



Leadership for national development

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In an increasingly competitive environment driven by the demand for better, faster, cheaper, and more environmentally friendly products and services, the ability to lead is a critical factor for organizations. All changes, whether they are strategic, procedural, structural, or technological, need the right mix of leadership factors. There are several reasons why leadership is required to push organizations toward better performance:

- Organizations may become complacent, creating blind spots to internal weaknesses and external threats and challenges.
- Organizations may no longer explore new ideas, services, markets, and customers.
- New ideas may be stifled due to a lack of leadership in thinking and knowledge.
- Too much inbreeding of followers may occur, with no desire to encourage excellent performance.
- Organizations slow in the journey toward corporate excellence due to low productivity initiatives.

The challenge is greater for NPOs, which must lead, create change, and add value for the development of other organizations. The staff of NPOs must be role models for other organizations if they are to earn their respect. A creative mindset, positive attitude, and zeal for acquiring new knowledge are the essence of developing productive leadership.

NPC leadership initiatives in the public and private sectors

The National Productivity Corporation, Malaysia (NPC) has been serving the private sector and industry for the past 41 years (Figure). It has gained the confidence and trust of that sector, as evidenced by the receipt of accolades and recognition of higher productivity and competitiveness achieved. Now, new leadership qualities will be required as the NPC takes on the role of assisting the government in productivity and quality initiatives in the public sector.

The public sector in Malaysia must be an enabler for the business community. The efficiency of the public sector as a facilitator in national development and as a service agency is reflected



in the nation's competitiveness measurement. With capable, competitive human resources, the public sector acts as a catalyst and pacesetter for the private sector. Furthermore, levels of service delivery in the public sector are becoming more important. Therefore, to build on past success and remain competitive, the public sector in Malaysia must continuously internalize such excellent mechanisms promoted by the government as public-private-sector collaboration, performance measurement, and innovation through teamwork.

Public-private-sector collaboration

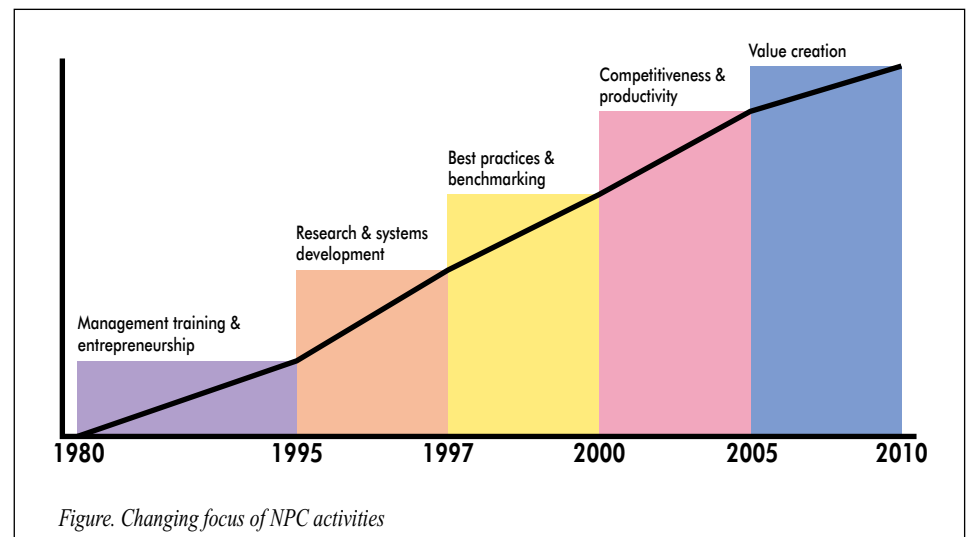
Based on the philosophy that public-private-sector collaboration is a key ingredient for successful national economic development, the rationale for seeking closer cooperation is the inherent interdependence between the two sectors. The private

sector is the commercial and economic arm of the nation, while the public sector provides the policy framework and direction to enable the private sector to perform at world-class level. The more successful the private sector, the more private businesses, greater employment opportunities, and higher government revenues. This in turn means that more is available to the public sector for financing socioeconomic development projects and public administration improvements.

Generally, public-private-sector collaboration promotes a better understanding of government strategies, policies, and procedures and gives the private sector a voice in their determination, which in turn results in democratic consent, transparency in government, and market efficiency through lower transaction costs. In addition, such collaboration leads to an appropriate balance between stability and change in government policies and allows effective reactions to external changes.

Consultative Panels

The public sector views the establishment of consultative panels as pivotal in promoting the Malaysia Incorporated concept. Interactions on collaborative panels generate networks allowing representation and participation from all economic sectors. Under Development Administrative Circular No. 9 of 1991, it is mandatory to establish consultative panels. The NPC set up 11 consulta-



tive panels on the hospitality industry, human resources development, financial institutions, agriculture, information technology, logistics and transport, manufacturing, healthcare, productivity measurement, construction, and energy and utilities. Outputs from the NPC's consultative panels include the National Human Resource Development Master Plan and Human Resource Framework, both incorporated into the Third Industrial Master Plan 2006–2020.

Dialogue Sessions

In addition to consultative panels, ministries and departments at the federal, state, and district levels hold regular dialogue sessions with the private sector aimed at stimulating open discussions of government policies, rules, regulations, and procedures that affect the performance of the business community. Those dialogues also provide useful feedback for future government policy planning and implementation. For example, the Ministry of International Trade and Industry holds annual dialogue sessions with private-sector representatives, and the proposals made and feedback obtained are used as inputs in policy formulation.

Jointly sponsored activities

The two sectors are also encouraged to organize activities jointly to promote cooperation and encourage the mutually beneficial sharing of knowledge and

experiences. A number of formal activities within the NPC have been organized jointly with the private sector, including seminars, training courses, and overseas trade missions. Such activities allow close relations between the NPC and private sector and foster congenial personal ties that facilitate work at the official level.

Conclusion

In accommodating both public- and private-sector interests, the NPC has found that meeting the challenges of global markets while achieving world-class leadership requires numerous questions to be resolved: Which management style is required? Does an outstanding civil service complement an outstanding NPO? Should NPOs be market driven? Can cost-effective centers of excellence be developed in NPOs? Should NPOs be probusiness or seek to become more competitive themselves? Competitive NPOs must address attitudes, mindsets, and passion for excellence in their role of assisting in national development. The NPC has come a long way from its beginnings as a training agency to an organization crucial in spurring human capital development and capacity building for national economic growth. More concerted efforts are needed from NPOs in all member countries to act as go-betweens for industry and government to achieve and sustain national competitiveness. 🌀