

By Contribution

Powerful Leadership & Excellence in Public Enterprises

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Leadership emerges from the core values of the organisation. It has been regarded as an important and powerful driver of excellence when adequately backed by globalization issues and flexibility in leaders' style dynamisms. This paper touches upon the cornerstones of the concepts and constructs surrounding powerful leadership and therefore, cuts across through and between various intervening concepts such as leadership, culture and also change. It provides a spectrum of leadership phenomena to explain the possible kind of leadership that is needed for the public sector enterprises to excel. It supports the theoretical underpinnings with a host of data through a study of a cross-section of senior managers in the organizations.

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Introduction

Within the literature on leadership, generally, there is a clear recognition of the link between leadership and culture in the process of change (Schein, 1992; Afsanesh, 1993; both cited in Parry & Proctor-Thomson, 2003; Kotter, 1998). Only through leadership can one develop and nurture a culture that is adaptive to change (Kotter, 1998:166). According to Schein (1992, cited in Parry & Proctor-Thomson, 2003), transformational leadership behavior such as directing attention to critical incidents, reacting to crisis, role modeling, formal statements and telling stories, legends and myths influence culture. Kilmann (1985) believes that leadership is critical because, as organisational culture develops and change, they also need to be managed and controlled. According to Bass (1998), survival of the organisation depends upon the shaping of the culture initiated by effective leaders, particularly during change efforts. Kotter & Heskett (1992:84) state that the single most visible factor which distinguishes major cultural changes that succeed from those that fail is 'competent leadership at the top'. They inspire and help create adaptive culture.

Romig (2001) reports that today's organisational leaders required a new kind of person having great managerial leadership talents and who did not depend on top-down organisational superiority and subordination. Reference is to powerful leadership in dealing with normal human responses such as fears, insecurity, self-doubt, confusion, etc firmly and sensitively, give support where it is needed and stand firm in the face of strong resistance. They help to create enhanced capacity in their people and who, in turn, become the steward of all the organisation's stakeholders (McLagan & Nel, 1996). According to them, the new style of leadership requires changes throughout the organisation and culture by looking deep within and transforming themselves, creating direct relationships with employees, helping managers and front line to change, acting as focused visionary and increasing organisational strengths.

Excellence in Leadership

In achieving organisational development and excellence, the role of a successful entrepreneurial and/ or intrapreneurial leader is important and the leader has to be a powerful one who can communicate and inspire by appropriate means, the level of competence necessary to influence a group of individuals to become willing participants in the fulfillment of innovational goals (Darling & Beebe, 2007). They create new ideas, new products and services, new policies, new procedures and effective communication networks. According to Nurmi & Darling (1997) these leaders believe in "attention through vision", "meaning

through communication", "trust through positioning" and "confidence through respect". Through the vision they take their organisations beyond the horizon and the established map.

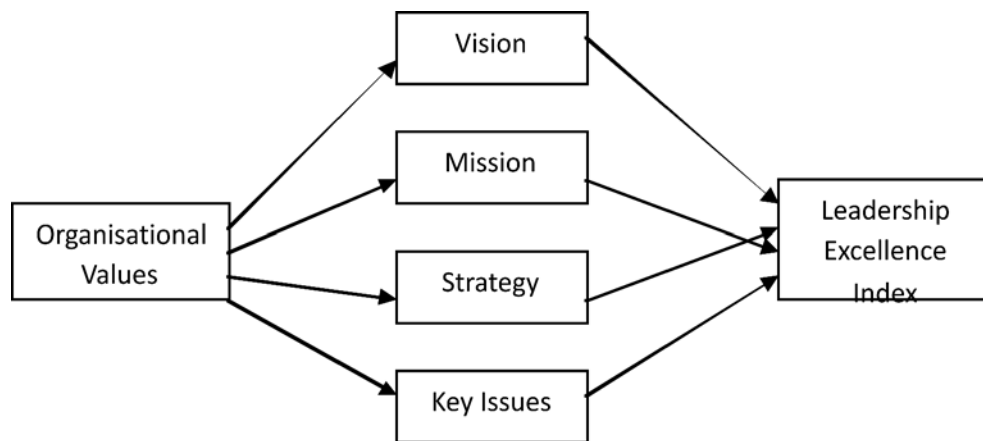
Leadership is prime and leadership excellence emerges from the core values of the organisation.

In Kanji's Business Excellence Model (Kanji & Moura, 2001), leadership plays a prime role for the creation of excellence in organisations. According to them, leadership is prime and leadership excellence emerges from the core values of the organisation. Bennis & Nanu (1985, cited in Northhouse, 1997) state that "management controls, arranges, does things right; leadership unleashes energy, sets the vision, does the right thing". This view is shared by Kotter (1990) when he states that the overriding function of the management is to provide order and consistency in organisations, whereas the primary function of leadership is to produce change and movement (Kanji & Moura, 2001). Georgiades & Macdonell's (1998) model also puts leadership at the center of effective functioning of an organisation with three main leadership tasks: establishment of the vision, the alignment of the culture, and specification of management practices. According to Nadler & Tushman (1990), leaders need to provide a focal point for the energies, hopes and aspirations of people and serve as role models whose behaviors, actions and personal energies demonstrate the desired behavior for concrete outcomes.

Kanji's model of leadership (Fig. 1) incorporates critical success factors for leadership identified as vision, mission, strategy and key issues which are essential for achieving excellence in leadership. To emerge as a powerful leader, therefore, the major challenge is man-

aging effectively the relationships among the globalization issues, the organisation's vision, mission and strategy, and leader's style dynamisms. The meaning of each of the model's constructs and relationships among them is explored in Fig. 1.

Fig. 1 Kanji's Leadership Structural Equation Model



Source: Adapted from Kanji & Moura (2001:710).

Global Leadership

The emergence of global leadership is the offshoot of what we call the management challenges of globalization issues, which need to develop executives to manage and lead from a global perspective (Mendenhall et al., 2003). Leadership began to be regarded as more complex and challenging to drive organisations towards excellence. Scholars came up with identical findings that developing global leadership and business competence in leaders was a high priority (Gregersen et al., 1998; Suutari, 2002; Mendenhall et al., 2003). Osland et al. (2006) identified challenges emanating from global contexts such as geographic

reach in terms of business operations, cultural reach in terms of people and intellectual reach in terms of development of global mindsets. Lane et al. (2004) argued that, as a term, globalization attempts to describe a complexity of four different kinds—multiplicity, interdependence, ambiguity and cross-cultural differences. The field of global leadership development has started developing and scholars are undertaking continuous research and surveys to contribute to this field in the nascent stage of development.

Some scholars have conceded that most competencies associated with leadership from the domestic and traditional leadership literature are necessary to lead

globally. The global context places high demands on the deployment of these competencies that for all intents and purposes render the phenomenon very differently (Mendenhall, 2008) and the study of global leadership therefore becomes necessary. Osland & Bird (2006) distinguish between global and domestic leadership in terms of issues related to connectedness, boundary spanning, complexity, ethical challenges, dealing with tensions and paradoxes, pattern recognition, and building learning environments, teams and community, and leading large-scale change efforts across diverse cultures. Living and working constantly in a global context, and experiencing the ongoing intensity of the dimensions of complexity (Lane et al., 2004) can trigger a transformational experience within managers (Osland, 1995). These powerful transformational or crucible experiences (Osland, 1995, Bennis & Thomas, 2002) have been found to produce new mental models in the individual—new worldviews, mindsets, perceptual acumen, and perspectives that simply do not exist within the people who have not gone through such a series of experiences in a global context.

Powerful Leadership

Combining the strong aspects of what can be had from the traditional leadership literature and those that are essential from the global leadership literature has produced something that can be called as powerful leadership to make domestic organisations not only successful, but also achieve high organic growth amidst the severe challenges thrown or likely to be thrown by global organisations in the domestic place. It

is in this context that a review of global leadership literature will help develop an appropriate framework of ‘powerful leadership’ to have a distinct competitive advantage over global organisations. Domestic organisations, too, have to function together with global corporations as operating in isolation in the context of massive globalization phenomenon today is impossible. Tichy et al. (1992, cited in Mendenhall, 2008) wrote about “true globalists”, as they called them, who have (i) a global mindset; (ii) a set of global leadership skills and behaviors; (iii) energy, skills, and talent for global networking; (iv) the ability to build effective teams; and (v) global change agents skills. These leaders develop people and organisations simultaneously. Kets de Vries & Mead (1992) developed a list of leadership qualities that included envisioning, strong operational codes, environmental sense making, ability to instill values, inspiring, empowering, building and maintaining organisational networks, interpersonal skills, pattern recognition and cognitive complexity, and hardness. Rhinesmith’s (2003) articulation of global mindset has two components— intellectual intelligence and emotional intelligence. Both lead to business acumen and personal management. Articulating the vision, mission and strategy of an organisation is an important attribute of a leader (Kets de vries et al., 2004). Goldsmith et al. (2003) identified 15 dimensions of global leadership and noted that 10 of their dimensions are also found in domestic leadership and continue to be important. They are demonstration of integrity, encouraging constructive dialogues, creating shared vision, developing people, empowering people, customer satisfaction, maintaining competitive

advantage, leading change, achieving personal mastery and anticipating opportunities. Powerful leadership will also require possession of shared leadership, building partnerships and traits of thinking globally.

Goldsmith et al. (2003) list the following important leadership competencies to drive future organisations towards excellence: genuinely listening to others, creating and communicating a clear organisational vision, becoming a role model for living the very same organisational values, uniting an organisation into an effective team, clearly identifying priorities and focusing on a vital few, building partnerships across the company, and constantly treating people with respect and dignity. Leadership competencies to lead in the 21st century in domestic organisations can be drawn from McCall & Hollenbeck's (2002) model of global executives. The model is developed based on interviews with global executives (who are also global leaders) and focuses on the interaction and partnership between the individual and the organisation. Most of the competencies are appropriate for leading public and private sector enterprises and a great deal of attention is paid to this model as these can be powerful drivers of organisations towards excellence.

A Powerful Leader

The important competencies required to make a powerful leader, among others, can be: leading and managing others—selection; development, motivation and team building; dealing with problematic relationships—headquarters, bosses, unions, government, media, politics; and

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developing good leadership qualities within self and others. According to Chopard (2002, cited in Winter, 2003), to successfully manage high performing organisations who, worldwide, are operating in an environment of increasing volatility, high performance leadership is the only way. Leadership will be required to be nurtured at all levels across the organisation. Between 1984 and the present day, three things have changed: scale from national to global, speed from steady to fast, and standards from local to world class. Nelson Mandela influenced the world from his prison cell, and we are talking of a leadership which is powerful and can influence an organisation in the most turbulent state (Winter, 2003). Powerful leadership is bound to make a difference as they inspire creativity in the groups they lead. Efforts such as creative problem solving and strategy are essential to the work of leaders in the knowledge economy (Leonard & Swap, 1999).

Organisational leaders are continuously resorting to one or the other transformation efforts with a strong determination to transform and turnaround towards making it a great organisation. However, as Kotter (1995) reports, most transformation efforts fail, particularly because a critical mistake in any of the phases has a devastating impact, slowing momentum of pace of change and sometimes negative hard-won gains.

Also, many change leaders—internal or external—may have relatively lesser experience in renewing organisations and even very capable people often make at least one big error (Kotter, 1995). Eight steps listed by Kotter (1995) relate to establishing a sense of urgency, forming a powerful guiding coalition, creating a vision, communicating the vision, empowering others to act on the vision, planning for and creating short-term wins, consolidating improvements and producing still more changes and institutionalizing new approaches. Starting a transformation program, cascading it down below, and seeing it achieving transformational goals through the aggressive cooperation of many individuals are important. A paralyzed senior management has too many managers and not enough leaders. Enough real leaders are required in an organisation (Kotter, 1995), particularly ‘powerful leaders’ for driving and leading change towards its transformation and excellence. If a change target is the entire company, the CEO is the key; if it is needed in a division, the division general manager is the key. At all these key positions, great leaders, powerful leaders or change champions are needed. Kotter’s analysis towards creating a powerful guiding leadership coalition to have a minimum mass for something worthwhile to be happening is helpful in understanding the successful transformation efforts.

If a change target is the entire company, the CEO is the key.

According to Locander & Leuchauer (2006), the phrase, “simultaneous loose-tight properties” used by Peters & Waterman (1982) captures the essence of the leadership paradox of structure. Organisational units require to be so structured that work can be effectively coordinated, performed and assessed without robbing employees of their dignity, stifling their creativity, and inhibiting their ability (Locander & Leuchauer, 2006). Kotter & Heskett (1992: 146) identify successful leaders as those who repeatedly communicate their vision, allow people to challenge these messages and stimulate middle managers to take up the cause and provide leadership themselves. These are characteristics of transformational leadership and are described by Bass & Avolio (1993) to be made of five key compositions: idealized attributes, idealized influence behavior, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individual consideration. Idealized influence and idealized attributes describe leaders who act as role models, can be trusted, are respected and demonstrate high ethical standards. Inspirational motivation involves arousing team spirit, motivation and enthusiasm. It also describes the process of creating vision for the future. Intellectual stimulation describes leadership that supports and encourages innovation and creativity. In addition, intellectual stimulation encourages the followers to question old assumptions. As the fourth transformational leadership style, individualized consideration occurs when leaders pay attention to the developmental needs of the followers, and develop personalized interactions and relationships (Bass & Avolio,

1997). Osterman (1994) found that concern for employees' well being was a primary factor contributing to innovation within an organisation. Podsakoff et al. (1990) defined similar constructs of transformational leadership, including identifying and articulating a vision, providing an appropriate model, and fostering acceptance of goals. Bass (1998) and Podsakoff et al. (1990) conceptualized transformational leadership as promoting flexibility, adaptability and innovation in their followers and their organisations. Gill et al. (1998) believe that the 'new post-bureaucratic organisation' will require transformational leadership for enhancing flexibility, horizontal networks, high-trust relationships, adaptability to change and uncertainty, innovation and empowerment of employees. Such a phenomenon will lead to the necessary reinvention of organisational cultures which, in turn, will lead to organisational success. According to Valle (1999), because of the changing nature of public service, the public sector requires new leadership that will promote flexibility and adaptability in organisations and in individuals. Public sector leadership must provide clear and pronounced vision, effective communication, and inspired motivation towards organisational goals. Leaders who inspire and help create adaptive organisational cultures possess the qualities of transformational leader-

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ship as described by Bass (1998). This may more appropriately be referred to as performance culture. Nutt & Backoff (1993) highlight factors such as using ideals (visions) that are co-created in the place of objectives or goals, moving to be proactive rather than threat driven, adopting innovative ideas, emphasizing participation of key stakeholders, reducing hierarchical distinctions, and empowering followers.

A powerful leadership must, however, use power and trust dimensions judiciously while leading. Kotter & Schlesinger (1979) defines power as "a measure of a person's potential to get others to do what he or she wants them to do, as well as to avoid being forced to do what he or she does not want to do". Machiavelli (1950) suggested fear and love as the main base of power. Hersey & Blanchard (1982) proposed seven bases of power—coercive, legitimate, expert, reward, referent, information, and connection. Pareek (1997, 2003) have given six bases of power in the coercive power group—organisational position (legitimate power), punishment (coercive power), charisma (charismatic power), personal relationship (emotional power), closeness to the source of power (reflected power), and withholding information or resources (manipulative power). He has also proposed six persuasive power bases—reward (reinforcing power), expert power, competence power, behavior power (being a role model), extension power (empathy, caring and helping others), and logical power (based on information and the rationale of the information).

Followership

According to Kellerman (2007), in an era of flatter, networked organisations and cross-cutting teams of knowledge workers, it is not always obvious who exactly is following (or, for that matter, who exactly is leading) and how they are going about it. Reporting relationships are shifting and new talent-management tools are constantly emerging. A confluence of changes—cultural and technological—has influenced what subordinates want and how they behave. Leaders need to understand bosses better and to understand the dynamics between them and their followers.

At times they also act by withholding support from bad leaders, throwing their weight behind good ones, and sometimes claiming commanding voices for those lower down in the social or organisational hierarchy (Kellerman, 2007). CEOs share power and influence with a range of players, including boards, regulators, and shareholder activists. Expertise can—and often does—trump position as an indicator of who really is leading and who is really following (Drucker, 1967, cited in Kellerman, 2007). Kellerman also points out that relationship between superiors and their subordinates is not one-sided and nor are all followers one and the same. Followers too act in their own self-interests as leaders do. While followers may lack authority, at least in comparison with their superiors, they do not lack power and influence. According to Waterman (1994), to be a true leader, one needs to give up control in a

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narrow sense to have control in a much broader sense.

Public Sector Leadership

Leaders, according to Goldsmith et al. (2003), can not embody all of the needed critical capabilities. However, in the present times of globalization issues, where the very changed nature of business organisation (merged, behavior, outsourced and virtual) is beginning to dictate organisations, shared leadership is expected to gain prominence as the operating model of the future. In future, there will be fewer “all knowing” CEOs; instead, leadership will be widely shared in executive teams. New demands for collective responsibility and accountability will emerge, as will competencies for sharing leadership. Not one person only, but more than one person will lead organisations collectively (Osland, 2008, cited in Mendenhall, 2008:51-52). Leaders style dynamism is about high performance leadership, developing leadership at all levels, shared leadership, and developing a second in command.

According to him, “high performance leaders” must harness two energies that are the “performance drivers”—mental and relationship energy, and two energies that are “performance enablers”—physical and emotional energy. Performance leaders can not build and capitalize on the knowledge, creativity and relationships

unless their physical energy (endurance) and their emotional energy (resilience) permit. Many leaders invest vast time and effort in increasing their knowledge and relationships and then fail to use these resources because of physical and emotional fatigue. Though some reviews had concluded that the situational leadership model has some logical and internal inconsistencies and lacks empirical support, it has been found to be adequately representing reality. Blank et al.'s (1990) framework also provides supportive evidences and is based on the assumption that subordinates' maturity moderates the leadership task relationship behaviors with indicators of leader effectiveness.

Research Based Analytics

A qualitative research methodology was carried out using individual interviews and focus group discussions to assess the important issues that typically are associated with the achievement and nurturance of excellence. About 20 individual interviews of about 20 senior managers in public enterprises and 4 focus group discussions (6 - 7 in each group) were carried out.

Three important factors identified that was felt to be important related to:

1. Top Management Leadership
2. Leadership Effectiveness
3. Super-Speciality Centered Leadership

Within each of these factors of powerful leadership, it was found that there

are some sub factors which gives some kind of identity to leadership and they are discussed under each identified factor.

Top Management Leadership

The top leadership in public enterprises needs to be full of dynamism and is evidenced by the fact that it is highly talked about also at every place in the organisation even when he has left the organization. His examples are often cited and have often left a deep mark on everybody's mind. The important sub factors of this phenomenon of leadership that came out were:

- i) *Vision Document Development:* Development of a vision document appears a theoretical exercise; however, it is important in traversing some distance in a planned way, though, mere development of a document does not guarantee or ensures achieving excellence. Referring to such an initiative by one of the public sector CMDs of public sector Hydropower Company, a group of employees mentioned:

“The present CMD has got a vision document developed: ‘Hydro Power 50000 MW initiative’. In this, projects worth 50000MW are identified and vision document prepared for development across the country. Policy makers have been persuaded and there is a constant push for hat by the top leadership. Vision document of public enterprises is a very valuable document related to public enterprises vision and mission fulfill-

ment. The present CMD's strengths are talked about as regards dynamism is concerned".

Vision document of public enterprises is a very valuable document related to public enterprises vision and mission fulfillment.

The powerfulness is being continuously talked about by people below. "What the great ones do, the less prattle off" (Shakespeare in Julius Ceaser). This is an important indicator of powerfulness of leadership.

ii) *Turnaround Leadership*: "In one of the public sector enterprises, a leader who had a stay of more than 7 years in the organisation is regarded as a turnaround leader because of whom the organisation is what it is today. The state of public enterprises when he took over as a CMD was not very good and was a 3500 MW company. However with his strategies, drives and plans it had had a continuous growth of projects, JVs etc and the projects finalized by him have started giving results now".

iii) *Global Leadership Initiatives*: "Public enterprises have started making a concerted drive towards achieving a place in the international community by beginning to providing consultancy services to developing countries in their areas of core competence such as hydropower engineering by an enterprise in hydro-power generation".

"It is a good thing. Achieving a world-wide status is one of the missions of public enterprises".

iv) *Leadership Ownership*: "In some public enterprises, leadership has been changing frequently and has been for durations ranging between 1-7 years, which in one case reportedly had the longest duration of 7 years. The next longest duration was 5 years. It is observed and also reported that there has been a maximum growth of the said public enterprises during this period."

Continuity of leadership is an important issue for higher organic growth. Enterprise may spirally go up or even go down.

Leadership Effectiveness

i) *Assertive Leadership*: "A widespread feeling persists of the Ministry not giving free hand to some public enterprises and making frequent interferences in functioning. More than half of the time of the top leadership would be getting away in managing these interferences. At times, many CMDs act assertively, giving high empowerment to people and are supportive to innovative ideas and initiatives. As assertive leaders, they aptly manage what is called the 'interferences' coming from the bureaucratic and governmental regimes / processes, and not put them forth as limitations and constraints for achievements. A high clarity of directions with every decision has high

impacts in terms of motivation towards achieving excellence”.

- ii) *Developing Managers as Leaders:* “There is no specific initiative for developing leaders for taking up positions at various plants, projects, regions, etc. It is purely based on seniorities, competencies, exhibition of talents in positions held and also the personal choice of CMD. This is an important factor as evidenced by many respondents saying, ‘it is CMD’s team’. Through this process very dynamic heads of projects have been identified. In some places, projects have been completed in a record period of time and is among one of the talked about projects is an example. Heads of projects are generally given freedom to choose their team and members are not forced upon him for deliveries in the project. They are generally from among those who have earlier worked in the past with him and according to those project heads, they are capable of giving results, have gone through the project hardships”.
- iii) *Powerful Followers:* “Powerful followers, defacto the ‘leaders of tomorrow’ have made to the top levels including the ‘board’ level. They have reached those levels by greater trust, support, and empowerment and shared leadership processes. They have reached these positions by way of strength of their hard work. They have the capacity to take the organisation forward. There are also some at the chief level, plant level, who have huge capacity but do not get freedom need to be made good followers by giving good support to them. The followers wanting to take challenging tasks, if are supported in true spirits, will become very good followers who will be the future leaders.
- iv) *Developing Leadership Skills:* “Leadership development initiatives are mostly by way of exposing employees to leadership concepts and challenges for change and growth. There is also high emphasis of developing leadership among officers at Manager and above upto Executive Director through processes such as competency mapping, assessment and development centers”.
- v) *Coaching Subordinates:* “Whenever a subordinate is in a fix to decide between one he is being asked to do and what he is actually wanting to do is basically confronted with value laden issues, superiors have been found in some instances to giving their subordinate a patient hearing and facilitating him to take the most appropriate decision. The effort observed has been to building strength in the subordinate and develop or adapt more flexibility in leadership than remaining in a state of rigidity which is important for getting results”.
- vi) *Project Leadership Challenges:* In some public enterprises particularly the hydropower enterprises, the leadership has been admired for their capacity to achieve amidst odds, as

cited by some respondents: “Each project has a typical problem with respect to geographical and geological conditions, and tunneling operations for dam construction requires different strategies. Various issues also require to be handled particularly relating to environment, water, apart from technical drives required. A powerful leadership for completing projects before time is required”.

vii) *Developing Subordinate*: “There have been many instances where subordinates have been developed by superiors. They have been informally guided and coached to obtain higher qualifications and that has helped in raising knowledge levels of people in the organisation”.

Super-Speciality Centered Leadership

“Based on three different nature of work involved in setting up hydro power plants, such as investigation, design and construction, the technical employees have developed specialized skills (super speciality) in their respective areas of working. Organisation has been particular about this and has provided several opportunities to those who have developed these kinds of specialities by providing international consultancy”.

i) *Leadership Development by Understudy*: “There has been a process of placing junior or new appointees at officer and supervisory levels to those having engineering degree and diploma but do not have experience. By working with those who have

been working on various projects for a long time these employees have been developing but of late since there has been reduced intakes at entry levels and so this process of developing as an understudy has also reduced. This has however been a very effective way of developing high level of technical competence among novice engineers and diploma holders”.

ii) *Work Pressure Management*: “The top leader has to manage high pressure from various quarters, central government, state government, local political leaders, union, and many others including difficult working conditions. In one project of a public sector, the tunnel boring machine got stuck in the mountain. The same is there and the decision is to be taken by the government and also to some extent political as local people are involved”. The environmental clearances are a part of public sector management and needs to be handled as per the environmental policies.

Conclusions

Leadership needs to be given due importance to in public enterprises. Public enterprises need to focus on developing effective leadership skills for transforming organisations, and leading and managing change. A good leadership can transform an organization and help achieve excellence. There are several skills in those leaders and it is suggested that organizations undertake planned Leadership Skills Development programs at various levels.

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