

Effective Strategic Leadership from Islamic Perspective

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Arabic Abstract

نتيجة للتطور التقني والتكنولوجي السريع الذي يشهده العالم اليوم ، أصبحت القيادة الفعالة وجه من أوجه الإدارة الإستراتيجية الحديثة التي همها الأول والأخير هو مواجهة التحديات من أجل المنافسة وسط اقتصاد المعرفة وتحقيق التميز .
الهدف الأساسي من هذه الورقة البحثية هو مساعدة القادة سواء كانوا قادة دول ، إداريين ، مدراء مؤسسات ، ناشطين في العمل الاجتماعي ، قادة دينيين أو أي نوع من أنواع القيادة ، في معرفة أبعاد وأهمية الدور القيادي الذي يقومون به وكيف يكونوا قادة فاعلين في تحقيق أهداف منظماتهم وطموحات مجتمعاتهم.
لذا فإن أهمية الحديث عن موضوع القيادة الإستراتيجية الفعالة ودورها في تحقيق أهداف المؤسسات يعد من بين أهم القضايا التي تسعى إليها جل مؤسسات المجتمع سواء في القطاع العام أو الخاص
كفائد من أين ابدأ؟ وكيف أصبح قائداً استراتيجياً ناجحاً ومبدعاً؟ الورقة تحاول الإجابة علي هذه الأسئلة وغيرها من الأسئلة التي تدور في أذهان كثير من القادة سواء كانوا حديثي الدور بالقيادة أو ممارسين لها فعلاً.
تعرف الورقة القيادة بشكل شامل ومتكامل. ولأن كثير من الناس يخلطون في أذهانهم بين القيادة والسلطة ، فهي توضح الفرق بين السلطة والقيادة بالإضافة إلي تحديد السمات المهمة التي يجب أن يتميز بها القائد الناجح الفعال كما توضح الورقة أيضا الخصائص والمؤهلات الشخصية والعملية والفنية للقيادة الإستراتيجية الفعالة علي وجه العموم ومن منظور إسلامي بصفة خاصة.
تحاول الورقة البحثية كذلك التركيز بشكل أساسي على استعراض أهم الوسائل والطرق التي تساعد في إعداد وتنمية قيادات إدارية مؤهلة وفعالة تسهم في الرفع من مستوى الأداء المؤسسي الذي سينعكس بطبيعة الحال على النمو الاجتماعي والاقتصادي المستمر.

Preface:

As a result of technological development and modern techniques in today's world, the strategic effective leadership appeared as modern face of administration. The purpose of this paper is intended to help the professional leaders, whether they are team leaders, managers, school principals, community, religious or any other kind of leaders, to grapple with what exactly their role is, how to be effective in achieving the organizational goals and objectives; and realizing the aspirations of their societies.

As a leader, what I am to do? If I want to be an effective leader, where do I begin? What do I focus on? Where do I put my energy or my attention? How can I tell if my priorities are right? How to develop my abilities to be a creative leader?, for someone who is new to a leadership role or for someone who has been on a leadership these are key questions; we are going to look at in this paper.

The main Objectives of the paper is to give a comprehensive definition of leadership. Because there is often great confusion in people's mind about the concept of authority and leadership, this paper distinguishes between the two terms; in addition, it describes the most important personal, practical and technical characteristics of strategic effective leaders. The paper presents a model of leadership from Islamic perspective. It shows also the practical ways of how to create and develop a strategic leader. So, the subject of strategic effective leadership and its role in achieving the visions and objectives of any organization is so important, specially at the time being. It can be considered as the main tool, which all social and private institutions are used, and dynamic in achieving and accelerating sustainable social and economic development.

Definitions of Leadership

Although Leadership is an integral part of management and plays a vital role in managerial operations, it is not an attribute of business alone. It is in the army, in the government, in universities, in hospitals etc. and anywhere. Where people work in groups, the leadership function emerges and there must be somebody to guide that group.

After reading several books on the subject, we think that the best starting definition of leadership you can use is that: “leadership is the ability of developing and communicating a vision to a group of people that will make that vision true”.¹ This definition may sound simplistic and practical. Almost everybody understands it and can grasp the essence of leadership. According to me it is a great point to start reviewing and looking to leadership by knowing first who's a Leader? Ken Valenzuela (in 2007) stated that "a leader is someone who has a vision can communicate it and make it happen". A leader has to develop a vision, has to communicate it and has to achieve it. In order to achieve the vision (or goal) the leader has to master six practices. These can be mentioned as follows:²

1. The leader has to vision the future imagining exciting and ennobling possibilities. He also has to enlist others in a common vision by appealing to shared aspirations.
2. The leader has to foster collaboration promoting cooperative goals and building trust.
3. The leader has to strengthen others by sharing power and discretion.
4. The leader has to model the way and clarify his personal values and set the example aligning actions and share values.
5. The leader has to recognize contributions by showing appreciation for individual excellence.
6. The leader has to celebrate the values and victories by creating a spirit of community.

Another definition, the Leadership is “the art of influencing and inspiring subordinates to perform their duties willingly, competently and enthusiastically for achievement of group objectives”³. It is the art or process of influencing people so that they will strive willingly and enthusiastically toward the achievement group goals. It is important to add the element of “*willingness*” in the above definition. This element differentiates successful and effective leaders from the “common run of managers”. In other words, it's the willingness of people to follow that makes a person a leader.

Leaders act to help a group achieve objectives with the maximum application of its capabilities. They facilitate process and inspire the group to accomplish organizational goals. Most management experts agree that, “leadership is the process of influencing the activities of an individual or a group in effort towards goal achievement in a given situation”.

Leadership and Authority

In practice, there is often great confusion in people's mind about the concept of authority and leadership. It is useful to make some clear distinctions between these. Let us look at authority first. Authority has been defines as the right to command. According to Henery Fayol, authority is the right to give orders and make sure that these orders are obeyed.⁴ Authority gives the management the power to enforce obedience. He defines it as “conferred power to perform a service.

Authority can be delegated. We delegate to people the authority to speak or to make certain decisions, or certain initiatives on behalf of the group. The group, in turn, agrees to accept this person's authority and respect the actions they take within this authority role. An important aspect of this is that authority is essential something that people were given or it is a position that they are appointed to or elected to.

Leadership, on the other hand, is not something that people is given. It is essentially something that they take. Taking leadership can be described as a decision we make to see that things around us work well or that the situation in which we find ourselves are handled effectively. It does not require any authority. Remember that it is not part of leadership to think for, or impose decisions on, the member of the group. Leadership is an influence relationship rather than authority one. It is an influence relationship among leaders and collaborators. It is not necessary to occupy a formal position of authority in order to take leadership. There are many people, for example, with no formal authority who regularly take leadership and who make a big differences to the world around them. There are also people we can think of in positions of authority who are or were outstanding leaders. Similarly, though, there are people who have authority but who do not take leadership for one reason or another.

¹ www.BeALeader.Net, 2007.

² Ibid,p., 1.

³ Peter Drucker, The Practice of Management, Harper and Row, 1954.

⁴ Fayol, Henery, General and Industrial Management. Sir Issac Pitman and Son. London, 1949.

First, people have to be thought individually. How is each member of the group doing? What is going well for them and where do they need a hand? What potential do they have? Where do they need support from us? Essentially, thinking about people entails being able to see where they struggle and at the same time, seeing their strengths and their potential. Without these it will be difficult for a leader to figure out what makes sense in any situation.

Secondly, people have to be thought about collectively. This is quite different from just thinking about each individual. What is the situation facing the group? What is going on the group or the organization as a whole? What are the difficulties, challenges and what are the opportunities that it faces? What is the potential of this group? Thinking about these questions often involves taking account of such issues as relationships, communication, organization, morale, power, roles, goals, conflict and oppression. We are trying to understand where the group as a whole is struggling and how we can assist that struggle. A leader is great because of the followers. Nobody can be a great leader without great followers. In order to be an effective leader you must think about people and situation facing them.

Thirdly, the leader must think about what is happening in the wider situation that has implications for the individuals, the group or the organization. What is going in the wide environment help us to make sense of what is happening within our group? What are the key issues in the environment that might attend how we see our tasks or how we attain our goals? Thus the leader tries to understand the process operating within the group and between the group and the world at large. Bennis (in 1998) talks about the leader as someone who helps define reality, interprets events and makes sense of the complexity around people.⁵ As the sometimes, Tichy (in 2002) says the role of a leader is to see reality. The ability of leader to name or describe clearly what is happening is often a powerful resource for any group.

Finally, both the group or the organization and the individuals within it need to be thought about over time. What has happened in the past for this group? What might be happen in the future for the group? A good leader thinks about individuals in terms of their previous experience. What is happening to them in the present and what is possible in the future. It is not enough to think only in the short term. The leader must think about things will be over the long term. Having a clear understanding of both the past and the present and how things might evolve in the future. Having a vision of how things could be different is the key feature of effective leadership. A good leaders had a possibilities change and develop in the people around them.

Strategic Leadership:

Strategic leadership entails the common usage of the term *strategic*. It is related to the concept of strategy—simply a plan of action for accomplishing a goal. Strategy is a plan whose aim is to link ends, ways, and means. One finds both broad and narrow senses of the adjective *strategic*. Narrowly, the term denotes operating directly against military or industrial installations of an enemy during the conduct of war with the intent of destroying his military potential.) Today, *strategic* is used more often in its broader sense (e.g., strategic planning, decisions, bombing, and even leadership). Since the aim of strategy is to link ends, ways, and means, the aim of strategic leadership is to determine the ends, choose the best ways, and apply the most effective means. The strategy is the plan; strategic leadership is the thinking and decision making required developing and affecting the plan. *In short, one may define strategic leadership as the ability of an experienced, senior leader who has the wisdom and vision to create and execute plans and make consequential decisions in the volatile, uncertain, complex, and ambiguous strategic environment.*).⁶

Strategic leadership provides the vision and direction for the growth and success of an organization. To successfully deal with change, all executives need the skills and tools for both strategy formulation and implementation.

Strategic Leadership from Islamic Perspective:

In Islam leadership is a process of inspiring and coaching the voluntary followers in an effort to fulfill a clear as well as a shared vision. A strategic leader from the Islamic view is essentially a teacher and a coach. He leads by teaching leadership such that the followers in turn become good leaders.

⁵ Bennis, W. "The Secrets of great group". *Leader to Leader* {on-line}, 3, Winter, 29-33. Retrieved July 28, 2004 from <http://www>.

⁶ Gary Yukl *Leadership in Organizations*, Prentice Hall, fifth edition was published in 2002.

Good leadership is providing a model to be followed. In Islam leader is not free to act as he chooses, nor must he submit to the wishes of any group, he in a majority or influential minority, he must act only to implement All's laws on earth. The essence of prophet hood is the exercise of power and authority to achieve the Divine purpose, and this is linked to leadership. The prophet (pbuh) thus combined in his person the authority of the Messenger, a mentor to common humanity, leader of family, head of state, diplomat, commander of the army, and a pioneer to a world social order. The biography of the prophet, therefore, offers an important lesson in leadership in all facts of life, and it is quite essential model for all Muslims. The Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) was a model of conduct for the umma (uswa hasana).⁷

Leadership is not a professional calling or a preserve of a few selected people. The Islamic view is that every Muslim is a leader in his or her own way. Everybody has leadership responsibility (kullukum raa'i) and everybody is accountable on how well they discharged that responsibility. Abdullah Ibn Omar reported the Apostle of Allah (may and peace be upon him) as saying: Each of you is a shepherd and each of you is responsible of his flock. The amir (ruler) whose over the people is a shepherd and is responsible for his flock; a man is a shepherd in charge of the inhabitants of his household and he is responsible for his flock; a woman is a shepherdess in charge of her husband's house and children and she is responsible for them; and a man's slave is a shepherd in charge of his master's property and he is responsible for it. So each of you is a shepherd and each of you is responsible for his flock".⁸

The society cannot exist or function well without leaders. When any three Muslims are on a journey they are required to select one of them as a leader. Lack of leadership is anarchy. Leadership should aim at excellence in all endeavors. Excellence (ihسان) is a pillar of religion (usul al ddiin) and must manifest in whatever a Muslim does. The Prophet (PBUH) taught us to perfect whatever we undertake to do (itqaan al 'amal).

Leadership is both science and art. It is experience and knowledge. Leadership attributes skills are not inborn but are acquired and anybody can learn to be a good leader. There are personal qualities that distinguish one leader from another. For example, Abubakr al Siddiq had a personality that marked him among men as a leader. The Prophet recognized strength in Omar Ibn al Khattab and always prayed to Allah to strengthen Islam with him.

Special Qualities of the Islamic Leadership

Qualities of effective leadership are: Influence, creates a vision of the future, rational strategy to move to the vision, enlists the support of workers and the ability to comprehend that human beings have differing motivating forces at varying times and in different situations.

Effective Islamic leaders are model what they breach and demonstrate integrity in how they behave. There is consistency between their values, their vision, their standard and their behavior. For many group effective leaders are especially able to model a sense of hope and encouragement for people. They also model the belief and confidence in the people around them. For example, when Omar Ibn Alkhatab was appointed as a califa, (Muslim Leader) he addressed the people, saying: "Now that I am in charge of your affairs, be sure that roughness has been increased. My severity will show on the unjust and the enemies of the Muslims. But for those who are peaceful, religious, and with good intentions, I am softer on them than they would be with each other. I will not allow any one to be unfair or to encroach upon somebody else. But those who do, I would put their face on the ground, and put my foot on their chest until they accept what is right.

With all this severity I am ready to lower my head to the poor and to the contented. You can find in me the following characteristics which I promise to maintain. Firstly, I will never touch any money from the tax we collect, or from alms money. Secondly, nothing of state money will be spent except in the right way. Moreover, I am going to increase what is assigned to you and to defend the country. I also promise not to lend you to destructive wars, and not to leave soldiers for long period on the front lines. When you go on an expedition, I promise to take responsibility for your families until you come back. Slaves of Alla watch Alla in every action. Help me in governing you by being righteous; and help me against myself by giving me the right advice and by stopping me from committing any thin. Having accepted what I wanted to say, I ask Alla for forgiveness for me and you. Self-confidence is seen in Omar's speech which reflects his ambition and strength.

⁷ Abu-AlFaz Lzzati, Leadership and Unity in Islam, The Islamic Guidance Society, (2002).

⁸ Abu Daud 2:827, chapter 1089.

In this speech Omer clarified his policies, stating that severity will be used against the unjust and against aggressive people, while kindness will be shown to the kind and the obedient. Money, on the other hand, will be spent where it is appropriate, and soldiers will not be kept away from their families, and their families will be looked after, the country will be defended and people consulted in decision-making.

History shows that Omar's words were not mere promise were prove in action. There is another point in Omar's leader that relates to social change, namely his being kind, merciful and caring. Omar's strong personality, his enthusiasm in applying Islam and his unflinching sense of justice, have all contributed to his unmatched success in holding the Muslim Arabs together, expanding Islam, establishing the required financial supervision and the judiciary, and building urban centers in Iraq and Egypt. So, the effectiveness of leadership depends on the following:

- 1- Personality and character of the leader.
- 2- Quality of the workers.
- 3- Quality and atmosphere of the Jamaah.

The importance of the personality and characteristics of a leader is that: Leader is the symbol of the organization and represents its nature and quality. Leader is the center of authority. And he is the driving force for the Jamaah.

Another Spiritual, Practical and Technical Qualities are:⁹

1. Taqwah, deep spirituality with excellent conduct and character are the special characteristics of a leader from Islamic point of view. This is to be done through a constant struggle to develop:
 - A. Close relation with Allah (SWT).
 - B. Love of the Prophet (SAW), Sahaba and Ulama.
 - C. Concern and fear of the accountability in the Akhirah.
 - D. Knowledge and practice of Islam, administrative experience, and wisdom (hikmah) of leadership. He must deeply understanding of the Deen and its application in the changing environment. Establishing Al Islam is the true objective of his life. He must be an example for *Iman* (faith), *I'lm* (knowledge), and *A'mal* (action). He must have true love and priority for his mission and the Jamaah.
2. A leader must demonstrate his dedication and commitment to the organizational mission, goals and objectives by hard work and self-sacrifice. He must be honest, trustworthiness, with history of selfless service.
3. Competence. He should have the critical skills of leadership, i.e., observation, analysis, coaching, recognizing the potentials, delegation and feedback.
4. Decision making ability after appropriate consultation and then ability to implement the decision.
5. Successful leader should be flexible in his attitude with Hikmah depending upon the situation but he should be firm in his decisions and zeal to move to the objectives.
6. Strategic leaders must have the potential to understand their own moods and emotions, as well as their impact on others. He must be friendly and social.
7. Effective leaders are proficient at delegation. They are well aware of the fact that delegation will avoid overloading of responsibilities on the leaders. They also must recognize the fact that authorizing the subordinates to make decisions will motivate them a lot.
- 8- Strategic leader should have ability to speak, write and use modern techniques of communication. Moreover, he must have good physical health.
- 9- Strategic leader should be willing to take risk. Routine work how well done never makes a leader. Good leaders always charter the unknown. They must accepted and seek new challenges.

How to create and develop a Strategic Leader

Creation and development of a strategic leader involves a number of important aspects. First, the most important, indeed foundational, part of this preparation concerns values, ethics, codes, morals, and standards.

⁹ Mohammad Yunus, Leadership in Islam ,on Mar 05, 2008 Islamic perspective on leadership.

Second, the path to strategic leadership resembles the building of a pyramid. Shortcuts do not exist, and one can't start at the top-strategic (fig. 1). Leaders are made, not born. Strategic leaders gradually build wisdom, defined as acquiring experiences over time.¹⁰



Figure 1. Anatomy of a Strategic Leader

Strategic leadership begins with organizational values, ethics, codes, moral and standards, the foundation of our profession. Upon this foundation, the leader develops an abstract body of expert knowledge based primarily on experience and basic skills. Continuing education can expand, and accelerate development. One must also remember that there are certain activities that can accelerate these experiences and widen perspectives. Next the leader is exposed to command responsibility and accountability, a vital phase during which the leader gets his or her first real taste of consequential decision making. Further education in strategic-thinking skills enhances the leader's competence. In each case, a leader could have opportunities to exercise strategic competency in support of a strategic leader. Ultimately, the leader will participate in strategic decision making and become a strategic leader.

Self-assessment and development are so important interpersonal skills. Self-assessment will help identify strengths and weaknesses. As a follow-up to the self-assessment, aspiring leaders should ask themselves a series of questions: What are my strengths? How can I capitalize on them? Where are my weaknesses? What can I do about them? Where do I want to be in the future? How can I get there? Do I really want to commit to development? The last question is the most difficult one. Those who answer yes are ready to begin the journey toward becoming strategic leaders.

Self-learning is also valuable, especially reading. All strategic leaders read outside their normal area of expertise. Strategic leaders to expand their perspective and increase their conceptual ability, in fact, many of them are experts in a number of unrelated fields. Becoming a "dual expert" helps one think in multiple dimensions.

Conclusion

We conclude by answering for the question how to create leader? In turning other people into leaders is a vital part of a leader's job, what can we do to achieve this? Simple steps to turn people into leaders. First we have to raise with people the possibility of their becoming leaders. This we can do in a variety of ways. We can ask them for help. We can praise their leadership qualities; we can create roles and ask them to fill them. We can talk about the need for leadership. Anything that encourages people to think of themselves as having a leadership role will be helpful. We conclude by answering for the question what about those who are not born leaders but have responsibilities? We can say to them they should try to acquire the required qualities of leadership. We don't ask for position, yet it's not allowed to escape from the responsibility. We know that the position is not attractive, but full of responsibilities. We should have firm faith in Allah. He is the one who gave us this responsibility and he will help us to fulfill it.

¹⁰T.Owen Jacobs, *Strategic Leadership: The Competitive Edge* (Fort Lesley J. McNair, Washington, D.C.: Industrial College of the Armed Forces, 2000), 24.

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