of leadership, it is not surprising that this is an area that does not currently receive adequate attention.

The purpose of this paper is to provide a brief overview of the five themes around which the as follows:

- 1) Defining the concept of leadership and the target groups for leadership enhancement initiatives.
- 2) The key issues facing top level government leadership
- 3) Specifying areas of competency enhancement necessary to better equip top level government leadership to function effectively in a globalizing world
- 4) Techniques, modalities and strategies to facilitate effective competency enhancement initiatives for top level government leaders.
- 5) Developing a plan of action for the UN/IASIA initiative: Next steps and future activities in the area of top level leadership competency enhancement.

I. Defining the Concept of Leadership and the Target Groups

¹ See for example, Malcolm Dawson, *“Leadership for the 21st century in the UK civil service”* International Review of Administrative Sciences, op. cit., pp.263-272 and Chen Weilan, *“Action Learning Practice in Chinese Public Management Training”: A Case Study of Training and Development for Senior and Middle Civil Servants in Western Provinces*, in State Modernization and Decentralization – Implications for Education and Training in Public Administration: Selected Central European and Global Perspectives , edited by Allan Rosenbaum and Ludmila Gajdosova, forthcoming.

for Leadership Enhancement Initiatives

Leadership is one of those qualities that are easier to recognize than define. Certainly one important reason for this is that very often the nature of leadership will vary greatly depending upon the needs of the particular situation or context within which it occurs. As Douglas MacGregor, a long time student of organizational leadership has noted, “it is more fruitful to consider leadership as a relationship between the leader and the situation than as a universal pattern of characteristics possessed by certain people.”² Yet another reason for the difficulty of defining, in a precise way, the nature of leadership, is that leaders themselves are such diverse individuals. As Peter Drucker, another prominent student of organizational leadership, has noted:

Among the effective executives I have known and worked with, there are extroverts and aloof, retiring men, some even morbidly shy. Some are eccentrics, others are painfully correct conformists. Some are fat and some are thin. Some are worriers and some are relaxed. Some drink quite heavily and others are total abstainers. Some are men of great charm and warmth; some have no more personality than a frozen mackerel.³

Regardless of the difficulty in defining it, there is no question that leadership is a quality that is very much in demand. Almost a quarter century ago, James MacGregor Burns, began his award winning book, Leadership, by noting that “One of the most universal cravings of our time is a hunger for compelling and creative leadership.” He goes on to note that:

The crisis of leadership today is the mediocrity or irresponsibility of so many of the men and women in power, but leadership rarely rises to the full need for it. The fundamental crisis underlying mediocrity is intellectual. If we know all too much about our leaders, we know far too little about leadership. We fail to grasp the essence of leadership that is relevant to the modern age and hence we cannot agree even on the standards to which measure, recruit and reject it. Is leadership simply innovation – cultural or political? Is it essentially inspiration? Mobilization of followers? Goal setting? Goal fulfillment? Is a leader the definer of values? Satisfier of needs? If leaders require followers, who leads whom from where to where, and why? How do leaders lead followers without wholly being led by followers? Leadership is one of the most observed and least understood phenomena on earth.⁴

Burns goes on to note that there is a considerable difference between the exercise of power and the exercise of leadership and what distinguishes them is the moral element involved in the exercise of leadership. Thus, Burns defines leadership in the following way:

² Douglas MacGregor, Leadership and Motivation (Cambridge, MA, MIT Press, 1966), p. 73.

³ Peter F. Drucker, The Effective Executive (New York: Harper and Row, 1967), p.22.

⁴ James MacGregor Burns, Leadership (New York: Harper Colophon, 1978), p.1

Leadership over human beings is exercised when persons with certain mottos and purposes mobilize, in competition or in conflict with others, institutional, political, psychological and other resources so as to arouse, engage and satisfy the mottos of followers.⁵

He further suggests that there are essentially two forms of leadership – transactional and transforming. Transactional leadership is driven by an exchange relationship in which the leader receives the support of followers in turn for delivering certain things to the followers that they wish to have. The implication of this is that once the transaction is completed, the relationship between the leader and the followers may well end. In contrast, Burns suggests the concept of transformational leadership in which a bond between leader and followers is created on the basis of the joint effort of both to achieve “higher levels of motivation and morality.”⁶

Other scholars who have been concerned with this matter have also been very concerned about what Burns characterizes as the moral dimension of leadership. For example, a recent extensive study of leadership renewal by Korac-Kakabadse, Korac-Kakabadse and Kouzmin suggests that “a leader must believe in a set of values and principals and must have a vision.”⁷ Warren Bennis, who has devoted much of his distinguished career to the study of organizational leadership, emphasizes the importance of knowing oneself and one’s values. In addition, as Berkley and Rouse have noted:

Leaders can be endangered by limiting their analysis of a situation in terms of previous successes, by failing to integrate new data and by losing their sense of humility. The most effective leaders view their positions as opportunities to constantly learn, accept its situation on its own terms, and remain open to new ideas.⁸

Regardless of how one defines leadership, whether as a concept or on the basis of its principal characteristics, the reality is that any effort aimed at improving the quality of leadership must find an easily operational way of defining it in order to determine to whom one would direct one’s efforts. Certainly, in any attempt to develop programs of leadership enhancement for people involved in government, one must decide whether to focus attention upon elected political leaders, appointed senior government officials, senior civil servants or all three groups? Clearly, all three groups of individuals can have a very powerful impact on the directions which government takes. In a similar vein, one can also raise the question of whether it makes sense to bring together, in a single group, officials of both national government and sub-national government – not to mention leaders in the public, private and non-profit sectors.

⁵ *ibid.*, p.18.

⁶ *ibid.*, p. 21 and Ch.2

⁷ Korac-Kakabadse, Korac-Kakabadse and Kouzmin, *op.cit.*, p. 207.

⁸ George Berkley and John Rouse, The Craft of Public Administration, Eighth Edition (Boston: MacGraw Hill, 2000) p. 204.

Obviously, there are certain aspects of the roles of each of these groups that are relatively specific to that particular group. For example, one could certainly argue that issues of managing a diverse work force are a great deal more relevant to senior civil servants than to elected members of a legislative body. On the other hand, one could also argue that it is the members of the elected legislative body who pass the legislation, or shape the policy, that requires the creation and maintenance of a diverse workplace organization. Consequently, a better understanding of this topic is equally relevant for them. In addition, one of the benefits of organizing programs that involve individuals from all three groups is that it helps to enable each group to better understand the other and the dilemmas which they face in carrying out their responsibilities.

Furthermore, bringing representatives of the three different groups together will undoubtedly contribute to encouraging more integrated approaches to problem-solving. As John O'Brian, the managing director of Hanover Executive, a leading international leadership development consulting firm, suggests, "integration" is the new paradigm for effective leadership. While O'Brian is focused principally on the private sector, the point is equally well taken in the governmental sector. Consequently, if the integration of disparate groups is an important value, then leadership development activities that integrates the three key governmental leadership groups represents a useful and beneficial approach to governmental leadership development. The logic of such an approach is reconfirmed in the comments of Ruth Hubbard who notes that "the huge increase in complexity and interconnectedness that faces elected officials, faces public servants as well – and the same kind of questions arise regarding capacity to handle the complexity."⁹

II. The Key Issues Facing Top Level Government Leadership

The contemporary world is both a more complicated one and a more interconnected one and, consequently, governmental leaders - whether they be elected, appointed or senior civil servants - have to be increasingly understanding of the wide array of issues that impact upon government at all levels – national and sub-national. The understanding of such issues is critical to senior level governmental leaders in at least two ways. First, such issues often are the source of the everyday problems that governmental leaders must attempt to solve. Second, even when they are not the direct source of the problems facing governmental leaders, they create the context within which such individuals must operate on a day to day basis. This means that for contemporary government leaders, inevitably one of their highest priorities is the better understanding of the many complex issues which impacts upon them and their countries. Indeed, absent an understanding of such issues, they will find it difficult, if not impossible, to institute policies and programs which produce outcome reasonably parallel to the intended goals of the programs or policies. Among the key issues confronting governmental leaders are the following:

⁹ Ruth Hubbard, *Societal leadership and good governance: strengthening learning, values and consent*, International Review of Administrative Sciences, op. cit., p. 233.

1. **Better understanding of the variety of developments that are frequently characterized as globalization.** In fact, globalization is the result of many developments, including innovation in communication and information technology; greatly expanded and new approaches to trade, commerce and finance; and the increasingly rapid dissemination of cultural elements from one country to another. Taken together, all of these phenomena raise many significant issues for government leaders - both in terms of creating new problems with which they must deal and impacting upon the manner in which they approach almost all of the traditional activities in which governments engage.

Of particular relevance to governmental leaders is one of the key factors that have encouraged globalization – the rapid development of information technology. As the UN’s World Public Sector Report notes, “there is no field of technological progress which has evolved more rapidly in the past twenty years than information technology.”¹⁰ This process of evolution has had at least two significant consequences for governmental leaders. First, it makes information that in the past may have been very limited in its distribution much more readily available to citizens and middle managers alike. Second, in so doing, it helps to flatten the nature of most public organizations.

2. **The realization that the public problems with which governments now must routinely deal have grown greatly in number, are becoming ever more complex and that frequently there appears to be no clear cut solution to, or right or wrong answer for, many of them.** Whether it is a highly technical problem, such as estimating the causes of global warming, or one rather more susceptible to ideological interpretation, such as the impact of rates of taxation upon economic productivity, contemporary policy problems are increasingly difficult to understand, let alone solve.

Moreover, the unfortunate reality of contemporary life is that there are rarely simple solutions (and sometimes not even complicated ones) to complex problems. At least in part this is because efforts to solve many of today’s multifaceted public problems often must rely upon the taking of collaborative action in many places and jurisdictions, the utilization of new and complex technologies and the changing of traditional values. The result of this is increasing pressure upon government leaders to solve what often appear to be, and sometimes really are, unsolvable problems.

3. **The growing gap between the rich and the poor in both the developed, industrialized countries and the less economically well-developed, transitional countries.** As also was recently noted in the UN’s World Public Sector Report; Globalization and the State, 2001; “Eradicating poverty and ensuring sustainable development should form the *raison d’être* of public administration. Half the world, nearly 3 billion people, lives on less than US \$2 a

¹⁰ United Nations, World Public Sector Report: Globalization and the State, 2001 (New York: United Nations, 2001) p.10.

day while the richest 20 per cent of the global population receive more than 80 percent of the global income.”¹¹

This phenomenon, which has been well documented in the United States and several western European countries as well, can conceivably serve at one and the same time to both encourage and discourage the development of social and governmental turmoil. On the one hand, growing economic discomfort can often lead to the emergence and growth of class-based organizations and movements designed to represent the interests of the poor and, in turn, place new and special demands upon governments. On the other hand, as the poor get poorer, it clearly lessens their capacity to participate, if not necessarily their interest in participating, in the processes of governance and, thus, makes them more susceptible to anti-democratic political manipulation.

4. **The considerable movement toward political democratization with its greatly increased emphasis upon government and civil servant accountability.** All across the world - from Latin America (where almost all countries have taken, during the course of the past decade, significant steps toward the building of viable, if still, in many instances, quite fragile, democratic governments) to the equally fragile, but emerging, democracies of Eastern Europe and the Newly Independent States; to Africa - institutions of democratic governance are significantly more prevalent today than they were two decades ago.¹²

From the growing independence of legislative branches, to the increasing mobilization of neighborhood organizations, to the intensifying citizen demands for openness and accountability, progress is being made in making governments around the world more responsive to popular will. This in turn places significant new pressures upon government leaders. Increasingly, they find themselves having to respond to many more demands, from many more constituencies, often seeking conflicting goals. These demands routinely challenge the professionalism and, in some cases, even the ethical standards of both senior government officials and civil servants.

5. **The growing emphasis upon market based solutions to address specific public policy problems and general economic policy issues and the significant increase in utilizing private or non-profit sector institutions to administer government programs.** At the same time that governments all across the world have been taking important steps to lower trade barriers, privatize public monopolies and deregulate private sector activities, there has been increasing experimentation with, and growing inclination towards the use of, private and non-profit sector organizations to deliver public services and address important policy problems. These initiatives range from the use of private companies to provide police and protective services to a dramatically increasing reliance upon

¹¹ *ibid.*, p. 19.

¹² United Nations Development Programme, Human Development Report, 2002: Deepening democracy in a fragmented world (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002).

non-governmental organizations and voluntary associations to provide basic government social welfare assistance to the citizenry.

6. **The growing incorporation of norms of cultural diversity into all sectors of society, with the consequent escalating demands for the direct representation of cultural and ethnic interests and heritages in the processes of public administration and governance.** This, in turn, has stimulated even greater demands for the widespread recognition of ethnic and cultural diversity in both the political and economic spheres. Whether it is a matter of tribal representation, or taking account of religious or ethnic origin, from Australia, to Belgium, to the United States, these matters are taking on increasing political and administrative saliency. Such developments inevitably create tensions within a society which must be addressed by governmental leaders.
7. **The critical need to further address issues of gender equality, especially in the area of educational opportunity, in developing and transitional societies.** One major policy success story of the past two decades is the gains made by poor people around the world in terms of the quality and amount of primary and secondary education that they receive. As World Bank data indicate, primary school enrollments have shown very significant increases in most of the developing world. During the course of the past two decades, adult literacy has risen in developing nations from 46 to 70 percent. At the same time, some progress is also being made on gender disparities with the ratio of females to males in secondary schools increasing from 7 to 10 in 1980 to 8 to 10 in 1993.¹³

This is especially important since, in transitional and developing nations, education, more than any other single factor, determines an individual's level of economic success and an individual's educational achievement is very directly related to their mother's educational achievement. This was one of the most important findings of the recent comprehensive study of income inequality in Latin America carried out by the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB). In the 1998-1999 Economic and Social Report, IDB researchers present the results of examining this issue in 14 countries. In every case they found a consistent relationship between level of education and level of income. Particularly important in this regard was the critical role of education for women. Increased educational achievement by women produced higher participation by them in the labor force, with higher economic returns for that participation and, consequently, fewer children which lead to a much higher level of educational achievement for their children.¹⁴
8. **The rapidly growing interest in the decentralization of previously highly centralized governments and national ministries and the broadening and**

¹³ Allan Rosenbaum and Arne Svensson, Responding to Citizens Needs: Local Governance and Social Services for All (New York: United Nations, 2002) p. 40.

¹⁴ Inter American Development Bank, Facing Up To Inequality in Latin America, 1998-1999, Economic and Social Report (Washington, DC: Inter American Development Bank, 1998) pp. 17 & 55.

strengthening of local governance capacity. From Bolivia, where the “Popular Participation Law” encourages the movement of the rural poor into the nation’s political mainstream through the building and/or strengthening of local institutions; to the Peoples Republic of China, where the granting of greater degrees of local autonomy has produced major economic development (including in Shanghai, the largest amount of new construction activity in a single urban area in human history); one witnesses the emergence of new leadership and creativity in sub-national government. Complicating this, however, is the fact that while there is new leadership and creativity at the sub-national level, many of those becoming involved are relatively inexperienced and, as a consequence, a high level of professionalism is not always the prevailing way of operating for many of the world’s rapidly emerging sub-national governments.

9. **The gradual weakening of state capacity and, in some cases, the actual disintegration of the state.** From Canada, to Great Britain, to the Balkans, to much of Africa, and even to China - there are signs that the nation state itself is becoming a much weaker and more vulnerable institution than at any time in the past 150 years. In several particularly notable instances, the disintegration of nation states has produced chaos and served to destroy governability. In other less dramatic instances, however, the receding of state control has served to open civic space for the emergence of a variety of types of international non-governmental organizations and domestic civil society organizations which serve to fill some of the vacated governance space. The non-governmental status of such organizations however further complicates the issue of providing a reasonable framework of accountability, performance standards, ethics and professionalism for these groups and the governments with which they work.
10. **The increasing linkage of issues of higher ethical standards and greater transparency to the improvement of governance all around the world.** From Beijing, to Miami, to Warsaw political officials are under increasing pressure to clean up corruption and malfeasance. This requires government leaders, and all others involved in public service, to be increasingly sensitive, in one manner or another, to ethical and professional issues and standards of behavior.
11. **The growth of multi-national integration.** Increasingly, at the same time that one witnesses some disintegration of the capacity of the nation state in many parts of the world, one also witnesses the integration of individual nation states into large international economic cooperation and free trading blocs with common rules and regulations and, even, in the case of Europe, a common currency. While this development has certainly progressed farther in Western Europe than in any other part of the world, one can see it occurring in many other regions as well - most notably in the Americas. This in turn has been accompanied by the development of increasingly permeable national borders and multi-national institutions - both of which complicates even further issues of nation state

governance, public management professionalism, institutional loyalty and the maintaining of uniform, high ethical standards.

III. Specifying Areas of Competency Enhancement Necessary to Better Equip Top Level Government Leadership to Function Effectively in a Globalizing World

Whether one wishes it to be so or not, the combination of globalization and growing technological capacity (and complexity) place increasing demands on the leaders of public organizations for more creative and effective leadership. Nevertheless, the effective governmental leader of the future will of necessity need to be sensitive to and aware of all of the traditional skills of leading and managing a government that has been the case in the past. These include such subjects as the ability to motivate others, an understanding of the basic mechanics of government (especially budget and financial management issues) and the development of a strategic vision for government. Indeed, the ability to enunciate an engaging and compelling vision for the future of one's organization, to focus it upon long term opportunities and goals, and to inspire others remains among the most important abilities required of the current and the next generation of governmental leaders.

Certainly, one of the most rapidly developing responsibilities of both current and future governmental leaders is to manage relationships among governments, organizations and agencies (and even individual employees) to insure that they have the necessary resources and skills to meet the requirements of the increasingly complex public sector. This is a significant change from an era in which, even though personal relationships were important, the public sector was hierarchy structured and the principal role of government leaders and senior public managers was to effectively manage people, processes and procedures. Today, organizations simultaneously are becoming less structured, increasingly complex and, in many cases, highly fluid in nature, while the tasks which they seek to accomplish are becoming ever more difficult. Consequently, there is a need for much higher levels of individual adaptability and flexibility in contemporary government. This puts even more emphasis upon the ability to manage relationships (which often may be in a continual state of flux) as a key activity of the future. In order to meet these challenges, current and future governmental leaders will need to be better equipped in the following areas:

- 1) Conveying Complex Ideas Orally and in Writing:** As public problems become more complex, demands for accountability (and greater equity) grow, and the challenges to the state become more intense, the ability of public managers to effectively communicate information assumes an increasingly high priority. This means that greater attention must be given to written and oral communication skills. In particular, the ability to convey information about complex issues in clear and understandable ways is a critically important skill.¹⁵

¹⁵ See Gustav Puth, The Communicating Leader: The key to strategic alignment, Second Edition (Pretoria, South Africa: Van Schaik Publishers, 2002).

- 2) **Adapting Rapidly to Change and Complexity:** In the increasingly complicated, ever-changing current and future environment of government - especially at its upper levels - the ability to adapt rapidly in a world in which the right answer is becoming more difficult to determine is of critical importance. Issues such as economic development, global warming, cleaning up the environment, and the like, which were generally not even considered the responsibility of government half a century ago, now are constant concerns. It is clear these very complex problems require a level of adaptability, and the capacity to respond in new and creative ways, that was literally inconceivable only a decade or two ago. While adaptability and flexibility are certainly personal traits, they are also ones that can, to a significant degree, be taught and learned through creative education and training.

The growing complexity of public policy and the public sector itself is occurring at a time of increased emphasis upon intergovernmental collaboration and greater interaction between the public and private sectors. Consequently, current and future government leaders must have an especially strong understanding of how to establish effective relationships between one's own organization and the many organizations, both within and outside of the government, with which it is increasingly necessary to interact in order to effectively deliver successful program activities. Moreover, the increasing emphasis on partnerships between public, the non-profit and the private sectors in order to promote particular social goals and policies makes the ability to effectively interact with the broader community even more critical to the future success of public sector managers.

- 3) **Fostering Effective Collaboration:** Increasingly, public leaders find themselves engaged in activities that require some form of group participation and, as a consequence, require skills in team building activities. In part, this is a result of the growing complexity of public problems and, in part, it is due to the fact that most public policy problems no longer fall solely within the purview of a single organizational unit, agency or department or even of a particular geographically based government. Consequently, efforts to successfully solve many contemporary public policy problems frequently require the creation of teams of individuals drawn from different units, agencies, departments or governments. This in turn requires that governmental leaders place increasingly heavy emphasis upon techniques and processes that promote effective collaboration among individuals who may have quite different priorities and, in some cases, even very different values.
- 4) **Seeing Situations as Others See Them:** Given the complexity and increasing interactiveness of the environment in which governments must work, it becomes critically important to see and understand the situation of one's own organization from the perspective of others and especially those outside of it. This must include both one's allies and, even more importantly, one's actual and possible opponents in any bureaucratic or organizational situation. This means that the

future leaders of government must be people who are able to assess the subtleties and complexities of the means by which their organization are able to achieve major governmental goals and the nature of the environment in which this must be done.

- 5) **Building Democratic Institutions:** The building of democratic government is not an easy task – especially in societies that face complex social and economic problems. Clearly, this requires competent leadership that understands and is committed to democratic institution building. This is especially the case at this particular moment when so many democratic governments are both relatively new and showing considerable signs of fragility in the face of intractable public problems. Ironically, very often democratic government creates short term complications in the resolving of complex public problems. Democratic systems which have institutional structures that provide checks and balances often tend to make the process of problem resolution a slower one than it might otherwise be. However, it is these checks and balances that sustain democracy. Consequently, the demands upon leaders are often much greater in democratic systems of government and in turn, leaders must be even more committed and effective.
- 6) **Fostering Ethical Awareness and Sensitivity:** In part, because the stakes of government are constantly growing bigger and becoming more important, and the complexity of the problems with which government deals escalating, the opportunities for compromises in ethical behavior - both intended and, sometimes, not intended - have increased significantly. This is especially the case with the growth in use of the private sector to deal with public problems and the increasingly frequent use of market-like, competitive mechanisms in the public sector.

Obviously, issues of ethics are important at every level of government. However, it is the top leadership of any organization that sets the basic tone, or ethos, that influences its entire institutional life. This makes it increasingly incumbent upon governmental leaders to be more sensitive to these issues and the setting of an ethical tone, not only in terms of individual behavior, but in terms of the activities and life of the organization as a whole. Clearly this is an area of concern to which some leaders have already begun to respond, but it is important that this response be sustained and intensified.
- 7) **Enhanced Self Management Capability:** In a world overflowing with information, and complex problems that continue to need to be solved, the ability to effectively manage one's own self and one's time (and, in so doing, to keep focused on the principal goals of the organization) becomes ever more important. It is critical that government leaders provide, through their ability to remain constantly focused upon the organization's principal goals, the sense of strategically targeted engagement that is increasingly necessary for success in all sectors of society.

- 8) **Entrepreneurialism and Risk-taking Ability:** In an environment in which organizational and institutional structures are becoming increasing criticism for their slowness to respond, and which is filled with ever more ambiguous tasks, the traditional managerial and policy guidelines and approaches of the past quickly grow less relevant to the solution of today's problems. Consequently, the ability of an individual leader to recognize the need to take calculated risks in a rational and considered way is crucial to the future success of most organizations. Likewise, the ability to recognize new opportunities and seize them - to engage in effective entrepreneurial behavior - becomes equally critical.
- 9) **Strategic Planning Capability:** At least two emerging trends will require public sector leaders to develop new skills in the area of strategic planning. First, the increasing emphasis upon responsiveness to clientele demands requires that government officials and senior public administrators have a better and clearer understanding of exactly what their clientele are seeking. One of the most effective means for obtaining this understanding is through the engaging in strategic planning exercises. Second, as both program management and service delivery increasingly are contracted out, the need for government officials to develop longer term plans to guide and coordinate their activities will grow accordingly. It is for these reasons that one witnesses the growing use of such techniques in virtually every area of public and non-profit sector activity - from rural grassroots political and economic development initiatives, to long term goal and agenda setting by large and sophisticated national government agencies.
- 10) **Ability to Facilitate Effective Staff Professional and Personal Development:** It is self evident that the success of government depends heavily upon the abilities of those who work in it. Consequently, it is ever more important that those who work in the public sector possess the highest levels of professional skill and the ability to understand and adapt to new situations. In a work place that will be increasingly characterized by rapidly changing job requirements this means that employee skills must constantly adapt to new demands and technologies. More often than one might anticipate individual employees fail to see this or are reluctant to adapt to such situations.
- This places an important priority upon the ability of government leaders to encourage and support effectively the professional and personal skill development of the people with whom they work everyday. This in turn also requires a realization that the funding of staff training is a wise long term investment and that it is necessary to provide high quality training opportunities for both current and future personnel. This will become increasingly critical in terms of maintaining and sustaining a supportive, encouraging and collaborative work environment.
- 11) **Capacity to Build and Nurture Harmonious Multi-ethnic, Multi-cultural, Gender Equitable Environments:** Increasingly, worldwide immigration and population movements are affecting even the most homogeneous and relatively

isolated communities. Indeed, in many communities, and certainly in most countries, populations are becoming increasingly multi-ethnic and multi-cultural. All too often this creates new tensions and in some cases outright conflict. Consequently, issues related to multi-culturalism and the understanding of the skills, techniques and abilities necessary to hold multi-ethnic work forces and societies together must become increasingly central to those who lead government. Obviously, equally important is the matter of gender equity. As noted earlier, this has very significant consequences for the economic well being of developing and transitional societies. Recent, highly unfortunate events in several countries have further emphasized the importance of governmental leaders directing attention to this issue and providing enlightened leadership.

- 12) Ability to Focus in an Increasingly Diffuse Environment:** Not only are the problems facing government leaders becoming more complex, but the knowledge and technical skill necessary to address them is becoming ever more diffuse, complicated and even ambiguous. As a result, the number of elements, and potential alternatives, that must be considered in attempting to address a typical public problem, and the consequent amount and type of information which one might want to process in order to deal with it, is continually growing. Indeed, even before the emergence of the internet and the world wide web, the amount of information available in terms of any given issue or situation was increasing by leaps and bounds. Now, with new electronic technologies, information, and, consequently, alternative options grow even more rapidly. In the face of ever mounting information, it has become exceedingly important that government leaders sharpen their ability to focus directly on the most critical elements of the task at hand and the precise information necessary to accomplish that task.

IV. Techniques, Modalities and Strategies to Facilitate Effective Competency Enhancement Initiatives for Top Level Government Leaders

Often many of the leadership skills and competencies required by government leaders are ones that seem, at first glance, to be more like personal, psychological traits rather than skills that can be learned and developed. However, that is not necessarily the case. Through the use of case methods, individual and group simulation techniques, and other new and more effective approaches to traditional teaching and training methods, it is possible to enhance the ability of people to cope more effectively with their leadership responsibilities.

Nevertheless, there are no absolute, or even very clear, guidelines regarding techniques and approaches to carry out training for high level governmental officials except perhaps to note that one should never characterize training for them as “training.” Indeed, the reality is that the use of the term often appears to produce a negative reaction among high level governmental officials who sometimes perceive training as something that is necessary for, and only relevant to, midlevel or lower level government employees. In organizing events for governmental leaders, the usage of terms like competency

enhancement initiatives, workshops, roundtables, working groups, policy dialogues, etc., have much less negative connotations.

Another point that seems to be relevant is that competency enhancement activities involving upper level government officials and senior level administrators are best carried out by involving at least some individuals who have had experience at a comparable level of government service. This can be individuals who have held such positions or who have had experience in working with those who have. Thus, if a group is going to involve individuals at the ministerial level, one should involve at least one facilitator with current or former ministerial level experience in the providing of guidance to the group. The same would be true if one would be dealing with a group of parliamentarians or senior administrative officials.

Another critical factor often is the attractiveness of the location in which the activity is being carried out. The reality, good or bad, is that, whether they acknowledge it or not, upper level officials and senior administrators expect to be treated as such and, consequently, are much more likely to participate in an activity when it is carried out at an attractive site. It is also important to structure the activity in such a manner as to provide opportunity for social activity and for networking purposes.

One particularly good strategy is to organize activities around a particular task or policy. A good example of this has been the establishment of the biennial meetings of the African Civil Service Ministers with its focus upon the development of the Charter for the Public Service in Africa. Another very good approach, especially for newly elected policy makers, is the creation of orientation sessions or seminars at an early point in their elected terms. Another important point to keep in mind is that such activities need to be limited in their time demands. Most senior level policy makers are reluctant to spend more than a couple of days involved in such activities. If a longer time frame is necessary, it is probably useful to divide the activity into different segments and spread it over several months.

V. Developing a Plan of Action for the UN/IASIA Initiative: Next Steps and Future Activities in the Area of Top Level Leadership Competency Enhancement

Perhaps the first step with regard to future activities should involve some additional efforts to better understand the processes of working most effectively with top level government leadership in the area of competency enhancement. Initially, this might be done in two ways – through some semi-controlled experimentation and the gathering of additional information.

In terms of the experimentation, it would seem useful to initiate certain key relevant activities. These might involve the organizing, on a regional basis, of working groups to engage in policy dialogues on one or two key issues of concern to top level government leaders. In some cases, these could involve a mixture of elected legislative and executive

branch officials, as well as senior government administrators. In other instances, the activity might be organized in such a way as to have separate events for each of the three groups of key participants. These activities might well provide further insights into both the principal areas of concern and the most effective ways to encourage competency enhancement for governmental leaders.

Another possibility that might be pursued is to attempt to systematically gather additional information on initiatives that have already been carried out by various countries – especially those in developing and transitional regions. This information could be collected both with the assistance of regional associations and through the review of materials on UNPAN. This review of information should provide additional valuable insights. Subsequent projects building on this prior experience could be initiated in conjunction with the most relevant regional organizations.

Conclusion

In almost every profession, new circumstances require the development of new, or the redefinition of, existing skills. Like those in virtually all fields of human endeavor, government leaders must be prepared to adapt and change in response to the changing tasks and problems with which they must deal and the changing world in which their work. This in turn requires that those who work with government leaders in the area of competency and skill enhancement adapt their methods to reflect the new demands and realities facing those who are and will be guiding the public sector now and in the future. This does not mean rejecting that, which has been important in the past, but rather adding to or redefining past practice in such a way as to accommodate new needs and developments. In truth, that process must always be a continuing one.