

A PROPOSAL FOR THE ESTABLISHMENT OF AN ISLAMIC LEADERSHIP INSTITUTION

A. S. MAJALI*

INTRODUCTION

Leadership is the ability to show the way, to guide or conduct, to direct and govern, to influence the actions or opinions of others. Ibn Khaldoun said: "Human social organization is something necessary. The philosophers expressed this fact by saying man is (political) by nature.

Through cooperation, the needs of a number of persons, many times greater than their own (number), can be satisfied. When mankind has achieved social organization,... and civilization in the world has thus become a fact, peoples need someone to exercise a restraining influence and keep them apart, for aggressiveness and injustice are in the animal nature of man. The person who exercises a restraining influence... must be one of themselves".

Ibn Khaldoun shares an acute insightfulness with men of diverse professions who not only excelled in this particular 'science' but actively concerned themselves with the basic features of man and society.

Leadership is both a science and an art. It is a dynamic activity that can transform a static administrative organ into a forceful and mobile one. Leadership consists of a number of integrated skills and aptitudes, which, together with individual attitudes, make up the personality of a leader. People in general do not object to being led, and do better when led creatively and properly. The leader's responsibility is to activate the energies of his institution, unit the minds of those who work in it, coordinate their efforts and encourage them to perform their roles willingly and successfully. Leadership is regarded as a human activity, fostered by a human institution and intended to promote organized goals and objectives.

Leadership implies a deep sense of responsibility and dedication to serve others and to enable them to realize fully their inherent capabilities. It also means the ability to take initiatives and to respond to the initiative of others. A leader is one whose intellectual aptitudes qualify him to 'be ahead', to lead others towards clear-cut objectives undeterred by contingent obstacles and un-distracted by

minor details. A leader does not deal with the management of material resources, but with people themselves, changeable in a changeable world. To be successful, a leader must take all human and natural variables into consideration.

LEADERSHIP: A HUMAN NEED

Our world is in need of peace and justice. For these two forces to prevail more understanding and compassion must be achieved through the endeavors of nations to understand each others' problems and aspirations. Likewise, further understanding is needed between governments and the people they govern, as well as, between the different branches of government within the same country. Thus, the need arises for future leaders from all walks of life to interact with other peoples needs and problems, both at a national and international level. This does not mean a dominating elite, but rather persons in positions of responsibility who are dedicated to serving and assisting others in realizing their full human potential. This means taking initiatives as well as responding supportively to the initiative of others.

Ignorance and the lack of understanding make up the basis for conflict between individuals, institutions, and nations, with consequential losses in efficiency and often material human suffering. It is in the interest of the individuals and the leaders in every nation to develop a capacity to understand the needs of others and to cooperate in assisting in their fulfillment.

As we approach the 21st century it is increasingly apparent that strictly national efforts to respond to human needs and to develop human potentials are inadequate. Efforts to respond to universal aspirations for peace and security, economic well-being, and respect for human dignity must be assisted by leaders who understand world interests as well as national and institutional interests.

THE NEED FOR LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

The future of human civilization closely parallels the performance of its leaders. It is crucial, therefore, that

*From University of Jordan, P.O. Box 1682, Amman, Jordan.

leaders be aware of the decisive role they play in determining human destiny. Because of the importance of their role in formulating social objectives and orientations, leaders should be aided in their development. This development can be achieved through a combination of education, training, and experience.

Training is the acquisition of a number of behavioral skills programmed on the assumption that tasks can be precisely defined, and therefore, be subdivided and analyzed so as to discover the ideal way of carrying them out.

Education is the development of the ability to engage in mature intellectual analysis and evaluation and to beyond successive discrete 'facts'. Education is a process of explaining and understanding knowledge. Although it does not aim at providing individuals with specific formulated answers, it develops their mental ability to think logically, to perceive relations and variations, and to understand the phenomenon under consideration. A leader's work is thus, like that of the philosopher and the scholar, a complex activity with so many ramifications that programming is rendered futile.

A great deal of what leaders do can be studied and taught, but very little of it can be programmed for others to imitate. Leaders are constantly dealing with variables which resist tabulation or patterning. There is no 'correct' or 'ideal' method that all leaders should follow. There are, rather, general guidelines to solve everyday tasks and issues. In fact, leadership can not be taught. What can be taught is something about leadership. One can teach what leaders do, but this does not mean that trainees will necessarily acquire the qualities of leadership. Nevertheless, educating future leaders is an important task that should be given prime attention by all policy-makers in our increasingly complex technologically-oriented society.

All systems, whether political, economic, or social, whether democratic, authoritarian, or autocratic are influenced by the kinds of leaders they have. All their policies, laws, and regulations are to some extent influenced by the leader's personality, experiences, ambitions, and principles. Therefore, the development of a leader enhances his ability to effect beneficial efficient and far-reaching changes for the betterment of his constituency.

Thus, the importance of early development of potential leaders who are responsive to the needs of their local communities as well as the circumstances of neighboring countries, and who are well-informed about world cultures and current affairs can hardly be over-emphasized. Effec-

tive leadership is not simply a product of personal traits and attributes but also of skills, habits, and experiences that can be acquired. It is important to try to influence future leaders by building up their human concepts and relationships through constant exposure to direct experiences prior to their assumption of positions of responsibility. Since the number of young people in the world is on the increase, and since the problems facing the young are also on the increase, it has become abundantly clear that young leaders everywhere are needed to assume the onerous task of leading the new world ahead.

CURRENT LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMS

In response to the need for leadership, societies historically have established institutions to prepare leaders for political, diplomatic, administrative, military, economic, educational, and other forms of service. Sometimes this has been done on a regional basis. But institutions devoted to preparation of leaders with global outlooks who can cooperate within and across national and other institutional boundaries are virtually non-existent.

In the normal course of career development, leaders usually have little opportunity to gain comprehensive knowledge of the world, its people, and other leaders. Many have scarcely left their own country or region, few have direct knowledge of world conditions. Preoccupied with gaining and later maintaining positions of influence, they normally have little opportunity for comprehensive study, reflection, and sharing of experiences with persons outside their own sector of activity. When top positions are reached, requiring global perspective, sensitivity to human needs, and ability to establish confident working relations with other leaders to solve pressing problems, there is scant opportunity to acquire these experiences. The international education obtained in summit meetings, state visits, and brief appearances at international gatherings falls short of what might be accomplished by early preparation for world-responsive leadership.

Although some pioneering accomplishments exist, there is now little research devoted to comprehensive understanding of the nature, problems, and needs of world leadership. More must be known about national and international processes of leadership within and across sectors so that both leaders and followers can improve leadership performance to serve human needs.

There is now no global resources of leadership knowledge and consulting advice upon which leaders and followers can draw in times of crisis as well as in calmer

periods of construction. To help meet the universal need for globally responsive leadership, a new kind of world institution in this field is required.

THE REQUIRED LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMS

Nature and role

Preparing a comprehensive leadership program is no easy task. Leaders have to acquire interrelated skills requiring interaction and dialogue with the leaders of various sectors; politicians, the military, economist, intellectuals, journalists, lawyers, etc. Furthermore, leaders must be acquainted with alternative ways of thinking which can enrich their experience, develop their ability to address future situations and respect different opinions, and at the same time emphasize that there are no ready-made, uniform solutions to all problems. Such interaction, exposing future leaders to various fields, specializations, and interests will take place smoothly and quietly without imposition, and will at the same time be beneficial to those currently occupying positions of responsibility. It will enable them to see for themselves what the young are thinking of and this will undoubtedly be useful to them in the decisions they take regarding the new generations.

It is necessary, therefore, that leadership development programs expose future leaders to the immediate living experience taken from current world leadership, and not rely solely on academic, theoretical studies.

Through this interaction young leaders can gain insight into the dimensions of leadership, the background of the present leaders and their qualifications, thereby stimulating desire on their part to study their own potentialities and to develop themselves in order to reach those high positions with which they have come into contact.

The initiative and responsibility of establishing such an ambitious program should come under the auspices of a consortium of universities in the Islamic World. With the idea towards establishing an Institute for advanced study in leadership.

Proposed Islamic institute for advanced study in leadership

The overall purpose of establishing such an institute is to promote more international understanding among leaders and future leaders from all walks of life and from all countries of the Islamic world. This is to be achieved by adopting a unique method of learning based on exposing participants to various information resources and leaving

them to acquire the knowledge best suited for their needs, and also by properly selecting future leaders so that they represent different social background, academic qualifications, and varied human understanding of the different situations they will be facing in their careers. Interaction among such varied mentalities and temperaments for a predetermined period is certain to enrich their personalities, instill in them genuine respect for others who have different ways of looking at things and make them aware that things from a continuum rather than separate unrelated entities. Ultimately, this kind of interaction will equip participants with a wider perspective and a greater respect for and tolerance of different cultures. It will create friendship and make mutual understanding possible and easy especially when the new leaders (participants) occupy highly responsible positions in the various sectors of their society.

Such an institute will aim to achieve the following objectives:

1. Improve knowledge of world needs, conditions, trends and problems by younger leaders in all nations and in various sectors of society.
2. Improve capabilities of future leaders to cooperate in service to universal human needs for peace and security, economic justice, and dignity through shared personal experience.
3. Provide a major resource for leading research and service in the field of leadership from a comprehensive global perspective.
4. Stimulate the creation and use of new knowledge about leadership that will enable mankind to overcome obstacles that prevent full realization of the benefits sought by such an Institute.

As nations of the world establish universities as means of preparing future leaders, it is felt that such an Islamic Institute should be the forum for a global leadership preparation program.

In establishing this program all nations of the Islamic world will be invited to participate; each will identify a group of potential leaders (say five) from various walks of life including the private and public sectors, between the ages of approximately thirty to forty years of age.

At the commencement of the program all participants will assemble at the location of the institute and be exposed to various intellectual, cultural, academic, and social activities including open dialogue sessions with international leaders who would be invited to do so.

In the second phase, all participating countries will be

divided into groups of ten. Each group will visit each of the ten countries in one group and meet with the top political, public and private sector leaders, as well as participate in national briefing and field trips.

As a third phase, all participants will again convene at the Institute and provide a comprehensive report of what they have seen and experienced.

The benefit of such a program can be considered at three distinct levels:

1. Knowledge gained directly by each participant of ten countries and the rest of the Islamic world through the reports of other groups in addition to the valuable exposure to the prime decision-makers in the political, economic and military arenas in each country.

2. The interaction of the participants with each other, the transaction of knowledge, techniques, traditions, and standards relevant to a particular country, race, and region between the participants.

3. The exposure of the current decision-makers and influential personalities to the feelings and aspirations of the incoming generation of potential leaders.

Correspondence:
A. S. Majali
University of Jordan,
P.O. Box 1682,
Amman, JORDAN.