

## **Leadership Qualities Needed for Harmony and Progress of the Nation and in Workplaces: Going Back to the Classics**

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Industrial relations as a field of study dwells on the world of work, particularly the dynamic interactions among key actors of society: heads of government institutions, employers and their management associations, labor and their representative bodies, and civil society organizations (CSOs), nongovernment organizations (NGOs), or people's organizations (POs). These major actors have the same focus as they strive to relate with one another to work and achieve the common vision of productivity, peace, and progress for their institutions, corporations, communities, and the nation as a whole.

Employers and workers concentrate on productivity. Government provides an enabling environment to balance the interests of employers and labor as they partner to sustain the viability and growth of their enterprises. CSOs, NGOs or POs, in essence, advocate for good governance and harmonious collaboration among aforementioned actors in the world of work. In this endeavor, they carry various advocacies that aim to fill in the gaps in public service, such as providing aid to vulnerable sectors in terms of basic needs, such as food, housing, education, and health, pleading for justice for the oppressed, fighting corruption in public or private enterprises, and addressing other societal needs that will bring about a decent life for every Filipino. Competent leadership, therefore, is a crucial requirement for these key actors at every level and sector of society to achieve peace, productivity, and sustainable progress.

Industrial relations as an academic field is multi-disciplinary, as it requires knowledge and skills derived from various fields, such as management science, political science, economics, sociology, law, psychology, history, and others. A leader will find it easier to fulfill his or her duties when equipped with multi-dimensional capability.

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Leading people in the workplace requires fundamental management skills to train people to work efficiently and motivate them to complete their tasks and responsibilities effectively. But of paramount importance to followers is that they see their leader as credible, trustworthy and principled, and as a person of integrity, high morals, and good character.

Several management theories have been offered to guide leaders. Among the classic and significant ones, from which recent theories, such as strategic management, McKinsey 7-S model, and Kotter's change management, have developed, are the pioneering works of Elton Mayo's behavioral theory of management, Henri Fayol's administrative management, and Frederick Taylor's scientific management. Mayo's behavioral management focuses on the human needs of employees to be treated with respect and dignity in the workplace. Fayol points out the leader's major functions of planning, coordinating, directing and controlling subordinates in doing their assigned tasks to achieve targets. Taylor stresses the science-based approach of determining how long processes can be expedited to maximize productivity by coming up with the best methods and systems. Teamwork, which gives importance to the spirit of camaraderie and collaboration among employees, results in the accomplishment of the organization's targets.

Yes, there are other theories of management. With today's great advances in technology, leaders of business enterprises, government institutions, CSOs, NGOs, and POs have to adjust their strategies in protecting and promoting their respective interests amid the complexities of the environment. In the current Philippine setting, leaders must be circumspect in monitoring the political, economic, and social issues that can seriously impact their decision-making to ensure the viability and growth, if not survival, of their organizations.

Government, as a matter of course, has the power to make or unmake the stability of the nation. As regulator of various government institutions and their official dealings with private entities, NGOs, and movements, the government is expected, in Fayol's management perspective, to be the overall planner, coordinator, director and controller of the intricate interactions of various actors, for example, in the execution of government infrastructure projects to avoid waste of time and money. The expert synchronization of the programs of government agencies, corporate business enterprises, labor unions,

farmer or fisher associations, and other POs requires a strong and honest-to-goodness leadership. Such leadership should have been shaped from years of serious studies in reputable educational institutions and sharpened with years of hands-on experience. Half-baked training in management of a leader can only spell disaster for the government bureaucracy resulting in the instability and discontent among the governed.

Businesses, especially big corporations, have a huge role to play in the stability issue. Given thus, business leaders will do well to apply the timeless and reliable management theories. Maintaining the productivity and growth of their companies, these corporate leaders see the value of crafting their plans and strategies with their employees' active participation. Good leaders know that consultation with those who will be affected by management policies and programs is a *sine quo non*. As enlightened leaders, they acknowledge that fairly compensated and contented employees can provide the necessary innovative and creative ideas in improving operations on the ground given that labor wants to make sure the outputs of the company are sustained. For a more holistic view of strategizing programs, leaders have to consider the environment within which they operate. Indeed, the political, economic, and social issues that plague the environment caused by incompetent government leadership can be a huge drawback.

CSOs, NGOs, and POs likewise require competent leadership. These advocacy groups crop up spontaneously, especially when government leaders fail to do their jobs as mandated public servants. Organized and run by responsible citizens with big hearts for caring and compassion and well-trained brains to always look at the big picture, these organizations often serve with strong political will to provide assistance to those in need due to the negligence of government leaders, particularly those at the topmost levels.

In a nutshell, a genuine government, business, or PO leader is one with proven integrity, strong political will, brains that think and work with a multi-dimensional view, and a caring and compassionate heart for fellow human beings. Such a leader is sure to bring about the necessary harmony and growth for his or her institution and other societal actors with which he or she interacts to achieve a common vision of development and recovery from whatever crisis that comes.