The Concept Note

A Policy Dialogue for Senior Secretaries/ Secretaries to the government on

Transformational leadership in a changing world

The concept of leadership has changed over the ages. During the ninetieth century, leadership was thought to be a quality of the 'great man'. During the twentieth century through the 1940s, leadership was believed to be intrinsic qualities such as physical and motivational aptitudes, communication skills, and ability to influence followers. As such it was thought that the leaders are born and leadership is in the gene. Now leadership is understood as behavioural interactions between leaders and followers. As this understanding gained ground, leadership is no more in the nature only, it can be nurtured and it became a subject that could be taught or learned. This conception of leadership involves a process and a property (Jago, 1982). The process dimension includes a leader's non-coercive behavioural patterns to influence his followers towards the achievement of a group's objectives. The property dimension of leadership includes qualities or characteristics of a leader that help him to exert the desired influence.

Leadership literature has provided some typologies of leadership such as consideration versus structure or democratic versus autocratic. The latest debate revolves around transactional versus transformational typology of leadership. A transactional leader depends on the use of rewards and punishment to get the assigned tasks done by his followers. This approach to leadership has limitations. In many organizations providing rewards and punishments is conditioned by rules and a leader has little to do in sanctioning these things (Bass, 1990). On the other hand, Bass (1990: 21) argued that transformational leadership "occurs when leaders broaden and elevate the interests of their employees, when they generate awareness and acceptance of the purposes and mission of the group, and when they stir their employees to look beyond their own self-interest for the good of the group." However, Javidan and Waldman (2003) argued that differences among the leadership typologies are not much and that all styles of leadership need a substantial emotional impact on the followers.

Leadership was thought to be associated with the private sector organizations only. The reason for such belief was that, in organizational context, leadership is always tied to innovation. Public sector organizations were believed to be uncreative. One leadership scholar commented that public sector and innovation are an oxymoron (Borins, 2002). The reasons for such comments are that public sector organizations are thought to be monopolies, highly centralized, rules-based, change-resistant, and institutional substitutes for leadership. But, these organizations are largely guided by powerful forces over which bureaucratic leaders have no control (Wart, 2003). However, new research findings show that public sector leaders are gradually exhibiting more transformational leadership practices (Wright and Pandey, 2009). This is because transformational leadership practices of the public sector leaders have gained ground to overcome bureaucratic characteristics of management. (Refer to "neither public nor servant")

There is no doubt that effective leadership is crucial to organizational success and public sector performance (Moynihan and Ingraham, 2004). Transformational leadership practices have taken ground in public sector leaders for a number of reasons which include influence of information technology, and avoidance of criticism (Borins, 2002). In other words, technology has compelled public sector leaders to emulate, adapt and innovate. In fact, in the public sector, leadership and innovation are now argued to be strongly linked (Borins, 2002). Agency heads, as leaders, need to shape vision and priorities of their

organizations to turn around their agencies to meet the set development targets. That involves drive, initiative and passion creating enthusiasm and interest among followers. That help them think beyond box, break what is called rules and step into exceptions – doing things in a new way, or doing new things – which are braced as innovation and welcomed in the private sector. These tasks require wide search for information. According to Eglene et al. (2007) leadership behaviors have important influence on knowledge sharing network in the public sector. Bureaucratic leaders are not only learning how to innovate in isolation, they are also learning how to build consensus to achieve collective goals. This has made transformation in their behavior from centralized command and control management behavior to collaborative and distributive ways of working. Thus, the concept of network has become important in public sector leadership (O'Toole, 1997).

It is in this context, BPATC feels the need to organize a 2-day policy dialogue for Senior Secretaries/ Secretaries to the government on transformational leadership behaviour. This dialogue will cover major global, regional and domestic development dynamics and trends including technological challenges that have implications for Bangladesh. The government of Bangladesh has set some medium-term and long-term targets. Moreover, the government is committed to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals by 2030. All these goals and targets have to be achieved in an inclusive model with catalytic role played by the machinery of the government where the Secretaries to the Government play a key role. Such a policy dialogue will help the Secretaries to understand and enhance, broaden and deepen their role towards the quick transition of the country to a developed one. A dialogue on transformational leadership is necessary because exerting coercive influence on subordinates does not always produce desired results. Rather raising their awareness and interests and motivating them can accelerate the achievement of desired outcomes. The Secretaries, as civil service leaders, can contribute much more to the achievement of the development goals (SDGs, Vision 2041) by practicing transformational leadership role.

In Bangladesh, we still carry the legacy of authoritative leadership with traits of transactional leadership where fear and favour takes over a sense of pride in performance and perfection. For bigger achievement we need transformational leaders who make such changes as are necessary for the team members to feel empowered and engage, take on their responsibilities and search for excellence in whatever job they perform

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