

МЕМЛЕКЕТТІК ҚЫЗМЕТ CIVIL SERVICE ГОСУДАРСТВЕННАЯ СЛУЖБА

MAXIMIZING PUBLIC SECTOR LEADERSHIP CAPACITY: A COMMUNICATION PERSPECTIVE

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Abstract. Leaders in the public sector face many unique challenges when compared with their counterparts in the private sector. Public sector managers are expected to achieve ever-increasing performance without corresponding increases in revenues since citizens are usually resistant to increased taxation. It is therefore essential to examine how public organizations develop the leadership capacities and skills needed to address this and other myriads of issues. This paper provides a brief overview of the intricacies of public sector leadership in times of disruption. It discusses how public organizations can develop leaders with requisite communication skills and competencies needed for sustainable long-term organizational efficiency and effectiveness.

Keywords: public sector leadership, public sector leadership communication, leadership capacity competencies, organizational performance

Аннотация. Лидеры государственного сектора сталкиваются с рядом особых проблем, когда их сравнивают с представителями частного сектора. Ожидается, что руководители государственного сектора достигают растущих показателей без увеличения расходов, так как граждане, как правило, несогласны с растущими налогами. Поэтому важно исследовать то, как государственные организации развивают лидерские качества и способности, которые нужны для того, чтобы разрешить эту и многие другие проблемы. В данном исследовании содержится краткий обзор на тонкости руководства в государственном секторе во времена дестабилизации. В докладе обсуждается вопрос того, как государственные организации могут развивать лидеров с необходимыми коммуникативными способностями и профессионализмом, нужные для устойчивой и долгосрочной эффективности, а также продуктивности работы организации.

Ключевые слова: лидерство государственного сектора, лидерская коммуникация в государственном секторе, лидерские качества, эффективность работы организации

Аңдатпа. Мемлекеттік сектор жетекшілері жеке меншік секторлар өкілдерімен салыстыру барысында бірқатар өзгеше мәселелерге тап болады. Мемлекеттік сектор басшылары шығындар ұлғаюсыз үдемелі көрсеткіштерге қол жеткізеді деп үміт артылуда, себебі қағида бойынша азаматтар салықтар өсуіне қарсы. Сол себепті мемлекеттік ұйымдар осы және басқа да көптеген мәселелерді шешу үшін қажет жетекшілік қасиеттер мен қабілеттерін дамытатын тәсілдерді зерттеу маңызды. Зерттеу жұмысында дестабилизация жағдайында мемлекеттік секторда жетекшілік егжей-тегжейіне қысқаша шолу беріледі. Бұл еңбекте мемлекеттік ұйымдар олардың ұзақ мерзімді және тұрақты, сонымен қатар тиімді және нәтижелі жұмысына қажетті коммуникативтік қабілеттер мен кәсіпқойлыққа ие жетекшілерді дамыту жолдары талқыланады.

Тірек сөздер: мемлекеттік сектордағы көшбасшылық, мемлекеттік сектор жетекшілігінің коммуникациясы, жетекшілік қасиеттер кәсіпқойлығы, ұйым жұмысының тиімділігі.

JEL code: H11, H70, D73, D83

INTRODUCTION

There continue to be on-going debates about the effectiveness, efficiency and high-quality service of the public sector. To manage today's public sector, in a global continually changing environment, requires public sector leaders to develop high-level

communication competencies. Thus, they can efficiently and effectively communicate with and deliver solutions to the citizenry and build their image and reputation. "Public sector organizations have traditionally been blamed for bureaucracy, slowness, inefficiency, and corruption. These apparent

failings have resulted in poor relationships between the public sector and citizens.” (Canel and Luoma-Aho, 2018, 3)

Communication helps public sector leaders to manage and actively participate in the creation of public nooks of comprehension. In them, citizens and public sector organizations understand their mutual expectations and capabilities of delivering the expected outcome. Productive dialogue and actions of engagement are the means of achieving comprehension and building support on both sides. They are in line with what Canel and Sanders (2014) view as one of the cores of civic purposes of public sector communications, namely “[b]uilding long-term relationships, mutual understanding and citizen engagement” (101).

These realities call for an urgent need to fill the growing gap of leadership communication talent. Public sector leadership needs strategic communication know-how to interact with, engage, and help internal publics and external stakeholders - to be adequate to the contemporary dynamics of the public sector.

According to Beinecke (2009), growing the new generation of public sector leaders may be the single most critical responsibility of current senior public service leaders. Challenges such as global uncertainty, individualized social relations, and competing populist narratives create a disruptive social discourse. It presses the need for reconsideration of the communication public sector leadership conducts in such a volatile environment. The importance of identification and development of leadership potential, together with the process selected by an organization, cannot be understated. The outcomes of leadership succession choices may have an enormous impact on organizational directions and policies (Lynn, 2001).

Additionally, the ability of an organization to survive and thrive in turbulent times springs from its ability to develop sustained and high-quality leadership over time. Sustained innovation extends beyond a sector (public or private) characteristics and encompasses the leadership capacity of all organizations. How an organization deals with its leadership issues is an indication of its

ability to develop its intellectual capacity needed for it to thrive. This question is no less the case for public agencies, which continue to encounter formidable challenges in identifying, educating, and building the next generation of public sector leaders.

There is a need to better understand and improve the practice of leadership in the public sector because of the current modernization of public functions, and the emergence of various management models, such as *new public management* (NPM) and *new public governance* (NPG). This trend calls for engaging additional public service actors such as agencies, partners, community organizations and others. It emphasizes results, efficient and effective management, and service quality (Lemay, 2009). Leaders in the public sector are required to have the requisite skills that encompass shared values, empowering stakeholders, and effectively communicating information (Beinecke, 2009). In the current context of public sector models of transparency and accountability, the right kind of leaders have implications for public sector governance (Lemay, 2009). While much study exists in the area of leadership in the private sector, research on the issue of public sector leadership is hardly sufficient. The current paper addresses some of the complexities of public sector leadership through the implementation of effective communication and offers suggestions on how leadership competencies in the public sector can be enhanced.

DISCUSSION

Why Public Sector Leadership

It is crucial to fully appreciate the unique nature and paradoxes that embody public sector leadership in such times of unprecedented technological disruption (PwC, 2018). This tech disruption brings opportunities for new industries, which never existent before, to spring up and flourish. It also pushes improvements in sectors such as healthcare, education (on all levels), transportation, and cities, increasing their reliability, efficiency and sustainability.

Disruption requires change, and if public or private “institutions can’t adapt, they could lose the right to lead” (Sheppard and Droog, 2019). With the challenges

citizens face today, they “are looking to governments to provide a guiding hand and steer a course that continues to bring prosperity in the midst of uncertainty” (Suarez and Abdallah, 2019, 10). Therefore, it is vital to fully appreciate the unique nature and paradoxes that embody public sector leadership. Such an understanding helps to illuminate the distinction between the public and the private sector.

As stated by Bilimoria and Godwing (2005), the private and public sector vary in terms of goals, structure, accountability, budgets, and ownership. Fottler (1981) indicates that values, incentives, and internal and external constraints are critical institutional differences between the public and private sectors. Similarly, Van Slyke and Alexander (2006) illustrate some differences between public and private sector organizations as follows:

First, public sector leaders operate in an environment that is influenced by political considerations, which is not the case in the private sector. Second, most civic organizations do not have the same strategic freedom that private companies have since politicians decide some of their strategic goals. This lack of freedom constrains public organizations' ability to operate and may, in some instances, force them to make decisions, which are not sound for the society at large. Third, public organizations are more open to environmental influences as a result of accountability to multiple constituencies, policymakers, legislative mandates, interest groups, citizens. Therefore, public sector leaders should focus on creating public value together with the operational capacity to deliver that value. They should also provide general support to the organization, rather than performance in financial terms (such as profit and stock price). All these are aspects of the public sector leadership process, which consists of:

(1) providing the results required by authorized processes in an efficient, effective and legal manner,

(2) developing and supporting followers who provide those results, and

(3) aligning the organization with its environment. (Orazi, Turrini and Valotti, 2013, 490)

In terms of human capital (such as the role of political appointees, civil service and

personnel protection, and methods of rewards and sanctions for public employees), public sector leaders do not have the range and flexibility of rewards and the discretion and authority with which to provide incentives for performance as their counterparts in the private sector. They may also lack the flexibility to impose sanctions on subordinates who fall short of performance expectations (Kamensky and Morales, 2007). Furthermore, the nature of leadership in public organizations is such that decision making and implementation are more incremental and deliberative.

Most of the public organizations have minimal leeway in some aspects of human resource management. Many civil servants are under collective bargaining agreements that limit the public organizations' use of incentives with employees. All these factors indicate that public sector leaders require a different mix of skills to effectively lead and manage the unique nature of public sector organizations.

Public Leadership Values

While leadership involves the accomplishment of change and efficient and effective use of resources, public leadership is further grounded in normative and value-based questions of democratic governance. For example, the role of public administration in facilitating citizenship and dialogue about public interest (Lemay, 2009). A normative model of public leadership emphasizes such factors as the public interest, collaboration, constitutional values, citizenship, democratic values, networks of relationships, multiple layers of accountability, and a view of public administration as part of the governance process (Denhardt and Campbell, 2006). There are several examples of normative perspectives, such as the New Public Administration, the New Public Governance, and the Refounding Public Administration. The New Public Administration calls for social equity. The New Public Governance focuses on the governance of processes and service effectiveness and outcomes. The Refounding Public Administration project defines public administration as competence directed toward the public interest and emphasizes the critical role of citizens in the process (Osborne, 2006; Frederickson, 1996). Additionally, the New Public Service emphasizes the importance

of democratic values, citizenship, and public interest as the normative basis of public administration. These normative values underpin the complex nature under which public sector leaders have to operate.

Public Leadership Competencies

According to Thach and Thompson (2007), there are specific competencies necessary for effective leadership in both the business and public sectors. These include the competency clusters of vision and goal-setting, interpersonal skills, self-knowledge, and technical competence regarding the specific areas of skills in which the leader works (Pedersen and Hartley, 2008). Indication, public leaders should be able to navigate between the various competing interests of the multiple stakeholders whom they serve, usually with limited resources. Consequently, effective public sector leaders should be capable of establishing and reinforcing values and purpose. They need to be able to develop strategies necessary to achieve a vision and build a community to implement these strategies. Moreover, public sector leaders have to initiate and manage the changes required to assure growth and survival (Block and Manning, 2007). Importantly, accountability mechanisms should be built into the implementation of competency models to ensure that leadership competencies are being emphasized (Groves, 2007).

Public leadership competencies vary following the type of leadership style. Transformational leadership, for instance, is inspirational in its core. Such leaders succeed in articulating the mission of an organization with a purpose and vision reaching beyond the horizon. On the other hand, transactional leadership differs with monitoring performance, intervention and corrective action in case of underperformance, rewarding high performance, and diagnosing explicit or implicit needs. Regardless of the leadership style, the feature both of them share is communication. Leadership communication enables the achievement and management of mutually shared understanding “when thoughts expressed in talk or action are recognized by others as capable of progressing tasks or problems which are important to them” (Robinson, 2001, 93).

Challenges of Public Leadership

Public sector leaders are expected to adapt to a changing environment shaped by security threats, globalization, technological and economic changes, and evolving governance structures (Van Slyke and Alexander 2006). Changes in the political and global environment such as shifting public demands, changes in technology, budgetary cuts, and a variety of other factors demand public sector leaders manage organizations that can respond quickly and successfully to these changes (Moore, 2000; Osborne, 2006; Demarais and Abord de Chatillon, 2010). Since public sector leaders are expected to manage these changes while striving to improve the quality of services and governance, they need to have a fuller and more sophisticated understanding of how organizations function under conditions of complexity and uncertainty (Hartley et al., 2002). The fact that public sector organizations are expected to exhibit many features of the private sector, including some scope of entrepreneurial behaviour as called for in new public management (NPM) principles imply that they have to shift policy towards greater competition in the public sector and to apply private-sector style leadership and management practices to the public domain (White 2000; Osborne, 2010). Approaches that recognize the values of the public sector and pose new challenges in the area of balancing efficiency with the norms and values of public administration (i.e. equity, service, citizenship, etc.) have to adjust these strategies.

Challenges of Public Leadership Communication

Leadership communication as a projection of public leadership and management also faces challenges. The five common global challenges that public sector communicators face, detailed in The Leaders' Report: Increasing Trust through Citizen Engagement 2018, are:

1. *increasing levels of distrust,*
 2. *lack of understanding and inability to effectively connect with audiences,*
 3. *asymmetrical communication,*
 4. *inadequate digital and social media communication skills*
 5. *insufficient level of influence within and across the public organization.*
- (Larkins, Harrison, Howard and King, 2018).

The Leaders' Report: increasing trust through citizen engagement 2018 provides a comprehensive, global overview of the challenges public sector communication faces. The research methodology employed a mixed-method approach including two quantitative surveys: one with 400 plus government communicators across 50 countries and a second one with 8,000 citizens across eight countries, and in-depth qualitative interviews with more than 60 senior government communication leaders across all continents.

1. Increasing levels of distrust

Citizens' discontent with their public sector institutions and leaders resulted in 60% distrust in on a global scale. The high percentage of distrust springs from the rise of populist unkept promises, which the public considers as campaigning messages. The findings of The 2018 Leaders' Report, 75% of the respondents stated that their voices remain uncouncted in essential public decisions. Thus the public sector institutions were perceived as somewhat self-centred, which marginalize the citizenry with their needs, wants, and desires. Such attitude results in a lack of mutual understanding and engagement and creating a highly bureaucratic public sector.

2. Lack of understanding and inability to effectively connect with audiences

Speaking to the general public continued to be the prevailing communication approach of public sector institutions despite the intensified grouping of people in various segments of society. A solution to would be a personalized communication approach, which takes into consideration the rather specific needs of this segment of society. The development of social media increased the expectations of citizens for such personalized communication. The main reasons behind the generic communication of public sector organizations are the lack of capacity (insufficient human resources) and the lack of capability (inadequate specialized communication).

3. Asymmetrical communication

Public sector communications continue to be a predominantly one-way mass activity. Public institutions indeed have various social media accounts. However, the effective use of them is somewhat questionable. Experts and

general public respondents stated that government communications, on all levels, serves to disseminate mass information instead of engaging stakeholders in a meaningful dialogue.

4. Inadequate digital and social media communication skills

To abandon the common asymmetric communication practice, which public sector organizations conduct, will require filling up the practical skills gaps. The employees responsible for the internal and external communication of the public sector organization have to upgrade their competences in digital and social media. Social networking websites provide the opportunity for conducting a productive dialogue with the organization's followers. The dynamic development and of social media, networking websites, apps increased the expectations of citizens for direct interaction, timely high quality, interactive, and useful content, remote access to public services across various platforms.

5. Insufficient level of influence within and across public organizations

Public leaders still hold a view of public communication as primarily image-making, and not so much as an essential managerial function. Public-sector communicators are, to a great extent, marginalized from the policymaking process. Their job predominantly includes "selling" the policy to the public. This practice of public sector organization management has two main flaws:

1) *Speaking in a fragmented voice sending undirected versions of a message and*

2) *Closes the organizational system of the organization and makes it highly vulnerable to crisis.*

Implications and suggestions for further research

Public leadership and management consist of interactions between the public and private spheres. Therefore, public sector leadership and management must find ways to navigate and coordinate the variety of stakeholders that must be included in deliberations, networks, and strategy formulation to enhance organizational effectiveness (Marsh, 2006). An appreciation of the issues involved in public sector leadership also has implications for public management

education. The continuous changes in the global, political and policy context require continual innovation that incorporates current trends in leadership in the institutions of public management.

There is also a need for more understanding of the importance of sectoral distinctions (public, private, non-profits) with regards to leadership issues and the effects of the contexts on organizational outcomes. This need is especially real, considering the capabilities needed by public sector leaders to moderate their environments and participate in policy processes. As Van Slyke and Alexander (2006) state, the challenge is in conceptualizing how public sector leadership context uniquely affects leadership and organizational effectiveness.

The dynamics of current global disruption requires a deeper understanding of the role and place of communication in public sector leadership. It imposes the necessity of conducting a proactive, transparent, and productive dialogue with the citizens. Today the "bold, effective and efficient decision-making in the age of disruption becomes one the most fundamental demands of public sector leadership" (Suarez and Abdallah, 2019, 44) communicated in a productive dialogue.

CONCLUSION

The challenges for public sector leaders and managers are considerable. Not only do they have to address various policy tensions, but they also have to work in an increasingly contradictory set of inter-

relations between the state, the market and civil society organizations.

There are usually different opposing paradigms of public governance at work at the same time, with complex demands. For example, requirements for accountability, control and risk management mean that elements of bureaucracy remain in enforce. On the other hand, the need for higher efficiency, economies of scale and citizen responsiveness have encouraged the implementation of lean management, national standards and inspections. Besides, engaging in networks and partnerships to achieve innovation, user options and joined-up services, and ultimately to satisfy customer choice at the point of delivery, must be encouraged.

Public organizations need competent leaders to respond to the various challenges of the contemporary global environment. The implementation of an integrated leadership development system is critical for public sector organizations. Because of the context under which most public sector organizations operate, changes in leadership and its associated political priorities can quickly alter the importance of leadership development on the organizational agenda. Thus, it is essential to enshrine systemic leadership development in the culture of public organizations.

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