

LEADERSHIP AND SOCIAL INFLUENCE: ASSESSING THE FUTURE-READY HUMAN SKILLS TOWARDS THE EFFECTIVENESS OF GOOD GOVERNANCE PRACTICES

Zawiyah Mahmood^{1*}, Shathees Baskaran¹

¹Azman Hashim International Business School, Universiti Teknologi Malaysia, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

*Corresponding author: zawiyah@graduate.utm.my

Abstract

Leadership and social influence have been hotly debated as among the top 21st-century skills. Previous research on leadership and social influence has focused mostly on leadership traits and characteristics, while little research has examined the social influence process by which public servants become effective leaders. The purpose of this paper is to develop an initial review from a public service perspective to outline the skill that contributes to the development as a future-ready human skill by public servants. This conceptual paper relies on prior research and existing theory to focus on the developmental processes that lead to acquiring the leadership and social influence skill as future-ready human skills. Additionally, leadership and social influence skills could contribute to particular behaviours to the effectiveness of good governance practices. Based on the literature review, it is assumed that there is a positive relationship between leadership and social influence and the effectiveness of good governance practices. Most importantly, this paper addresses how the skill is unique and most realistically developed in a public organisation.

Keywords: leadership and social influence, future-ready human skill, good governance practices, Malaysia.

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■ 1.0 INTRODUCTION

Researchers recognise that the public sector not only delivers services; public employees' skills are becoming more sophisticated than before. In Robert Katz's foundational study, he established Katz's Three-Skill Approach to becoming a successful administrator or manager: human, technical, and conceptual skills (Katz, 1974). Human skill aims at people, technical skill concentrates on things, while conceptual skill focuses on ideas and concepts (Katz, 1955). It is widely documented and studied in Katz's literature, which concluded that the categories are necessary for effective leadership. This article proposed clarifying that human skills cannot be substituted by technology. In order to remain competitive in the job market, workers must constantly improve their high-level skills and human skills (Chuang & Graham, 2018).

Aside from learning about changes in job structures, particular emphasis should be placed on improving employees' human skills and helping them transition to a skill-polarised workplace (Chuang & Graham, 2018). This has resulted in a shift of skill sets that are needed of employees, with a greater emphasis on human skills. Human skills are needed to allow managers to influence others to achieve the organisation's objectives (Ofei et al., 2020). It is concerned with human interactions and interpersonal abilities (or personal skills) (Ibay & Palisbo, 2020). Leadership, in specific, is a critical human skill utilised in conducting public interest (Meyer et al., 2019). Successfully influencing subordinates, peers, and superiors is a human interaction skill. This essential ability allows managers to inspire employees to collaborate to achieve organisation objectives. Higher degrees of human skills enables managers to adapt their ideas to others' thoughts, improving the speed of organisational objectives accomplishment (Ofei et al., 2020). This article leads to the role of leadership and social influence as one of the future-ready human skills in accordance with the needs of the organisation.

■ 2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Future-Ready Human Skills

This article aimed to seek skill sets and to inspire to become future-ready. Future-ready skills and

competencies are ‘purpose-built’ for improving resilience in times of rapid change (Holloway et al., 2019). Future-ready human skills will be the components of career readiness that are beneficial to future-oriented workers. Human or interpersonal skills are critical for success; they improve efficiency and boost enthusiasm at work (Kruchina et al., 2020). According to Katz, leadership are closely aligned with human-centred skills and is essential at all three management levels (top, middle, and low or supervisory) in Katz’s Three-Skill Approach (Katz, 1974). Thus, the future-ready human skills will contribute impactful solutions to the organisation.

To develop a framework, this article recognised the Future of Jobs report by the World Economic, which supported leadership and social influence skills that in a ranking of most in-demand skills in 2020-2025 (World Economic Forum, 2020). Efforts to improve knowledge of leadership dynamics and successful practice and equip leaders with an appropriate mix of theoretical understanding and practical skills are in high demand in the leadership profession (Ruben & Gigliotti, 2021). Employees may operate more successfully in shifting at the workplace if they exhibit developmental leadership characteristics (Delle & Searle, 2020). Instead of seeing leadership as something that can be owned, it should be seen as a dynamic process that emerges between individuals depending on the circumstances (Karp & Helgø, 2008). However, there are barriers in leadership, such as a lack of social influence skills, even if organisations continue to spend on leadership development training. Looking into this, promoting leadership and social influence as future-ready human skills can engage with public servants and be a competitive advantage in implementing good governance practices.

2.2 Leadership and Social Influence

Leadership theory is becoming more popular among public management academics, who recognise the significance of its ideas. In the behavioural sciences, it is widely acknowledged that influence is essential to all social phenomena, including work organisations. Leadership is an essential social influence process in organisational that developed through time (Ferris et al., 2017) or a relationship-based interactive process of social influence (Contreras et al., 2020). It is vital to broadening social influence research in a more complex yet refined way by evaluating the advantages and possible value of social influence activities (Yi et al., 2018). As described by the definitions, it requires a leader to influence the followers’ behaviour proactively. The followers abide by the guidelines of their leaders because they share the same aims and behave according to a given context in achieving organisational objectives (Vanlalhlmpuii, 2018). However, leadership influence mechanisms are not unilateral. They have their unique characteristics, preferences and views that may increase or diminish the influence of followers (Oc & Bashshur, 2013).

Given that social influence happens from continuous growth, it is essential to concentrate on social influence and leadership to understand its development. Leaders may influence the followers and build trust within the organisational network. Believing in the power of social influence, World Economic Forum characterised the leadership and social influence skills as making an impression on people in the organisation and demonstrating enthusiasm (World Economic Forum, 2020). In addition, communication and social influence are components of a continuous process obtained reflecting messages produced by an individual. Clearly, a communicative perspective emphasises the informative implications of social influence, which is defined by followers as much as by leaders, and that involves both sense giving and sensemaking actions (Ruben & Gigliotti, 2016). Thus, this article understands that leadership and social influence are dynamic processes that persuade other group members to devote themselves to accomplishing group tasks or objectives voluntarily. Leadership and social influence skills are not just fundamental for future-ready skills, but they need a more expansive view of its impact on the organisation and not for personal (i.e., leader) gain.

2.3 Effectiveness of Good Governance Practices

In recent years, the rise of good governance in the public sector has increased substantial recognition in theory and practice. Furthermore, organisations also continue to use technology to create platforms for the citizen to access relevant information. Good governance plays a significant role in administrative transparency, accountability, and openness. As a people-centred approach, good governance’s end result benefits society by improving the quality of public service delivery and administrative accountability and openness (Jamaiudin, 2019). As public workers, public administrators are tasked with delivering the services with tremendous authority (Meyer et al., 2019). The public servants are recruited under lawful and management requirements that regulate their employment.

The primary objective of adopting good governance practices has been to guarantee that the government is efficient and effective in delivering social services (Bincof, 2020). Good governance standards have multiplied, providing advice on good governance practices and indicating a practical improvement to adhere creation to create the environment of trust, accountability and transparency (Melón-izco et al., 2019). The transformation agenda of good governance practices, which has resulted in a noticeable shift in policy changes and decision-making, include principles such as equality and justice are successful in corruption control or mismanagement (Jamaiudin, 2019).

Future studies on good governance practices should be conducted on a broader scale (Ibrahim et al., 2020). Good governance is the route to increase citizens' satisfaction and therefore foster public confidence. Public trust is critical for cultivating effective governance in any democratic administration (Jameel et al., 2019). The deployment of governance concepts within the public sector motivates better decision-making and increases efficiency. Good governance offers cost-effective and efficient services and guarantees all stakeholders equal access to development benefits (Vanlalhlmpuii, 2018). Hence, good governance practices depend heavily on public servants' role to evolve towards a current system according to the principles, tools, and policies.

■ 3.0 LEADERSHIP AND SOCIAL INFLUENCE AND THE EFFECTIVENESS OF GOOD GOVERNANCE PRACTICES

In recent years, social influence has been increasing significantly, and leadership results in desirable traits among public servants. However, little study has focused on the entire social process or the interaction between political skill and the social influence impact of its aspects (McAllister et al., 2016). This will lead to critical information on network conditions in which leaders may not be just as susceptible to social influence as others but also capable of influencing others' views or conduct (Zhang & Gong, 2020). It is possible to influence each employee to provide higher-quality services, resolve employee corruption and misbehaviour, and adhere to good governance principles (Mohamad et al., 2014).

By transparency, honesty and personal influence, leadership strengthen good governance to enable the administration of public sources (Vanlalhlmpuii, 2018). In order to evaluate whether followers act as expected, the influence process linked leadership effectiveness with the leader inspired others to perform. For example, CEOs must determine which managerial implication will affect organisational to enhance their leadership skills and uniquely influence team performance based on trust (Chen & Sriphon, 2021). It is often conceived with leaders' integrity that affected follower performance to promote service delivery through effective governance practices via their leadership (Said et al., 2016). Leaders are more likely to be socialised via their organisation's culture, learning from the formal and informal, including planned and unintentional influence around the leaders (Ruben & Gigliotti, 2016). Employees' confidence in their leader's authority grows due to a leader's impact influence, which runs counter to such reasoning (Ng & VanDuinkerken, 2020). Influencing people's beliefs is an essential tool for maintaining the momentum for change (OECD, 2011). Hence, this paper proposes the following hypothesis:

H1: Leadership and social influence are positively associated with the effectiveness of good governance practices.

■ 4.0 IMPLICATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

Changes in the work environment need greater attention from employees, and they will need to learn new skills to keep improving in the position. Nowadays, to stay up with the speed of technology, humans must fully merge with technology. However, future-ready human skills will provide a new perspective on the workplace and insight into an advanced environment. This article offers a piece of knowledge about public servants as leaders with a powerful social influence mechanism as future-ready human skills towards the effectiveness of good governance practices. Moreover, it stimulates the research perspective of new propositions, thus comprising the next step for further theory development.

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