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Leadership and management development post-war: exploring future trends
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Leadership and management development post-war: exploring future trends

Abstract

Purpose – The purpose of the current study is to explore and understand current challenges and future trends in leadership and management development that can help practitioners in post-wars periods, using evidence from Syrian public sector.

Design/methodology/approach – Qualitative method design is used for data collection: semi-structured interviews with 24 senior managers in the public sector.

Findings – The findings revealed that the current challenges includes egos, technological hurdles, financial constraints, instability, and the different expectations of new and old staff; while future trends include developing collective leadership, technology literacy applications for effective leadership development, focusing on self-learning and development, focusing on creativity and innovation for transferring learning and development, and targeting both vertical and horizontal learning and development.

Research limitations/implications – Research data has been collected with managers working in an unstable environment. Only the public sector has been involved in the study. There were a number of limitations, e.g. selection of participant sample size and exploratory methodology, which affect generalizing the findings.

Practical implications – The implication of the current study is practical in nature. Essentially, post-war governments can use the results of the current study to help leaders and managers develop and implement effective strategies to meet their enormous and urgent needs.

Originality/value – Leadership/management development has become a strategic issue in post-war countries, acting as the key element in the stage of extensive reconstruction of damaged infrastructure, and the restoration and restructuring of social services in former conflict zones, and the restoration and restructuring of economy, and many other roles.

Keywords – Leadership, management, development, challenges, trends, post-war

Paper type – Research paper

Introduction

Though post-war countries vary in the nature and degree of destruction, all suffer from the collapse not only of assets or skills but of systems – physical, financial, economic, technical, organizational, political, and social. It may be argued that managing and leading people and organizations in an uncertain environment remains a complex task (see Megheirkouni, 2016c). In this respect, leadership and management development are perceived as a natural response to the need. Given the differences in that need, leadership and management development have become context-specific in terms of purpose, content, and implementation (Megheirkouni. 2016a, 2016b). Although there is some literature pertaining to effective leadership development methods, practices, or processes (Giber *et al.*, 2000; Hernez-Broome and Hughes, 2004; Van Velsor *et al.*, 2010), it is difficult to achieve immediate and tangible results for individuals and organizations in a post-war period without an integrated plan that helps identify the required needs for leadership and management development. That implies there is an essential need to consolidate these process and practices into a comprehensive

framework to explore and understand what best fits, for example, post-war organizations (Leskiw and Singh, 2007). Consequently, this study responds to specific research questions for effective post-war leadership development, using evidence from the Syrian public sector by answering the following questions:

Q1. What are the current challenges influencing leadership and management development of the public sector?

Q2. What are the future trends in leadership and management development of the public sector in the post war period?

Learning and Development System, Best Practices, and Processes

Given a continuing need for effective leaders and managers, organizations set up various processes, practices, activities, and roles to develop them. This may be through crafting learning and development systems. A system is broader than a leader development initiative or a curriculum. It encompasses all aspects of the organization that contribute to producing effective leaders (McCauley *et al*., 2010). Specifically, a system is a complex whole comprising a set of connected elements: inputs, processes and outputs linked together by processes, and thus a system can be understood and analyzed in terms of these three elements. In this respect, the learning and development system has also its own inputs, processes and outputs. This was evident in the detailed model that integrates systematic and systems approaches in learning and development (see e.g. Sadler-Smith, 2007). According to this model, internal inputs refer to recruitment, performance, gaps, technology, learning and development policy and needs, human resource planning, organizational change, and internal resources. External inputs refer to social, technological, economic, and political factors, external resources, government policy, and perceived value of learning and development.

Identification of learning and development needs
Business strategy

This refers to the way strategic leaders devise a plan of action to use a company's resources and distinctive competencies to gain a competitive advantage over competitors in the market place. In other words, the business strategy determines how the business will compete in the market with potential new entrants, buyers, suppliers, and substitute products from other industries. The typological approach to identifying business strategy is recognized as creating a better understanding of the strategic reality of an organization, where each type of business strategy has its own particular characteristics (Croteau and Bergeron, 2001). This is especially the case in the arena of leadership and management development. In this respect, Richard *et al*. (2016) claim that to craft a leadership development strategy, there is a need to make sense of the business strategy that captures the overall direction and thrust of the business. More specifically, it is argued that different leadership behaviors and capabilities are required for different business types (e.g. Megheirkouni, 2016b). That implies that leadership and management development should begin and end with the business's strategy and objectives in mind.

Selection of participants

Once leadership needs are identified, the next step is that consultants, designers, or HR managers select appropriate individuals who need to attend leadership/management development programs. This is often affected by the priority in terms of an individual's role or position in the organization. However, leadership development programs can also include individuals from different leadership levels in an organization (Leskiw and Singh, 2007; Megheirkouni, 2016b). It is argued that effective participant selection practices are grounded in a strategic human resource development approach, where human capital is a potential source of competitive advantage, especially in contexts where other sources can be imitated, such as information technology system and business strategies. There is an essential need for developing future leaders and supporting leadership talent through continuous initiatives that may play key roles in organizations success (Leskiw and Singh, 2007). Thus, enhancing competitive advantage can be achieved through avoiding replicating and mimicking such initiatives (Lado and-Wilson, 1994; McCall, 1998). However, some companies delegate their managers to certain management schools nationally or internationally for extensive courses, such as MBAs. According to Hall and Soskice (2001), the different practices used by companies in different countries that deal with training and development are likely to disappear because countries are rapidly becoming more convergent in their best practices. But leadership development practices reflect a set of the differences regarding industrial infrastructure and the institutional system that shape a company's strategies for adopting skills and product market type (Boyer, 1990). For instance, Lane (1989, p. 34) states that "although organizational goals may not differ significantly across organizations, courses of action towards reaching these goals do, because action is socially constructed and hence shaped by culture as manifested in societal institutions". This opinion may be supported by scholars who emphasize that leadership development is divergent around the world because they stem from the same leadership schools, theories and approaches. But the reason for use (content and purpose) and the manner of application tend to be different from country to country and from organization to organization (Megheirkouni, 2016a, 2006b; Mabey and Lees, 2007). In this context, it may be argued that selecting individuals for leadership development programs may be affected by the company strategy, surrounding environment, and the capability of the selected candidate to learn and change.

Tangible requirements for learning

Today's organizations need a sophisticated infrastructure for learning because a corporate learning infrastructure has influence on individual and corporate learning. Giber *et al.* (2000) argue that the key to an effective leadership development infrastructure is variety. Specifically, a variety of learning methods and interventions must be incorporated into the leadership development system for three reasons: 1) differences between learning styles; 2) some approaches may not be appropriate for leaders at all organizational levels; and 3) leadership development should be a continuous process, not a series of episodes, because this can increase the positive engagement of participants. Others have gone further and addressed tangible requirements for effective application of leadership development initiatives (e.g. Antes and Schuelke, 2011; Avolio and Kahai, 2003; Conner, 2000; Webber, 2003). Many studies suggest that the use of technology across countries is divergent due to differences in

technology infrastructure (Lall, 1995; Corrocher, 2002). For instance, previous research conducted by Megheirkouni (2016c) explored factors influencing leadership development programs and revealed that poor technology was perceived as one of the negative factors influencing the effective application of leadership development.

Analysis of learning and development needs

Undoubtedly, consultants and designers of leadership development programs often begin with a thorough needs assessment in an organization as a primary step toward designing specific programs that target specific participants and focus on a specific content for a specific purpose (Fulmer and Goldsmith 2000; Giber, Carter, and Goldsmith, 2000; Mabey and Lees, 2007; Megheirkouni, 2016a). A needs assessment refers to the process of collecting data about an expressed or implied organizational need that could be met by conducting training. This need can be either to correct a deficiency or to improve the performance. More specifically, the main purpose of a needs assessment is to answer why, who, how, what and when questions. Barbazette (2006) defined these questions as follows: 1) why conduct the training; 2) who is involved in the training; 3) how can the performance deficiency be fixed; 4) what is the best way to perform; and 5) when will training take place. According to Giber *et al*. (2000), the success of any development program depends on how participants have applied their learning to their job performance. Martineau and Patterson (2010) went further and argue that assessment contributes to the power of leader development. This is because assessment processes, formal or informal, would help participants fully understand their situation and become motivated to capitalize on the learning opportunities available to them. It is worth noting that assessment processes and practices may be implemented or perceived differently from context to context. Specifically, cultural differences may be a real barrier for collecting particular data (see also, Javidan *et al*., 2006). For example, in an Arab context, personal information, e.g. gender, age, religion, sexual issues, political affiliations, in the workplace are very sensitive issues, while personal information is considered appropriate for assessment in other contexts. This may be attributed to Arab people not being familiar enough with the reasons for using assessments.

Design of learning and development programs

Given the dynamics of the business environment, any investment in leadership development will yield positive outcomes for leaders and organizations. To do so, this requires taking into account that program designs should go beyond providing a conceptual understanding to engaging in learning experiences. Giber *et al*., (2000) shed light on five areas in which most leadership development programs fail, and recommend that they should stay clear of designers and consultants. These areas are: 1) too elaborate and try to cover too many areas; 2) lack of a compelling catalyst to convince participants of the need for change or continued growth; 3) lack of understanding or involvement of key stakeholders to support learners in the process, yet with an expectation of change and growth; 4) lack of sustainable change; and 5) little demonstration of return on investment for the expense and time away from the job. Moreover, to design effective learning and development programs, there is an essential need to identify a set of factors that can affect the why and how the program is shaped and delivered. Specifically, the content (the type of behaviors and capabilities required)

(Megheirkouni, 2016b), the level of leaders who will be involved in the program (executives, middle, operational levels, or mixed) (Giber *et al.,* 2000; Tichy, 1997), best practices (the methods and activities that will be used to deliver the program content) (Megheirkouni, 2016a), the time (Wakefield and Bunker, 2010), location (whether it is off-job or on-job training (Fuller, 1996), and funding (how much the program will cost, where this differs based on firm size) (Mabey and Finch-Lee, 2007; Mavin *et al.*, 2010; Story and Westhead, 1996). Once these factors are considered together in great detail, the learning and development program will take a clear shape.

Implementation of learning and development
Undoubtedly, the manner of implementing leadership development programs is equally important to the stage of designing these programs, if not more. In this vein, Giber *et al.* (2000) reported that practical experience proved that 60 to 70 per cent of all strategies fail to be successfully implemented, and thus leadership development companies need to ensure that everyone in the organization understands the strategy, the reasons for it, their role in making it happen, and understanding effective developmental activities, acting as a means of sharing the information and providing some of the tools for successful implementation. Schatz (1997) stated that traditional academics fail to respond to companies' requirements for developing leadership practices, and argued that although learning and development is supported by theories and scholars, this is not adopted by business schools. It is argued the type of development methods/activities, the content, and the implementation are posed for major debate not only in leadership literature, but also in institutional-cultural literature (e.g. Mabey and Finch-Lee, 2007). That implies that leadership development programs may differ in terms of manner of implementation. This was empirically supported by Megheirkouni (2016a, 2016b) who explored leadership development in the for-the profit sector in terms of purposes, content, and implementation. The findings revealed that each development method/activity can be used for more than one purpose, and different methods can be used for the same purpose. Additionally, leadership development methods/activities are implemented via off-job or on-job training, and in class or action learning.

Evaluation of learning and development outcomes
Undoubtedly, it is not enough to just re-administer an assessment survey to measure the outcome of any leadership and management development program. The effectiveness of leadership development programs depends on the ability of participants to transfer what they have learnt into practice for better performance. Hannum (2004) reported that individual outcomes of leadership development can be assessed by regular evaluations, end-of-initiative evaluations, learning and change surveys, and behavioral/capabilities observation, while team outcomes of leadership development can be determined by dialogues and a focus-group approach. Giber *et al.* (2000) suggested three separate evaluation methods were used to determine if program objectives had been met. First, formal reassessments of the original survey are administered to both team members and their direct reports. Second, staff and participants can be asked open-ended questions immediately after the program and then six months later. Third, consultant observation of the executive team can reveal how the team worked together to achieve the team task and the processes used to do the task. Ready and

Conger (2003) argue that leadership development programs tend to be successful if these programs include appropriate leaders who are ready to complete the tasks/roles that are given, have the ability to use what have been learnt for competitive advantage, and have ability to understand IBM's business strategy and are able to transfer it into practice.

Current Challenges in Leadership Development

The complexities and challenges encountered by people, organizations, and countries in today's business world in the state and for-profit sector constitute a rich source of learning, but learning leadership by developmental methods for all business types is likely to be questionable. Adopting generic leadership practices for successful organizational leaders in any sector is a complex task (Sullivan, 2004; Connerley and Pedersen, 2005) because the complexity of business environments requires a different set of leadership needs in today's organizations (D'Amato et al., 2009); and likely requires specific leadership development practices (MacGillivray, 2006). In line with this, the development of leaders in isolation from context is ineffective and leads to failure in achieving the desired outcomes of leadership development activities. Consequently, a number of authors (e.g. Bolden, 2005; Storey, 2011; Grint, 2005; Hartley, 2010) have proposed that LD should be aligned with a number of contextual factors that are categorized under institutional-cultural factors.

Technology in today's business is perceived as a critical factor affecting leadership development (Conner, 2000; Antes and Schuelke, 2011; Webber, 2003; Avolio and Kahai, 2003). For example, technology infrastructure has become a challenge to leadership development because today's business proposes that companies need cutting-edge LD technologies (Conner, 2000; Hernez-Broome and Hughes, 2004; Antes and Schuelke, 2011). Avolio and Kahai (2003) argue that technology affects leadership in different ways, and assert that technology facilitates the opportunities of LD through adopting online courses or CD-based training.

Competitive strategy is also perceived as a critical factor affecting leadership development in the current literature (Stank et al., 2012; Fulmer and Bleak, 2008; Arthur, 1992). Porter (1980) argues that competitive advantage requires different sets of human resource policies and practices to elicit specific behaviors and attitudes of individuals in order to encourage success. For example, Arthur (1992) asserts that differentiation strategy needs different HR practices and even policies that include high-quality training, decentralized decision-making and transformational skills, such as motivation, creating opportunities for individuals, teamwork, empowering staff and commitment.

Additionally, the concept of leadership is investigated either as a convergent or divergent phenomenon across cultures, and the work of Hofstede's model may be a fundamental source of explaining leadership learning and development (e.g. Hofstede, 2011, 2003). For example, Hogg's (2001) work on prototype learning may provide a clear understanding of how participants react to LD programs because the implications of the outcome for prototype on LD is in that individuals from a social identity group may practice different access to opportunities for development (Douglas, 2003; Sinclair, 2009). Therefore, culture is perceived as another factor affecting leadership development. Megheirkouni, (2016c) distinguished between two types of factors influencing leadership development in Syria: 1) factors influencing the application of LD that include poor technology

infrastructure, weakness in technology use, religion, wasta, gender, political and economic sanctions and the lack of time value; and 2) factors determining leadership development that include differentiation strategy, business type, sector type, number of employees, organizational managerial levels, balanced international strategy and organizational culture on the other side.

Future Trends in Leadership Development

Leadership development is perceived as central to organizational learning. Organizations today need strong leadership capability at all management levels to ensure their success (Fulmer and Bleak, 2008). It is argued that the importance of leadership development lies in the fact that it has grown in response to the changing nature of organizations, advances in management theory, business environments, and social trends around the world (Gallos, 2008). In line with this, leadership development may be also seen as oriented towards building capacity in anticipation of foreseen and unforeseen challenges. In addition, adapting to uncertain environments requires specific leadership behaviors and capabilities (Martineau and Patterson, 2010), and building and developing leadership behaviors and capabilities might be a priority for strategic organizations in today's business (Yearout *et al.*, 2001; Daft and Lane, 2014; Surdulli *et al.*, 2012) because leadership development is a strategic initiative in response to challenges surrounding the organization.

It is also argued performance management is a process requiring both vertical and horizontal integration in an organizational system (Hartel and Fujimoto, 2015; Petrie, 2014). That implies people in the vertical and horizontal levels need to be well-trained to achieve the role required. Essentially, vertical and horizontal managers should be targeted in most leadership learning and development initiatives.

The dominant way of describing any leadership development system is by indicating what organizations do to develop their managers and leaders and what type of methods they utilize (Megheirkouni, 2016a). Given that leadership is an essential part of organizational development, identifying which specific behaviors and capabilities must be present is vital. Without defining the leadership behaviors/capabilities required, organizations may fail to optimize the outcomes of their leadership (Megheirkouni, 2016b).

Others believe that the return on investment of formal leader development programs may not adequately prepare leaders for tomorrow's challenges (Avolio *et al.*, 2009), particularly, in the time it takes to design, implement, and evaluate leadership development program, the needs of organization may have changed due to the dynamic environmental forces. Therefore, leader self-development enables leaders to adapt to the continually changing environment both within and outside of the organization (Reichard and Johnson, 2011) and helps solve problems quickly and generate creative ideas that support organizational growth (Phillips, 1993).

This proposes that development strategies in an Arab context in general and Syria, in particular, have to take into consideration the specific-purposes, the specific-content, and implementation of any future leader development program (e.g. Megherikouni, 2016a).

Method

Research context

Syria has witnessed a set of reforms since the 1970s that have placed the country on a course of political and economic stability. These reforms have covered all aspects of life particularly after 2000. For example, Syria's economy was rapidly growing, standing at the apex of a decade-long shift from a planned economy to a social market one, which opened up the country and its people to countless new opportunities. Syria continued to be a welfare state, providing huge subsidies, universal free healthcare, and free education at all levels (Shaaban, 2017). Additionally, there have been a set of unique characteristics that contributed to its stability such as, safety and security (Megheirkouni, 2016c), self-sufficiency for most food staples wheat, fruits, vegetables (Fiorillo and Vercueil, 2003), self-sufficiency for oil (Goodarzi, 2009), and tourism characteristics (Van Harssel, Jackson, and Hudman, 2014). However, the war has destroyed all these unique features in Syria (Megheirkouni, 2016c). This will place more pressure on any future government for infrastructure improvement, reform its institutional system in order to meet people needs after this disaster.

Lack of research on leadership development in the Middle East can be attributed to two reasons: first, lack of interest in leadership development research is likely to be because the area of leadership development is still neglected by Arab governments, and is mostly investigated by non-Arab scholars or researchers who may not recognize the hidden challenges surrounding public sector organizations in the Middle East in general and Syria in particular. Second, leadership development programs in the Middle East are still designed based on a Western mentality that does not work with public sector organizations. In other words, to understand future trends in leadership development targeting public sector organizations in post-war, there is a need for a better understanding of local culture, leader characteristics, the way of thinking, war tragedy, terrorism, and institutional systems in order to develop leaders who are able to reduce the gap between employees and/or managers post-war, and thus help the public sector achieves its objectives.

Participants

Phone interviews were conducted with 24 middle managers. The sample was composed of 16 males and 8 females. Public sector organizations that were involved in the study were selected from five cities: Damascus, Latakia, Hama, Tartus, and As-Suwayda. The characteristics of these public organizations differed in terms of: 1) business type, such as telecommunication, ports, tobacco, and fabric/ textile; and 2) their different contributions to Syrian society, economic benefits, and employment. Public sector organizations lost a large number of experts, consultants, and leaders because of terrorism. Accordingly, the purposive sampling was adopted in the current study, given the need to managers/leaders who have professional experience in the public sector organizations, and thus they can provide further details on opportunities, challenges, weaknesses, and strengths in Syria (Megheirkouni, 2016c).

Interview protocol

A semi-structured interview protocol was developed to investigate the research topic. The interviews lasted around one hour, on average. The questions were divided into two main sections: a set of introductory questions to fill the gap between the interviewer and the

interviewee (Musselwhite *et al.*, 2006) and a set of key questions surrounding issues on leadership development interventions. The key questions asked in the interviews were: 1) What are the current challenges you think are facing effective leadership development?; 2) How do you think the current challenges are affecting leadership development in your organization?; 3) Are these challenges also seen in all public sector organizations in this country?; 4) What do you think the public sector should be doing more of in this country regarding leadership and management development?; and 5) Where do you see the future of leadership development in the post-war period? The questions used in the interviews go beyond the contradictories, needs, and characteristics of the context from which the data were collected, the company's requirements, regardless of their business types in the public sector, people's tragedy, and the weakness of most public sector organizations, corruption, and economic sanctions.

Data analysis

The interviews were transcribed and were read twice to ensure that all the data was on paper. The qualitative data was analyzed using NVivo version 9. This software is used for analyzing any unstructured data and is increasingly being used by qualitative researchers and scholars in order to organize qualitative data and perform thematic analysis (Klenke, 2008). The qualitative analysis here combines electronic and manual forms of data analysis. The process of qualitative data analysis can be summarized as follows. A provisional 'coding list' of categories was used that emerged from the qualitative data, where this gave the researcher the point of departure (Miles and Huberman, 1994). This list was inputted into the software to form tree nodes as well as sub-nodes. As data analysis continued, reflexivity helped to generate new sub-nodes to the parent tree, which were compared with the different and similar nodes (Bazeley and Jackson, 2013). To ensure a consistent use of codes, the description function was essential to track which sorts of data were coded therein. Sub-codes were generated for the nodes that were flourishing (Miles and Huberman, 1994).

Findings

The results are presented in two parts: first, current challenges to leadership development are presented, and second, future trends in leadership development: see Table 1.

TABLE 1 HERE

Current Challenges

Egos

Top leaders in public sector organizations are often perceived as elite leaders, given their experience or their selection from among a large number of people. Therefore, this has a negative impact on the behavior of those leaders. Specifically, they create a gap with those working at operational and middle management in terms of experience, knowledge, qualification, as the following quote illustrates: "I do not see one reason for taking part in training sessions". One participant was very clear. He said "It is shame on me if I attend a training program with those who are at the lower management positions… this gives a bad

impression of my experience or knowledge". Additionally, top leaders in public sector organizations have the power to affect all people working in public sector organizations, so the distance or gap between leaders and employees increase the respect for the leaders, given the ambiguity that surrounds leaders' skills, experience, and qualifications of employees. One participant stated:

> I have been appointed to that position because of my experience in ports over 30 years... I do not accept to be assessed by consultants in any training course that does not take into account that there are other managers, from lower managerial positions, who are attending that course.

Another participant mentioned a Syrian idiom called 'Khush-bush' that means that the relationship between two persons is very informal through a set of slang vocabularies used, or feel free to ask for a favor, regardless of being legal or illegal. He stated:

> A 'Khush-bush' relationship reduces the gap between a leader and the others, but this is not me. This behavior will affect me in the company if I do not have a strong personality where employees may ignore laws and their duties... I am very sensitive to this issue if I want to attend a learning and development course.

> I have heard that my employees believe that after I came to this leadership position, my vanity increased, which is good to maintain this distance with the employees.... I do not think it is a good idea to be together in one training course.

It was found that managers who were appointed to leadership positions because of their experience used hard words that show their anger and annoyance when their names are put with managers who seriously need training courses. One participant stated the following:

> Do not repeat that again. I think you have forgotten you are talking with the general manager of this company! ... How do you want me to attend a training course with managers who do not have enough experience?!

Technological hurdles
The Syrian government is responsible for public sector organizations like any other government around the world. This responsibility covers such issues as HR, funding, strategies, policies, and more importantly, infrastructure. It is worth noting that technology plays an essential part in public sector organizations to facilitate tasks, so the Syrian government pays attention to the importance of technology in the production of and for improving the quality of services. However, the technology used for human resource development is still perceived as useless. More specifically, technology infrastructure for training and development in public sector organizations can be described as poor due to a set of factors, as the following quote illustrates: "technology infrastructure in this country is widely affected by two factors: political and economic sanctions, and the gap between old and new generations entering the public sector every year". This quote was strongly supported by many participants. For example, one participant mentioned how poor is the technology used for learning and development. She stated the following:

> We still rely on a traditional way of learning when we attend a training session, which is a very boring approach for learning. But I must be honest in my answer because economic sanctions affected technical equipment… all our computers and software are old now.

Another participant was clearer in his answer. He stated:

> The public sector cannot import without the government's support, and the government is put under surveillance by the EU and the US. The public sector is looking for spare or replacement parts for IT equipment such as laptops, desktop PC, printers, monitors or projectors, and other things. Training sessions in the public sector face a real challenge with this problem.

Additionally, there was a gap between the old and young generation entering the workplace every year in terms of the ability to use technology, where it was found that young managers showed more attention to technical issues than old managers. The reason is likely to be because of the difference in the educational system between the young and old generations that affects how managers learn. One participant stated:

> I do prefer using a handbook rather than an eBook because the way we learned was a traditional way of learning, so I cannot change that.

> Training courses with old managers are boring…. We spend time because some managers learn slowly with technology. They believe that learning through the use of technology is boring, but in fact learning without technology is really boring for me

Instability

Undoubtedly, instability is a serious factor influencing leadership and its development in any country or organization. In this aspect, it was found that the Syrian war and terrorism are the main reasons for instability, where this had negative implications for the productivity of most companies operating in Syria in general and the public sector in particular. The public sector is committed to paying for employees despite the lack of productivity and the economic sanctions, which were factors affecting training and development programs supported by the government, as the following quote illustrates:

> … no organization spends money on leadership and management development in a state of instability of the environment in which it operates because there are priorities that should be taken into account such as bills, salaries, costs of productivity loss,…etc.

> We are working in this crisis [Syrian war] to cut all forms of spending and cancel all our HR development plans for saving, especially, export and import movement is still frozen due to sanctions and terrorism and many productivity sections are out of order because they are disrupted.

It is noted that lack of security, the main reason of instability, was another reason for canceling human resource development (HRD) programs which were supported by the government with internal and external partnerships. As the public sector is managed by the government, each ministry is responsible for its public organizations, and thus ministries determine where managers from all cities should gather, but this is not possible for some managers, given the lack of security. One participant stated:

> I canceled my booking many times because the highway to the capital city was not safe because of radical groups.

> Because of the war and terrorism, our elite managers, consultants, and experts left the country and went to find another opportunity abroad due to instabilities that led to negative results on all levels: rising living costs, inflation, and the devaluation of the Syrian pound against other currencies.

The different expectations of young and old staff
It was found that there was no agreement between old and young managers on several matters, including human resource development for managers and employees. A participant stated:

> Career development is the best method used by the government to select its managers or leaders in all public sector organizations. I have been in this position since 2010 after I worked for 8 years as a vice chief executive, and am looking for a higher leadership role because I can do more.

Another participant stated:

> All that I am looking for is just one opportunity to develop my skills to combine my academic qualifications and what I learned for a better outcome.

Additionally, the way of thinking between old and young managers was salient. This is likely to be because most old managers still follow bureaucracy that affects all forms of action learning, while young managers tend to be more open and flexible to change and show interest in implementing what is new and learning from their mistakes, but this is not allowed for managers. This is well illustrated in the following quotes:

> Traditional management resists change and it is a real barrier for learning, in turn. That is the case between our chief executive and all managers who have the desire to develop their leadership capabilities through action. I did two CIPD courses… they are useless in this environment because the chief executive perceives these courses as banality courses.

> Our general manager does not accept any idea to develop our skills. It is difficult to implement ideas that you learned 30 years ago now, so when we suggest raising a

report to the ministry explaining the need for external training courses, nothing we will learn can be implemented in practice, he said…

Financial constraints

Given that the government supports and manages public sector organizations, it is natural that this sector is greatly influenced by the instability of government. In the case of Syria, the war and terrorism from one side and sanctions from the other side have been the major reasons for the state of instability, which has had negative implications for all public sector organizations, included profitable companies. Financial difficulty has placed the government under pressure due to the lack of financial income. This needed changes in public sector strategies to meet this challenge through relying on cutting spending policy. One participant stated:

> The government forced all ministries to cut spending, given the financial difficulties surrounding government in general and public sector organizations in particular. These financial difficulties were faced by adopting strict austerity measures on the ministries and the public sector organizations to survive.... HRD was hardest hit by cutting funding.

Another participant said that "there is a strong relationship between funding and management training". In a similar vein, one participant stated: "when the income or budget of the public sector goes down, all developmental strategies will change or be canceled despite their weaknesses". Another participant stated:

> We cannot do anything regarding management training if we are struggling to survive from the current situation [financial difficulties]… Unfortunately, the government suggests lots of plans for developing manager for many reasons. For instance, to overcome bad phenomena in the society such as corruption.

Similarly, one participant stated:

> Though the government does not have a very clear strategy in the long term for management development, it has been doing its best. The government encouraged the public sector to invest in HR. Now we have the problem of paying salaries in the current financial dilemma after the Syrian crisis.

Future Trends

Developing collective leadership

Individual leadership is very common in public sector organizations. Although this sector includes in some of its organizations executive teams that lead these organizations, the final decision is made by the chief executive. It was noted that there is a desire to encourage collective leadership in the public sector for dealing with all cases whatever their size is in public sector organizations. Specifically, Syrian society combines individual and collective cultures, and thus this has a significant impact on leaders and the how they lead. It was found that participants explicitly admitted that collective leadership will become essential after the

Syrian war because of the need for all people who have experience or high academic qualification to lead public sector organizations in the post-war period, as the following quotes illustrate:

> We now recognize the importance of shared or team leadership after the Syrian crisis. We do need all leaders' minds for leading Syrian organizations after this destruction of our infrastructure.

> The focus must be put on how we build strong team leadership for effective outcomes.

> All managers or leaders must be flexible and accept change for the public interest.

> I do admit that the way to lead is affected by national culture, home, education… so even if we do not like to work with others, we must think of the positive side of working in teams to build and improve our public sector.

Additionally, it was found that although leadership and management development is not a priority in the post-war period, given the financial difficulties, the government will fail to improve the public sector, as the following quote illustrates:

> The government needs to focus on HRD for managers and employees and must run management development focusing on particular capabilities… the most important one is 'how to work in team leadership'.

Technology literacy applications for effective leadership development
The gap between young and old managers and the way of learning should encourage the public sector, and behind it the government, to increase the attention on technology literacy, particularly as used for leadership or management development. This is because technology adopted at operational levels is mostly used to facilitate tasks or productivity, but the most important one is the technology used for learning and development. One participant stated:

> To develop future leaders and managers for better performance, the government must work hard on technology literacy.

> Learning technology must be the next focus for successful and effective application of management training courses.

Additionally, it was noted that young managers do not like to attend training courses with old managers, where they make training slow. The same thing is true for old managers because they feel disappointed by the young managers who do not respect that they are from different generations. One participant stated: "Honestly, the old managers make training sessions very boring". Another participant stated:

> Technology is moving too fast for us… we are very slow at learning how to use technology for learning and development. I recommend the government to separate the old generation and the young generation when running training programs.

Focusing on self-learning and development

A state of instability has affected all aspects of life in Syria, included productivity, services, income, and financial strategies. This has required adopting strict austerity measures. This led to making changes on HRD plans that were adopted by the government for the public sector. There were several opinions calling the government to encourage the public sector through following different and cheaper learning and development strategies for managers and employees. One participant stated:

> I raised my report to the ministry recommending we should encourage our managers and employees to adopt self-learning for developing their skills.

Another participant said:

> We cannot use assessment regularly for management development because of the current situation; we do need our people to work on their weaknesses.

Furthermore, encouraging managers and employees for self-learning was also to overcome many problems that are not related to the Syrian crisis and ones that are caused by the Syrian crisis in the public sector. For example,

> Encouraging our staff to work on their own skills is an essential need in the short and long term through self-training, reading, registering on specific courses that best fit their needs that are different from one to one, self-assessment of performance… all that was an old demand to overcome some weaknesses after we lost our elite managers and employees.

Focusing on creativity and innovation for transferring learning and development

Given the differences among staff in terms of qualifications, experience, technology use, and more importantly, the financial difficulties and instability, the public sector needs to work on future trends that can be used to facilitate transferring the content of leadership and management development initiatives, even if the quality or support of these initiatives are not similar to those used in the for-profit sector in Syria. In this vein, it was found that participants insisted on the way of transferring future leadership development initiatives that will determine whether they will be effective.

> We have to focus on the way of transferring leadership programs through focusing on organized and longitudinal methods designed carefully and fit for all managers whatever their age, experience, and academic qualification is.

Another participant stated the following:

> Not all managers are equal in terms of experience and academic qualification; we need innovative and creative methods in the next decade that facilitate learning for managers who have experience without academic qualification and vice versa.

One participant stated:

> The most important thing in management development is how to deliver the content of training programs because what is used in one country is not necessarily to be used the same way in others, and the way of transferring a particular leadership program differs from country to country… consultants or designers need to focus on innovation for delivering effective learning.

Targeting both vertical and horizontal learning and development

One of the most important issues raised by participants is that the public sector has lost thousands of elite leaders, managers, experts, consultants, and employees who were either killed or have migrated abroad for a better life due to the Syrian crisis. This requires taking into account that learning and development should target all leadership, managers, and supervisors, vertical and horizontal in the organizational structure, as the following quotes illustrate:

> Management training must target not only all managers and supervisors in each department or division, but those who are operational level, middle management, and top management… We lost over the last 6 years our elite people, so we have to cover what we lost.

> The public sector must prepare new staff for managerial positions in the next 15 years… the managers who are still working will be retired in the next 5 years, so we do need alternatives.

> Who told you that management training must target only middle management or top management! What about those at operational levels! All people who aspire to leadership positions need be prepared throughout their career development for potential roles in middle management or even top management.

Additionally, it was noted that although salaries, wages, pensions, compensation, and incentives are more organized and fixed in the public sector, even in a state of instability in the country than in the for-profit sector, learning and development is still less organized than the for-profit sector. It was found that most experienced managers who had retired worked for the for-profit sector. Specifically, the public sector loses those people, while they work as consultants in for-profits. Learning and development approach is perceived as an ongoing need and learning from other experiences must be seriously considered. One participant stated:

> 360-degree development must be implemented in public sector organizations and we must also share our knowledge and experience for developing the next generation of leaders.

Another participant said:

> I do believe that all managers in the public sector must be given an opportunity for management training because they spend their life in one career… investing in HR at

all levels will have positive implications for performance, quality, productivity, and competitive advantage.

Discussion

The purpose of the current study is to explore understand current challenges and future trends in leadership and management development that practitioners can use post-war, using evidence from the Middle East. Table 1 shows the current challenges surrounding leadership and management development and future trends in leadership and management development in a post war period, using evidence from the Syrian public sector.

In examining the first question, current challenges surrounding leadership and management development of the public sector in the Syrian context included egos, technological hurdles, financial constraints, instability, and the different expectations of young and old staff. Empirical research examining factors influencing leadership development in for-profit companies operating in Syria revealed that there were several factors influencing the application of leadership development. This included poor technology infrastructure, weakness in technology use, religion, Wasta (it means using networks and connections for favorable outcomes), gender, political and economic sanctions, and the lack of value of time (Megheirkouni, 2016c). Contrary to expectations, the current study investigated the public sector, but the results did not include more sensitive issues, such as religion (Megheirkouni, 2017), gender (Megheirkouni, 2004), political affiliation (Megheirkouni, 2006c), and Wasta (Hutchings and Weir, 2006; Megheirkouni, 2006c; Smith, Huang, Harb, and Torres, 2012a; Smith, Torres, Leong, Budhwar, Achoui, and Lebedeva, 2012b), which have been widely seen in the Arab Middle East in general and Syria in particular since 2011. This may be because these four issues are not publicly discussed, given their sensitivity and the negative implications for the people who raise such issues in the public sector managed by the government (Megheirkouni, 2016c). Particularly the public sector, and behind it the government, worked hard to reduce the gap between males and females over the last four decades, minimize the role of religion and politics in the public sector, and fight the phenomenon of Wasta, regardless of their success. A number of authors (e.g. Bolden, 2005; Grint, 2005; Hartley, 2010; Storey, 2011) have proposed that leadership development should be aligned with a number of contextual factors that are categorized under institutional-cultural factors. Evidence clearly shows that such contextual factors have implications for content of leadership development methods (Megheirkouni, 2016a; 2016b; Storey, 2011). For example, Hannum et al. (2007) found that contextual factors affect the design and implementation of leadership development programs in ways that shape what is learnt and how the evaluation is perceived. Notably, for effective leadership development, there is an essential to explore and understand current challenges in leadership development.

Several studies discussed future trends in leadership development or how to develop future leaders. For example, drawing on theories of adult development, moral development, Day, Harrison, and Halpin (2008) stated that along with what is known about cognitive development, theories of self-development and self-regulation, current authors are attempting to move from the traditional focus on leadership competencies or skills, to a more integrative model that focuses on the whole development of the person as leader. OECD (2001) suggested that some general and common trends in developing future leaders

can be drawn from the country experience. Specifically, there is an essential need to define a competence profile for future leaders, identify and select potential leaders, encourage mentoring and training, and keep leadership development sustainable. The current study suggested five future trends in leadership and management development in the post-war period included developing collective leadership, technology literacy applications for effective leadership development, focusing on self-learning and development, focusing on creativity and innovation for transferring learning and development, and targeting both vertical and horizontal learning and development. In this respect, Hernez-Broome and Hughes (2004) suggested six trends that would have a major role in future understanding and practice of leadership and leadership development, included leadership competencies, globalization/internationalism of leadership concepts, constructs, and development methods, the role of technology, increasing interest in the integrity and character of leaders, pressure to demonstrate return on investment, and new ways of thinking about the nature of leadership development. Petrie (2014) suggested four future trends based on the following situation: the environment has changed, the skills needed for leadership have also changed, abilities are needed, the methods being used to develop leaders have not changed, and leaders are no longer developing fast enough or in the right ways to match the new environment. These future trends are: more focus on vertical development, transfer of greater developmental ownership to the individual, greater focus on collective rather than individual leadership, and much greater focus on innovation in leadership development methods. That implies that future trends cannot be the same for all organizations, sectors, countries because the current challenges or situations in any organization determine its future trends in leadership development (e.g. Megheirkouni, 2016a, 2016b), and thus consultants, experts, designers of leadership development programs must understand the current challenges, as a specific-context approach to design effective leadership development post-war. Similarly, although there are certain future trends in leadership development post-war that can be widely used around the world, leadership development scholars and learning and development centers have to explore current challenges and identify future trends in leadership development post-war acting as a specific-need approach.

Theoretical Implications
The current study extends the current thinking on challenges and trends in leadership development, particularly leadership development post-war. Petrie (2014) have illustrated that more focus on vertical development, transfer of greater developmental ownership to the individual, greater focus on collective rather than individual leadership, and much greater focus on innovation in leadership development methods are perceived as major four trends for the future of leadership development and the current study confirms these findings. Furthermore, the qualitative nature of this study adds further support to these claims where the data of the current study explore current challenges and future trends in leadership development post-war. A second contribution of this study lies in drawing together the learning and development system, best practices, and processes, current challenge to leadership development, and future trends to leadership development literature to jointly help explore and understand the current challenges and future trends in leadership development post-war. The findings support previous suggestions (Megheirkouni, 2016c) that current

challenges in leadership development are context-specific challenges affected by internal and external environment of public sector organizations and the country's characteristics. Although certain challenges in leadership development may have seen valid to other settings and countries, such as technology (Antes and Schuelke, 2011; Avolio and Kahai, 2003; Conner, 2000; Spreitzer, 2008; Webber, 2003), culture (Al-Faleh, 1987; Alimo-Metcalfe and Alban-Metcalfe, 2003; Martineau and Patterson, 2010), it remains sparely researched in the literature and there is even less research about the major challenges affecting leadership development (e.g. Mabey and Finch-Lee, 2007).

Practical Implications

As noted, when considering the Middle East in general and Syria in particular post-war, it is essential to understand both the current challenges that include egos, technological hurdles, financial constraints, instability, and the different expectations of young and old staff on one side, and future trends that include developing collective leadership, technology literacy applications for effective leadership development, focusing on self-learning and development, focusing on creativity and innovation for transferring learning and development, and targeting both vertical and horizontal learning and development on the other side. The findings of this study can be used to guide the practitioners of leadership development programs to design effective post-war public sector initiatives. At least three implications for government, public sector, and designers/consultants must be identified before thinking about the application of leadership training and development programs in the post-war period.

First, governments in the post-war period must understand the challenges that surround their public sector because the current challenges can be perceived as a strong base and evidence for drawing effective future plans and strategy in HRD in general and leadership and management development in particular. Specifically, the circumstances that accompany crises and wars are not necessarily the same. Therefore, governments need to evaluate the current challenges for better understanding of future trends in leadership and management development for the public sector.

Second, managers and leaders of public sector organizations need to share their experience and academic knowledge vertically and horizontally to prepare future managers and leaders. This step should then be followed by nominating candidates to attend particular leadership and management development programs. As a result, those managers and leaders will work as consultants in future programs after preparing the new generation for managerial leadership positions, and so on.

Third, there are three scenarios that can explain the nature of consultants, experts, and designers of leadership and management development in the public sector, regardless of the size of these programs: 1) working with for-profit sector experts as partnership for leadership and management development; 2) working with the European Union after the government has signed several agreements with the EU to take advantage of their experience in leadership and management development to overcome leadership corruption since the 2000s; 3) working also with managers and leaders who were appointed due to their achievements to be consultants for public sector organizations. According to the findings, consultants, experts, and designers of leadership and management development programs need to know there is no

leadership development without taking into account three issues: 1) political decisions that will encourage and invite expatriate academics in Europe and the USA who have the capability to supervise effectively the application of leadership development programs in the post-war period; 2) targeting a large number of leaders and managers in the horizontal and vertical levels of organizations with the same courses as well as separate ones; and 3) appointing academics specialized in leadership and management development for temporary leadership positions to lead in the post-war period, being as a sensitive period that will transfer the public sector from bureaucracy and traditional management to innovative leadership.

Limitations

As is the case with any study, there are several limitations associated with this research worthy of being acknowledged. First, there are several other challenges that may impact on leadership development post-war. For example, corruption in most its forms could also have an impact on the future trends in leadership development. Future research may want to add more complexity to the current study and explore the impact of corruption on leadership development post-war. Additionally, future research could consider for-profit and non-profit sector to explore current challenge and future trends in leadership development post-war. Second, simply relying on qualitative research does not allow generalizing the findings to other Arab countries in the Middle East, particularly those that suffer from wars and terrorism. It is important, therefore, to supplement the qualitative research with quantitative research. Although much harder to implement on such a large sample size, collecting mixed methods, using qualitative and quantitative data could have provided strengths that offset the weaknesses of both quantitative and qualitative research. As such, if possible, similar future research could combine, for qualitative purposes, both open-ended survey questions with semi-structured interviews for a more holistic understanding of public sector organizations. Third, the study sample consisted of only 24 middle managers from public sector organization located in safe cities: Damascus, Latakia, Hama, Tartus, and As-Suwayda. As such, future research may want to add more managers at the operational and top levels of management from areas or cities occupied by ISIS or other radical groups after the war.

Conclusion

In post-war environments, public sector leaders and managers face pressures to lead and manage jobs, people, and organizations. There is an essential need to rehabilitate people in public sector organizations, particularly those who are in leadership and management positions. The data in this study suggest one means of doing so. An understanding of the current challenges in leadership development forms the cornerstone for any future attempts for effective leadership development. If these results survive further empirical testing in broader settings, they will shift our understanding of future trends in 'leadership development post-war'. Together, these ideas contribute to existing research and invite future research on current challenges and future trends in leadership development in other complex environments.

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Table 1 Current Challenges and Future Trends in Leadership Development

Current Challenges	Future Trends
• Egos	• Developing collective leadership
• Technological hurdles	• Technology literacy applications for effective leadership development
• Financial constraints	• Focusing on self-learning and development
• Instability	• Focusing on creativity and innovation for transferring learning and development
• The different expectations of young and old staff	• Targeting both vertical and horizontal learning and development