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LEADERSHIP COMPETENCIES AND DEVELOPMENT FOR COMMUNITY LEADERS IN MALAYSIA

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Abstract

What are the leadership competencies for community leaders in Malaysia?. It attempts to identify the detailed competencies of community leaders who serve in the Neighborhood Association in Malaysia. In-depth interviews of eight participants were utilized for data collection. The interview was conducted using an interview guide for two to three hours until no more new data emerged. The data were transcribed verbatim and analyzed to identify themes and sub-themes related to competencies of community leaders in Malaysia. The research identified 10 domains of attitudes, skills, knowledge and competencies for community leaders. These were managing effective teams and work groups, building and maintaining relationship, leading diversity and difference, developing others, communicating effectively, bringing about change, solving problems, setting vision and mission, managing social and volunteer work and developing good values and leadership practices.

Key Words: Leadership Competencies; Leadership Development; Malaysian Community Leaders; Community Leaders; Competencies of Community Leaders.

INTRODUCTION

What are the leadership competencies for community leaders in Malaysia? This study is based on a survey, focus group interviews and in-depth interviews of committee members of Neighborhood Associations in Malaysia. The focus group interviews and survey provide the initial findings related to competencies of community leaders. The competencies identified are in the areas of: (1) conducting community and social programs, (2) effective ways of leading a multiracial team, (3) process of bringing about change, (4) volunteer work, (5) communication and interpersonal skills, (6) community development, and (8) conflict resolution (Madinah Mohamad, 2008).

Generally, the term competencies is closely related to ability which means ability to do or a special talent or in a work situation as being qualified to perform a task. Usually, competencies will result in better performance.

Competencies are defined as a set of behavior patterns that can contribute to effective performance in the organization. It is also defined as clusters of employee behaviors that generate superior performance. Yet another definition views competencies as underlying characteristics of a person that distinguishes outstanding performance (Manogran, 2000).

Appelbaum and Paese (n.d.) indicated that roles described the “what” of leadership and competencies describe the “how” of leadership. Thus to perform certain leadership roles, the leaders need a set of competencies to ensure the desired results. Hence competencies are important to leadership success. They indicated that competencies are “specific skills and abilities that impact effectiveness in those leadership contexts”.

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The Public Service Department (n.d.) reported that competencies refer to: “Skills, knowledge and personal attributes required for competent work performance for each job category. The competencies required in an organization cover not only managerial and other technical or functional skills but include individual personal competence”. It also refers to the ability to perform certain job activities in a given occupation according to the standards set.

The report summarized that competencies include: (1) Having the ability and attributes for effective job performance and being able to fulfill job roles and expectations; (2) being able to perform to expected standards; and (3) ability to respond to the dynamics of actual work environment

Creative Center for Leadership or CCL (Berke, Kossler & Wakefield, 2008) proposed the use of leadership competency models based on data that are researched and validated. Examples of these validated competencies are drawn from studies by CCL and Abu Daud Silong et al. (2008). The CCL wheel described 20 competencies derived from thousands of responses from leaders in all organizations. These are related to three major competency areas of “Leading Others”, “Leading the Organizations” and “Leading Yourself”. Each cluster of competencies is described by certain domains and specific competencies.

Abu Daud Silong et al. (2008) identified 15 core competencies of public sector leadership in Malaysia. These are competencies related to communication, teamwork, problem-solving, relational skills, conflict resolution, project management, public relations, interpersonal skills, professionalism, visioning process and strategic thinking, leadership, training and coaching, technical skills, research skills and change management. Leaders who have higher competencies in these areas are likely to be more effective.

Competency can be gained through education, training and experience. “Leadership development is becoming an increasingly critical and strategic imperative for organizations in the current business environment. Recent historical events and emerging trends emphasize the need to invest in the active development of leaders” (Leskiw & Singh, 2007). Leadership development, now and in the future, is big business. In the US alone about US\$45 billion was spent in 1997 for developing leaders. There are about 900 leadership programs offered by universities in the country (Storey, 2005).

However, competencies can best be developed through systematic training. Sloman (1994) analyzed and described six effective training models that include: (1) The systematic training model, (2) the transitional model, (3) the National Training Award Model, (4) Training as consultancy, (5) continuous development training model and (6) the Ashridge model. These models indicate the various phases of planning, conducting and evaluating training. Basically the phases indicated by the various models are almost similar with slight differences in their approaches to training. They involve phases such as training needs analysis, setting learning objectives, designing training, conducting training and evaluating training.

More recent models of training are being proposed by Bersin (2008) that emphasized on training that provides impact to individuals and organizations. His “Business Impact Model” consists of four phases: (1) Problem definition – needs for training begins with some kinds of problems that individuals and organizations faced and thus need to be defined and clarified, (2) training solution – the training must be able to solve the problems being identified, (3) individual performance improvement – the training must indicate improvement in individual performance, and (4) organizational performance improvement – the training must bring benefits to the organization

The aim of this study is to identify and describe various competencies for community leaders in Malaysia. Utilizing the identified competencies, leadership development programs are proposed for improving skills of community leaders in Malaysia.

METHODOLOGY

This research is an exploration of the experiences of community leaders in Malaysia. It is a collaborative research between the researchers and the Department of National Unity and Integration (locally abbreviated as JPNIN), Prime Minister’s Department Malaysia. It was an extension of previous studies based on data collected using focus group interviews and a survey.

The research sample consists of leaders identified by JPNIN officers together with the researchers. Initially 15 names of community leaders, who are all Chairmen of the Neighborhood Association, were given to be part of the sample. The names were identified based on agreed upon criteria by the researcher and officers of JPNIN, based on their track records as leaders of the Neighborhood Associations. However, after contacting all the potential respondents only eight agreed to participate in the study.

These eight respondents consist of community leaders from different racial compositions – four Malays, two Chinese and two Indians. There is also one female among the respondents. The majority of them were quite elderly with an average of 51.9 years, the youngest being 43 years while the eldest was 63 years old. Most of them had high school education, except for one who had tertiary education. They had an average of 16.0 years experience in Neighborhood Associations, two with less than five years and four with twenty or more years of experience. Two of them were pensioners, one worked with the public sector, one worked with the private sector, one worked as a pre-school teacher and three were self-employed. All were married with one to four children.

The data were collected using an interview guide developed by the researcher. The guide was pre-tested and the questions were improved based on feedback of the interview. The in-depth interviews conducted on the eight respondents gave detailed description of the competencies of community leaders. The interviews were conducted for about two to three hours at locations of their conveniences such as the offices or their homes. The interview was conducted until no more new data emerged. The interview was recorded, transcribed verbatim, coded and analyzed according to themes.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

This study generates themes based on the experiences of eight Chairmen of Neighborhood Associations in Malaysia. They are community leaders in multi-racial communities that include the major races of Malays, Chinese and Indians and sometimes with minority groups such as the Sikhs, Eurasian and foreigners. The themes generated are various competencies required by the community leaders: (1) Problem-solving skills, (2) living skills in a multi-racial community; (3) communication and interpersonal skills; (4) decision-making skills; (5) skills in bringing about change; (6) skills related to conflict resolution; (7) team-work skills; (8) social and volunteer work skills; (9) skills in acquiring funds and resources; (10) skills in conducting programs for the community; (11) skills in developing good values and leadership practices; (12) ICT skills. These competencies are related to the roles leaders have to perform in the community and are described as below.

Problem solving skills: One of the key leadership competencies that are crucial to community leaders is related to problem solving. The communities faced a host of problems, both social and economic problems. Some of the social problems include thefts, vandalism, fights and truancy among schoolchildren. Some of these problems are criminal in nature. On the other hand economic problems are concerned with poverty, needy groups and low income earners such as single mothers.

The leaders have to solve the problems through identifying the problems faced by the community and finding the solutions and acting on the problem. Often they have to sit down and discuss with those involved, provide the necessary advice, consult with relevant parties such as JPNIN, and get the commitment of parents to handle the problems if it involved schoolchildren and youths. In cases where the problems are criminal in nature the leaders have to make reports to the police. There are a few basic skills related to problem solving such as identifying problems, finding the solutions and acting on the problem. In doing this they must know how to get commitment from others, get their views, provide advice and make police reports if necessary.

As emphasized by R1 (Respondent 1):

A leader needs to have ways of solving problems because this skill is very important in solving community problems. Example includes solving problems between neighbors if there is any misunderstanding between various races such as religious differences between Malays and Indians. This misunderstanding happens frequently since the Indians sound their temple bells regularly in conducting their religious affairs and create uneasy feelings among the Malay neighbors....Thus the Association has to call the parties involved and sit down and discuss and get

views from the committee members and JPNIN officers....after receiving the necessary feedback from all parties, get them involved so that an agreement is reached to settle the problem.

An example where R2 indicated that the way of solving is by hearing explanation by parties involved in a problem related to garbage disposal.

An argument between neighbors occurs because of garbage being dumped in front of their houses. When this problem reaches the Association, the Chairman called those involved together with the committee members to hear their problems. Then the committee members provide the advice Those involved take the advice and the problems are solved.

Living skills in a multi-racial community: Another important competency for community leaders in Malaysia is related to living skills in a multi-racial community. The leaders consist of people from various races such as the Malays, Chinese and Indians and they also come from various religions. The committee members of the Association are also made up of various races and with Malay and Chinese backgrounds. The committee comprises only one-third of women, but only one is Chairman of the Association. The communities are also composed of people from various races and religions with five Chinese majority and three Malay majority communities. In this kind of setting, the leaders have to understand the value and belief of the other races, understand the culture and way of living of other races and avoid touching on matters that are sensitive to others. They can do this by participating in activities organized in the community, participate in activities of people from other religions, and participate in various religious festivities and celebrations, mix around with people of various races and have friends from other races. They can also increase their knowledge about other cultures through activities such as reading and mixing around. They need to develop competency on living skills in multi-racial society so that they are able to lead a Malaysian community and establish harmony among the various racial and religious groups. Without this crucial skill there will be racial fights and riots.

The respondent R3 indicated the importance of understanding knowledge related to the culture and ways of living of people from different races and religions such as:

Knowing a little about the ways of other races

Understanding people of other races

Do not touch on sensitive matters

Do not take matters into our own hands pertaining to demolition of places of worship that are built without permit. Let the local council take the necessary action.

Always socialize and make friends with people of other religions so that you know their customs and beliefs.

Another respondent R5 focused on building relationships between people of various races through conducting activities to provide the learning experiences.

Conduct activities that provide them the opportunity to know people of different races. Example: to conduct a trip to Genting Highland [a resort area in Malaysia] and arrange the activity in such a way that they have to share a room with another person of a different race. In this way their relationship will be closer and they will share things related to other races such as their customs, religious activities and other things.

Communication and interpersonal skills: The leaders also cannot perform their leadership roles well if they do not have communication and interpersonal skills. The skills include both verbal and written communication. As community leaders they have to face many groups of people and in the process they need to prepare and make presentations, prepare and present reports, prepare and make speeches, prepare and deliver working papers. They also have to chair meetings, get feedback from various groups and are involved in tasks such as delegation, giving instruction and directives. Such tasks require the use of good communication and interpersonal skills.

The respondent R3 emphasized the importance of using verbal and written communication:

Written communication is important – writing letters, preparing reports,

Preparing advertisements and other work that involves writing

Verbal communication is important – public speaking, making presentation, giving ideas and views, communicating with government officers and Ministers and others.

Giving out instruction is important – knowing how to give effective instruction to the committee, an example is to come on time for events or meetings so that they understand and follow the instructions. Skills on giving instructions come from experience in involvement with social work such as experiences from involvement in other organizations.

Skills in giving out constructive criticisms are very important – those giving criticisms must use skills such as ability to speak, skills in using proper language and words so that the criticisms do not hurt those being criticized.

In giving instructions, R6 and R8 indicated that:

If you want to give directives, a leader needs to show how it is done before giving directives to others [R6]

Based on my experience and socialization with others, instructions have to be given with diplomacy and the use of proper language and have to be done with sincerity if we want others to follow [R8].

Bringing about change: One of the roles community leaders have to perform is to bring about social-economic changes to the community. Therefore they have to understand how to bring about change, especially in seeking agreement from others on the proposed changes. They have to seek views of others, plan the change, have the plan analyzed and discussed in meetings.

In bringing about change R6 indicated the need for the following skills:

You have always to plan and analyze every change that you want to bring to the community. Then, do something based on the views of community members and summarize all their views. For example, if we want to paint the *surau* (place of worship for Muslim community, but smaller than the mosque), then I will ask the members of the community for a suitable color. I will get various responses and views and then I will choose the color that will make most of them happy.

Working in a team: Leaders have to work effectively in a team. First the community leader has to build a strong and effective working team among the committee members of the Association. His working team then has to collaborate with others from the community and also those outside the community. Basically all the programs and activities conducted by the Association needs cooperation from various groups of people and team work skills are critical to achieve the desired community development goals.

One of the respondents, R7 emphasized the importance of communicating with each other in the team:

Always communicate with each other [in the team], conduct post-mortem for any activity that has been conducted.

While R8 indicated that:

Always give opportunities to get views or ideas from other committee members and not only based on our own opinions. It is important to get consensus among the people.

Social and volunteer work: The Neighborhood Association is an NGO under the auspices of the government. So participation in the committee of the Association is on a voluntary basis. This means they have to serve the Association and the community without any monetary rewards. Thus as indicated by the respondents that at all times they have to serve the community, lead by example, help any member of the community facing problems, show strong interest in work without asking for any reward, always ready to help others, always with the people in doing community work and encourage others to participate in activities organized for the community.

Respondents R5 emphasized the right attitude; R6 provided good examples while R7 used her experiences in approaching social and volunteer work for community development.

You need to have the interest in helping community that is to give voluntary service without asking for any payment. If you do not have this spirit, then you will not be able to do voluntary work [R5]

The leaders together with community members conduct volunteer work so that the people would not think that we are just using them. Example – I will clean the area together with the community members, otherwise they will not do it.

Used experience to help others, as I used my experiences with the Red Cross Association [R7]

Conflict resolution: Handling conflicts between various groups in the community is also a key skill of community leaders. There are conflicts between neighbors, among youths and among the various racial and religious groups. The leaders must know how to get the parties involved for negotiation, share their experiences and get some form of agreement from the parties involved. The leader should be able to provide advice to those people involved in the conflict and empower them to settle their differences. There are also cases where the leaders have to refer the conflict to outside parties such as the police and JPNIN.

For example, R1 indicated the way he handled a conflict between two neighbors, a Malay and an Indian. The Malay was offended because the Indian neighbor owned a dog, which is not acceptable to Muslim neighbors.

I called the parties involved for a face-to-face discussion and listen to their explanation. Then, as Chairman of the Association I offered them some advice. I advised the Indian neighbor not to own dogs because this is against regulations of those living in the apartment. The advice was well taken and the conflict was resolved.

The respondent R3 shared his experience in handling conflicts that have potential to become a major racial conflict.

The conflict occurs between the Malays and Indians at *Kampung* (Village) Y. The conflict was serious and so the Association has to handle the case with care so that it will not spread to other communities. The Association decides to call for a briefing with officers from JPNIN to discuss ways of resolving the conflict and insist on the various races living together harmoniously and peacefully.

In both cases, the leaders are Malays. However, the parties involved are Malays and Indians. So, it is a very difficult situation for the leaders since they do not want to be viewed with prejudice in resolving the cases. They have to be fair to all races and groups. This is one of the greatest challenges of resolving conflicts in multi-racial community.

Acquiring funds and resources: The Association receives only minimal financial support from the government in the form of an annual grant. This can barely cover the operational cost of the Association. Most often the Association has to raise their own funds for many of the activities they conduct. Thus the respondents indicated that they have to determine the amount of funds needed during the operating year and ensure how to obtain those funds. Thus they need the skills in acquiring funding for the Association. Based on their experiences the respondents said that they have to know and identify the sources of funds available, know the agencies that are willing to contribute, have good relationship with officers from government agencies and private companies and know the VIPs and local leaders. The leaders must be willing to write letters to people in high positions and also solicit for sponsors from private companies. The leaders must not be too dependent on collection from the community as this will burden the members. Thus the leaders must learn the skills to acquire funds and resources for the Association and community.

In acquiring funds for the Association, R5 indicated the need to have good relationship with others. He said that:

You need to have good relationship with individuals and relevant parties so that it is much easier for the committee to approach them in requesting for funding.

In this matter, R6 and R8 indicated the following skills:

To have a good relationship with community leaders, political representatives and ministers from the government. Example – I have known a few ministers that enabled me to get financial help for our community activities [R6].

Through experienceget sponsorship from private sector...and write letters to get sponsorship for related programs. Besides that we have to know officers from the government and the private sector so that it facilitates our request for sponsorship [R8]

Developing community programs: Developing programs that are relevant to the community is very crucial for the leaders. In developing community programs, the leaders must know how to plan, implement and evaluate them. As indicated by the respondents; they have to get and discuss ideas; always get feedback from others regarding programs and activities to be conducted; discuss proposed programs thoroughly before approving; have sharing and exchange of ideas, experiences and views when planning and conducting activities; prepare working paper; ensure adequate funds available; get participation of other agencies that want to cooperate; evaluate activities that have been conducted; observe activities to identify weaknesses to improve them; and conduct collaborative programs with others. Community leaders must be skillful in planning, conducting and evaluating programs.

In developing programs for the community some of the skills R5, R6 and R7 mentioned:

Observe activities conducted in other areas...determine their effectiveness and try to improve activities that have been conducted [R5]

Always discuss and seek opinions from the community members on what kinds of program they need that is good for them. Also discuss the program at the committee level to determine the program is good and can be approved. In conducting the program for the community examine the budget needed. Ensure and plan the financial requirement.... Also have a yearly plan for programs and activities to be conducted [R6].

Through experience, discussion with others, exchange of views and ideas. Besides that, make plans based on the ideas given, prepare working papers and make sure of the financial implications for the programs to be conducted. Also look for agencies that want to cooperate such as the Department of Health for health programs [R7].

Decision making: Making decision is also a very important task in the leadership process. The respondents indicated that: they have to get accurate information before making a decision; they have to be open and be able to accept ideas from others such as the committee members and do not reject them outright; they have to learn to evaluate and accept ideas according to the situation; sometimes in making certain decisions, they have to discuss things outside the meetings before making the desired decision; seek advice before making decisions; try not to be very authoritative or too forceful in making decisions; and use life experiences as a guide in making decisions.

The respondents, R5 and R6 indicated the skills for making decisions:

Through skills from attending courses and also get advice from officers from JPNIN, officers in high positions and VIPs for their views before deciding [R5]

Must be able to accept ideas or proposals from community members and not reject them outright [R6]

Developing good values and leadership practices: Community leaders are looked upon by others as people who can guide and assist them in their lives. Thus they need to understand and adopt good values and leadership practices in leading the community. The respondents indicated that they have:

To get trust from others; to provide example to members of the community, especially the new generation; to be respected by the members of the communities and not perceived in a bad manner; only to serve the communities; to have the confidence as leaders and also for members of the community to be confident with us; do not do things to destroy our image as leaders; to mix with members of the community in all events organized by them; do not select leaders with

tarnished background; to ensure leaders are respected and have the support of members of the community; develop good practices and avoid negative feedback by others; always follow the right foundation such as being honest, sincere and responsible; ensure that members of the community can relate to each other; develop good traits and values so that leaders are respected; always provide advice in proper language; always be friendly and address others, irrespective of age; have high discipline; honest in areas such as financial management; always watch what we say – good manners and do not say something nasty; firm in managing, according to situation and needs; know the difference between what is good and bad; have credibility and fair characteristic such as develop activities for all races and groups; dedicated to social work; highly committed; be transparent; always tell the truth; develop positive attitudes and ensure good relationships with others; ready to accept views from others; know our community well – social problems, activities, economic resources, etc; do not make false promises.

The leaders have to develop traits and values that are effective for leadership that include being honest, responsible, credible, friendly, fair, patient and be able to deliver.

ICT skills: The respondents also indicated they need ICT skills to help in their job as leaders. The skills are needed so that they: can speed up and make work processes more efficient; utilize ICT to write letters, reports and activities of the Association.

The following respondents emphasized the need for ICT skills.

Very important that now we need ICT to speed and increase efficiency for managing our work. For example, if there is a request from a community member that wants to go for pre-university education, then with a little knowledge of the Internet, I can help solve the problem [R6]

The use of ICT is important, and I learn through books and those who are expert in the area. Examples – the use of Internet and typing.

COMMUNITY LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

Initially many people believed that leaders were born. As such they focus on traits that were passed onto the children. However, over hundreds of years of research lead some to believe that leaders are made rather than being born. Vince Lombardi, the legendary American football coach said: “Contrary to the opinion of many people, leaders are not born, leaders are made, and they are made by effort and hard work” (Lussier & Achua, 2007:9). Abu Daud Silong (2009) on the other hand indicated that leaders are neither born nor made but they are developed over time. There is also such a thing as natural leaders. There are some innate leadership qualities that are found in leaders, but over time they also can develop some leadership qualities. Peter Drucker said that leaders are not born or made but they grow (Abu Daud Silong, 2009).

Thus leadership development is crucial in developing effective leaders in organizations. “Leadership development is fast becoming an increasingly critical and strategic imperative for organizations in the current business organizations. Recent historical events and emerging trends emphasize the need to invest in the active development of leaders “(Leskiw & Singh, 2007). Leadership development, now and in the future, is big business (Abu Daud Silong, 2009).

Similarly for community development, leadership is the key to achieving the desired goals. Initial research suggested that community leaders have to perform various roles for them to be effective. They have to be competent to perform those roles effectively. That means they must have the competencies – the right and relevant attitudes, skills and knowledge (ASK) to be effective community leaders.

This research has identified various competencies for community leaders in Malaysia. These competencies can be gained through various ways such as reading, experience and training. However, to ensure that the leaders have the required competencies, then a systematic program of leadership development effort must be initiated. Thus far the development for leaders of Neighborhood Association in Malaysia has been done on an *ad-hoc* basis, some learn on their own and some attend courses but not on a systematic basis.

Using the CCL competency wheel as a model and guide, this research identifies 10 major domains of ASK and competencies related to community leadership in Malaysia. These are: (1) Managing effective teams and work groups; (2) building and maintaining relationships; (3) leading diversity and difference, (4) developing others, (5) communicating effectively; (6) bringing about change; (7) solving problems; (8) setting vision and mission; (9) managing the work ; (10) developing good values and leadership practices (Table 1).

These are some key areas for building the competencies for community leaders in Malaysia. These competencies can be used as a base for training community leaders in the country. However, the training to be developed has to be systematically planned, conducted and evaluated.

In order that the training and development (T&D) effort provides the necessary impact on the effectiveness of community leaders, the training impact model will be used as guide. It includes four key elements: (1) The training definition problem; (2) training solution design; (3) individual performance and (4) organizational performance. Basically, this model begins with defining the problem related to leadership effectiveness, then providing the training solution that will impact individual and organizational performance.

The first phase will begin with analyzing what are the competencies the leaders are lacking for them to perform effectively as community leaders? The identified competencies can be used as a base in trying to develop the training program. However these competencies should be aligned to the needs of the various Associations and communities. Only by this aligning process, can the real problem be identified, quantified, defined and prioritized.

Table.1: The Domains for Attitudes, Skills and Knowledge and Competencies for Community Leaders

Domains for attitudes, knowledge and skills (ASK)	Competencies
<i>(1) Managing effective teams and work group</i> Represents ASK and ability to build effective work groups	Brings out the best in people, participative approach, forging synergy, building effective teams
<i>(2) Building and maintaining relationships</i> Represents ASK and ability to build relationship with various groups within as well as outside the community	Building relationship, putting people at ease, managing conflict, compassion and sensitivity, perspective-taking
<i>(3) Leading diversity and difference</i> Represents ASK and ability to lead groups of various races and religions and of various backgrounds	Multi-cultural awareness, living skills in a multiracial community, differences matter, valuing diversity, adapts to cultural differences, working with different groups in community and celebrating diversity.
<i>(4) Developing others</i> Represents ASK and ability to develop others, the committee members and various groups in the community through various ways	Guiding followers, developing followers, delegating, motivating, inspiring, mentoring and empowering others and providing them with various training opportunities
<i>(5) Communicating effectively</i> Represents ASK and ability to communicate effectively to various groups of people within and outside the community	Presenting information and ideas, communicating effectively - listening, persuading, asking questions, verbal and written communication, giving instructions
<i>(6) Bringing about change</i> Represents ASK and ability to bring about change, manage change, evaluate impact of change	Understand change, initiate change, manage change and measure impact of change
<i>(7) Solving problems</i> Represents ASK and ability leaders should have to be effective problem solvers and decision makers	Understanding process of problem solving, getting and analyzing information, findings solutions and, taking and evaluating action
<i>(8) Setting vision and mission</i> Represents ASK and ability associated with creating vision and direction of the Association and the community	Planning and setting direction, strategic thinking and planning, and visioning
<i>(9) Managing social and volunteer work</i> Represents ASK and ability that leaders should demonstrate to effectively manage work	Organizing work, set and achieve organizational goals, management, human resources, finance, acquiring funds and resources, use of ICT in work and communication, decision making and business orientations
<i>(10) Developing good values and leadership practices</i>	Develop good traits, values and leadership practices

The second phase involves designing and conducting the training program. Based on the problem identified a training solution is provided. It will include the learning objectives, content, learning experiences, instructors, participants, supports and facilities. Since the leaders have vast experiences, the training should be more oriented to an experiential kind of learning. Then the participants can share their experiences which will be meaningful to the participants. Berke et al. concluded that: (2008:55) “In short,

managers gain their most profound learning from live experience. Classroom events, coaching support, and other sources of learning must be geared toward a real-world setting” (Berke et al., 2008:55)

However, Berke et al. (2008) suggested a variety of experiences for people to learn. “It seems obvious that a variety of tactics are necessary to effectively transmit skills and information to a group to an entire level of managers in a company. But far too many development initiatives limit themselves” (Burke et al., 2008:55).

The next steps of the training are to determine whether the training solution has impacted the leaders’ performance as well as the Associations’ performance. Most training stops immediately when the training ends. They usually have an end of the course evaluation indicating how happy the participants were with the training provided. But seldom did they find out whether the training has impacted the participants in their situation and whether finally it has benefited the organization involved. Thus it is proposed that if training for community leaders is conducted, its impact should be determined. Evidence should be gathered to indicate its impact on the leaders’ performance and benefits to the Association and community.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The research has identified various competencies required by community leaders in Malaysia. The competencies are not very different from competencies identified for leaders in other situations such as public and private organizations. These are some competencies that are common to all leaders in most situations such as the abilities to communicate effectively, work in teams, manage, bring change, develop others, build and maintain relationships, lead diversity and differences and develop good values and leadership practices. The only major difference is the context of leadership, and in this study it focuses on community leadership in a multi-racial society. Hence the main role of leadership is to build a strong, peaceful and united community and thus competencies related to leading diversity and differences is one of the keys to success of community leadership. Another important aspect, community leadership in this study focuses on voluntary work. The leaders serve the Neighborhood Association and do social work without any rewards. Thus there is also need for the leaders to understand and internalize voluntarism in their leadership practice, adopting good leadership values and practices. It is recommended that JPNIN, as the government agency that assists the Neighborhood Associations nation wide in their development, should initiate a more systematic training for the community leaders. The competencies identified can be used as the base for such training.

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