



Case Study 13

HR/OD Intervention Focus: Leadership Capability Building

New Mental Models of Leadership

Noel Duarte, who has been with the Department of the Interior and Local Government (DILG) for 20 years, was initially sceptical about attending the Leadership Capability Building Program

initiated by the Government of Australia through the Philippines Australia Human Resource and Organisational Development Facility (PAHRODF).

After all, he has had more than his fair share of leadership trainings on his way to becoming a Local Government Operations Officer VI (LG00 VI) and the provincial cluster leader of Compostela Valley Province. “With DILG, before we were sent to the field office, we were trained for three months in the Local Government Academy on leadership kaya sabi namin para bang sumobra ng training naman ng leadership (so we thought another leadership training would be too much),” he shares.

However, he had to take it because the program was a prerequisite for promotion to LG00 VI, which was a new position at that time. He admits that initially, he only wanted to satisfy his curiosity. Duarte narrates, “I was curious to see what new insights, new input, new mental models I would learn. Second is, I was curious to see how this training would help me as a new LG00 VI or as a new operations officer of the department.”

His perception of the program, however, soon changed. “I found out that the new mental models are different from the old ones,” he admits. Having been a facilitator himself for several leadership trainings for local officials, he reveals that the new insights on leadership are potentially groundbreaking. “I am convinced that if this will be taught to the local officials and even to our peers in the DILG, especially if it is internalised, it could be the pivotal point for change in governance,” he declares.

Duarte shares that aside from self-advancement, the Facility helped him greatly in dealing with other LG00s, different municipalities, mayors and other government officials. In addition,

it also shifted his paradigm on local governance. He asserts that in the past, his focus was primarily on determining the attributes of a leader. Now, with what he has learned from the PAHRODF intervention, he has come to realise that he needs to do so much more.

According to Duarte, the new model is more collaborative compared to the old top-down leadership architecture, as it taps all possible human capabilities within one's sphere. "The new mental model made me see that a leader does not depend only on his capital. Check what other capitals are around you. My janitor could be my leadership capital, my clerk could be my leadership capital [and] also the people in my community," he expounds. He goes on to say that this is actually in line with the direction of DILG to encourage involvement of stakeholders, nongovernment organisations and the community. "Kaya nga nabuo 'yung bottom-up budgeting, 'yung vigilance and volunteerism. (That's why bottom-up budgeting, vigilance and volunteerism started gaining ground.)," he argues. Duarte is impressed with the learning service provider (LSP) as well and recalls techniques he picked up from the LSP such as 'silencing,' appreciative inquiry, and the leadership timeline.

Duarte admits that although there remains much to be desired when it comes to his organisation, he is not deterred from contributing what he can. He says he has been working on many areas: implementing programs, ensuring that local government units (LGUs) comply with the full disclosure policy, and working to attain the seal of good governance for LGUs. These tasks get him interacting not only with government officials but also the wider community. Whether he is working on disaster management, the integrated anti-criminality and public safety plan, or the social protection and environmental protection agenda, Duarte asserts that his efforts are aligned with the strategic direction of DILG and anchored on the president's mandate of "tuwid na daan" (the right way).

To illustrate, he cites an instance when he was assigned to help a municipality hit by Typhoon Pablo, one of the strongest typhoons to have ever hit Compostela Valley and the rest of Southern Mindanao in 2012. His learnings came in handy especially in organising a disaster management plan for the area. "Kasi 'pag DILG officer ka, in order to realise the programs of the department, the only bala na meron ka is your convincing power. There are mayors na talagang mahirap i-convince. (As a DILG officer, the only weapon you can use to realise the programs of the department is your convincing power)," he shares. He finds the input from PAHRODF on how to convince local leaders particularly helpful.

Duarte has also kept in mind the words of a former DILG secretary: "You can make or unmake this department. You can make or unmake this government." These inspiring words renew his commitment to doing his part. "I personally believe that governance is not only with DILG and everyone in government. What is truly important in governance is the people. Looking into the concern of the stakeholders, the community—yun ang importante (that is what is important)," he declares.

Echoing the learnings

Recalling his REAP, Duarte notes that it was all about cascading what he has personally learned. With an interaction plan in place, the first step was to meet with his boss to discuss what transpired during the program. Afterwards, he had to echo his learnings to his fellow LGOOs through a seminar. This naturally required budget, but his organisation found a way to shoulder the cost.

Mr. Duarte relates that shortly thereafter, he was invited to attend a facilitator's training program, a PAHRODF-sponsored activity meant to capacitate participants to deliver the leadership training module themselves. He mentions that the helpful coaching sessions boosted their morale, but the training he had to facilitate before he could graduate from the program proved to be more challenging. After all, his training would be attended by regional and assistant regional directors, including his boss. The thought of convincing his superiors that there is a new leadership mental model, one that could steer them towards good local governance, initially made him anxious. He successfully administered the training, however, and Duarte remembers being less worried when he had to do it all over again for provincial and assistant provincial directors.

The third time around, though, he was asked to co-facilitate a 'train-the-trainer' program for Bureau Directors of the Central Office, which meant the Secretary and Undersecretaries would be in attendance. Although this made him anxious again, he came out of the experience knowing that after the rigorous training, he was now fully capable of running the program. "I mastered the craft and gained confidence because PAHRODF trained me hindi lang (not only) once, but thrice," he jests.

That was when he realised that it would be a good idea to cascade his learnings to an even wider audience. Although it was more of a personal initiative and no longer part of his submitted REAP, he went on to share what he learned during his other training sessions. "Although hindi talaga yung module na ginawa ng PAHRODF, doon ko ini-insert yung input of PAHRODF: 'appreciative inquiry', yung mga 'leadership time' and 'capital' (Although it's not really part of the original module from PAHRODF, I try to include other things I have learned from PAHRODF such as 'appreciative inquiry', 'leadership time' and 'capital')," he reveals.

While he dreams of conducting training programs for all sectors down to the barangay (district) level, financial constraints prevent him from doing so. Instead, Duarte intimates that he has injected these leadership techniques in training programs for newly elected officials, newly elected barangay officials, the disaster council, and even programs for barangay secretaries and treasurers. He has also managed to refer to them during flag ceremonies and in various meetings with department heads, barangay officials, teachers, tanods (guards) and lupon (board) members.

Duarte is also looking forward to conducting a full leadership module for the Youth Development Taskforce, a group recently organised after the previous Sangguniang Kabataan or Youth Council was disbanded. In particular, he intends to pattern it after PAHRODF's leadership module. He believes that by introducing the new mental models to the youth, governance can finally improve for the next generation. Thankfully, his bosses are fully supportive of his plans. Moreover, budget would not be a concern as 10% of barangay funds is really earmarked for youth programs.

Clearly, he who was once sceptical of the leadership program has turned into a staunch believer. Understandably so, for Duarte thinks that the new mental models on leadership have lightened his workload, improved his relationship with his peers, and changed his mindset considerably. He muses, "Hindi iyon sa posisyon. (It's not about one's position.) To become a leader doesn't mean you impose your position in the hierarchy. To become a leader, you must be with them. That is how to lead a winning team."

Noel Duarte, Cluster Leader - DILG, was among the participants for the HR/OD Intervention on Leadership Development for Cluster Leaders of DILG.