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ECONOMIC LEADERSHIP IN COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

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The development and growth of most communities can be linked to farsighted local citizens who charted the course of growth and then served as catalysts to activate the growth. The leadership provided by these citizens can be directly attributed to intellect, abilities, personalities, experience and training. In the past, there has been little direct, coordinated action by society to identify and prepare people for leadership roles. Hence, both good and poor community leaders emerged: some providing leadership for community growth and development, and others allowed their communities to flounder.

The benefits from effective community leadership can be measured in terms of incomes, employment opportunities, and quality of community life. Hence, high returns can be expected from societal efforts to identify and prepare people for key roles in community leadership. Developing programs to enhance community leadership involves first identifying the factors which contribute to effective leadership and then categorizing these factors according to whether or not the factors can be enhanced by education and training. Then, potential leaders possessing basic innate leadership abilities could be targeted for educational and training programs to develop and/or improve additional leadership skills.

The objective of this paper is to identify and describe the basic factors contributing to effective community leadership. The identification of these factors will then be used to develop strategies for selecting and training potential community leaders.

Economic Leadership Defined

The concept of leadership has elements both of familiarity and mystery. It is familiar to people because they observe leaders in their own family, business, and community, as well as throughout the world, every day. However, it is mysterious because most people cannot explain how some emerge and succeed as leaders and what factors contribute to good leadership.

Leadership is better described in terms of relationships than in terms of position. Having a large salary, an important title and subordinates does not make a person a leader. Lundy indicates that the ultimate test for

leadership is whether or not a person has followers (Lundy, 1986). A leader is anyone who has followers.

In the most general sense, leadership is the process of influencing others to accomplish the organization's mission, goals, and objectives. Since the organization's mission, goals, and objectives may change through time, the leadership process is dynamic in nature. The concept of leadership also allows for the dynamic process of the leaders themselves modifying these goals and objectives, and possibly even the mission.

In this paper, we address a particular type of leadership -- community leadership aimed at economic growth. Some of the goals that they pursue are assumed to be related to economic development as measured by increased income and employment and/or improved quality of life for community citizens.

Theory of Economic Leadership

The basic model of economic leadership is made up of three components -- demands, resource constraints, and choices. The demands and resource constraints determine the domain within which the leader operates. Within a domain, the leader makes the choices on using available resources to meet the perceived demands.

Demands

The terms "demands" as related to community leaders is a broad catch-all term. For leaders filling a position with a community organization the demands on that job would be a function of what the person is required to do, generally, in fulfillment of the organization's mission, goals, and objectives. For the top leaders of a community the demands would be more consistent with the economic definition of demands. Included would be the demands for public services such as roads, water, and waste disposal, which would have to be implemented by leaders in community development. An accurate understanding of the demands faced by each leader is important but difficult because such demands are not directly observable. Different leaders would likely perceive the demands differently and hence make different choices.

Constraints

Community leaders control a limited amount of resources and operate within an institutional framework; both of which limit possible actions. The resources consist of personnel, capital structures, equipment and operating budgets. Through time, a resourceful leader will attempt to modify the amount and mix of resources available for use. The leader may also attempt to modify the institutional framework. Hence, leaders must operate with given constraints in the short run but may move to modify these constraints through time.

Choices

The community leader determines how to utilize available resources within the institutional framework so as to meet the demands related to the position. The goals motivating these choices may range from individual goals including maximizing personal power, prestige and income to societal goals including maximizing social welfare. Alternatively, some combination of these goals may motivate a particular leader.

The basic choices of a leader are:

1. Identify the demands on the position and choose those to be met,
2. Choose the resources (and associated technology) to be utilized to meet particular demands,
3. Organize and control the personnel and other resources to carry out the tasks, and
4. Choose which individuals or groups to influence so as to change demands and resource constraints through time.

All of the above choices are important, but the main focus of the literature on leadership, as well as the remainder of this paper, will be on the third area which deals with leading people within the organization. Within this area, leaders can choose the style of leadership to be followed, including the amount and type of responsibilities to be delegated to subordinates.

Vast differences in leaders and styles of leadership are recognized. For any given set of demands and resource constraints there may be several different styles of leadership that would be effective. However, it is posited that some styles of leadership are more effective than others for a given set of demands and resource constraints. Furthermore, one style of leadership that is effective in one set of demand and resource constraints may not be effective in other situations. Hence, it is important in discussing styles of leadership to recognize the domain in which the leader operates.

Leadership Styles

There are three fundamental styles of leadership -- authoritarian, participative, and delegative. Leadership styles differ in some important aspects but are quite similar in others. Foremost, leadership styles are situational dependent. They are generally employed in combinations and are basically innate.

An authoritarian leader does not seek input from others in decision making. This leadership style is generally acceptable where the outcome of the decision is of little consequences to the community as a whole or the function to be performed is highly management oriented. In using the participative leadership style, the community leader seeks the input of others regarding what should be done and how might it best be accomplished. Since the primary concern of community leadership is people, this leadership style is often favored over the authoritarian style. The community leader who delegates decision making to others while retaining ultimate responsibility for such decisions employs the delegative leadership style.

The authors caution that the choice of a particular leadership style cannot be predetermined. The appropriate style or combination of styles can only be identified after a careful analysis of the situation. Even here, leadership styles must be evaluated for adoption in terms of what the leader is expected to "Be-Know-Do." As a minimum, the leadership style adopted must permit the community leader to provide timely direction, implementation, and motivation of subordinates or followers. The choice of a leadership style when combined with appropriate traits and characteristics can definitely enhance effectiveness as a leader.

Leadership Qualities and Skills

The literature is replete with divergent findings regarding what is leadership or what are essential leadership traits. Cronin (1984) and Gardner (1987) maintain that there exist no universal traits of leadership. Contemporary military readings and others, however, strongly defend the importance of selected traits to success in leadership. In that leadership is people-oriented and value-laden, the difference in views is understandable.

At least intuitively, most of us possess a basic perception of what fundamental qualities and characteristics appear common among successful leaders. Identifying these relevant traits should be useful to limited resource communities in developing appropriate strategies for selecting and training potential leaders.

This evaluation of leadership employs the framework of the U.S. Army's leadership model

to present basic leadership qualities and characteristics of a leader. These traits are classified in terms of what a typical community leader is expected to Be, Know, and Do. The model is not fully exhaustive nor does it suggest that every leader will possess each trait. The reader is encouraged to add to or modify the model as deemed appropriate.

"Be" Qualities and Skills

Intelligence often leads the list of desirable qualities of a leader. However, intelligence is necessary but not sufficient for success in leadership. A community leader must be wise. A wise leader is intelligent but not all intelligent leaders are wise. Rarely is intelligence a match for poor judgment. A wise leader is visionary, resourceful, and a communicator. These traits determine and guide one's effectiveness as a leader. By communicator, we mean one who possesses the ability and skills to influence others to believe and invest in their dream. Finally, a leader must be both academic and socially intelligent. If people do not like you, they may help you fail (Hyatt and Gottlieb).

Community leaders must be "risk takers" or "change agents" and committed to the common good. They must be willing to lead. They must possess high levels of physical vitality and stamina. They must be of high moral standards. It is one's value sets that determines their agenda; provide their initiative; determines their character, courage, and commitment to the common good.

The "Be" qualities of a leader are largely innate. Those leadership qualities (not skills) which are not innate normally cannot be enhanced through formal training in sufficient time to be successful in a given situation. Hence, if communities seek to simply identify leaders, qualities instead of skills appear to be relevant criteria for focus. Each quality identified in this discussion is associated with a set of skills. These skills are subject to formal enhancement and should be the focus of leadership programs aimed to train better prospective leaders.

"Know" Qualities and Skills

Unlike the "Be" qualities, few, if any of the "know" qualities of leadership are innate in content. Thus, these qualities would appear to be less reliable as criteria for identifying leaders but are crucial to their training. Successful leaders must know and understand the basic factors of leadership -- leader, follower, communication, situation, relationships. Community leadership is people-oriented. Thus, leaders must understand the dynamics of human nature. One's perception of the problem and its solution is often colored by values, culture, and beliefs. The wise leader must know the community -- its strength and weakness -- and

be able to advance a course of action which is in the best interest of the community. Leaders must know themselves, recognize their limitations, establish priorities and organize. The skills that a leader must know in order to be successful can be learned.

"Do" Qualities and Skills

Individuals often are aware of what they should "Be" and "Know" but fail to function as a leader. To be successful, a leader must lead. An important part of leading is developing the correct leadership style at the appropriate time. Leaders must implement their visions and motivate others to support the chosen plan of action. Finally, leaders must accept responsibility for their actions. Leadership skills which compliment what a leader must do to be effective can be enhanced through training and education.

SUMMARY

Community leadership is people-oriented and value-laden. Thus in a pure context, it is situational. However, there exist a fundamental set of qualities that a leader should possess. Many of these attributes are basically innate while others can be strengthened through training and education. As a strategy, leadership qualities may be used to identify leaders while skills or characteristics appear essential in designing formal training programs.

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Community leadership framework model -
attributes and characteristics.

I. A leader must be:

- 1) Capable of leading and possess the attributes
 - a. physical stamina and vitality
 - b. vision and commitment
 - c. communication
 - d. intelligence and good judgment
 - e. loyalty to community
 - f. desire to achieve
- 2) Resourceful and unrelenting in commitment, open minded and persistent
- 3) Of high moral standing with integrity, competence, trust, courage, candor, character, commitment
- 4) Patient and open-minded, unselfish, listen, dedicated, open to criticism
- 5) Committed to the common good
- 6) Flexible and adaptable

II. A leader must know:

- 1) The factors of leadership, --
follower-leader-communication
- 2) Human nature, understand human needs and emotions
- 3) How to create favorable situations
- 4) The community: it's strengths and weaknesses, people, resources, institutions
- 5) Yourself and have character, confidence, knowledge, skills

III. A leader must (do):

- 1) Motivate, teach, instill confidence, demonstrate, set examples
- 2) Accept responsibility, and be accountable.