

Vision and Leadership: The Nature, Role and Development

Marina^{1,*}, Rasyimah¹, Dewi Kumala Sari¹

¹ Universitas Malikussaleh

*Corresponding author. Email: marina@unimal.ac.id

ABSTRACT

Every leader has their leadership style. Visionary leadership is a style that emphasizes the need for a clear vision for the future of an organization. Vision affects how the people within the organization perform and how the organization adapts to forthcoming changes. The organization's style, culture and purpose affect how a leader forms a vision. This paper aims to analyze visionary leadership's nature, role and development. A case of a leadership situation shows that a leader with a strong vision would create strategic choices and judgements for the better growth of the organization.

Keywords: *Organization, Leader, Vision.*

1. INTRODUCTION

The word “change” will always be related to the word “future” because change is happening and will happen, even if only in a small portion. Therefore, to be prepared for the changes, it is essential to initiate a vision because a strong and planned vision will assist in moving to a better future wisely and precisely. More importantly, in an organisational setting, to adapt and adjust to changing and evolving society, leaders assisted by the followers in organisations need to define a vision statement that can represent their initiative for innovation. Saros, Cooper and Santora (2011) assert that leaders should articulate a vision and have it accepted and performed individually and organisationally. In addition, Quigley (1994) continues that leaders should develop, share and sustain the vision over long periods.

This paper aims to identify and understand the relationship between vision and leadership in an organization. The vision's nature, role and development are elaborated, and an example of visionary leadership is discussed. This paper used a literature review approach to describe knowledge, ideas and findings from academic-oriented literature and to convey a descriptive analysis of a topic. The data were collected by reviewing several resources from books, articles, journal papers, television broadcasts and webpages. The data is analyzed descriptively by describing the main issue to understand the issues at hand.

2. VISION AND LEADERSHIP

Vision is essential because it is hard to imagine a leader without one. According to Lussier and Achua (2010), the construct known as vision is the answer to the question, “what do we want to become?”. It is a committed belief in what will happen in the future that people can rely on and that it is not attainable yet but offers a better future than the status quo. Kantabutra & Avery (2010) emphasize that leaders would develop their vision either rationally and objectively or intuitively and subjectively. The vision often varies based on the leader's style, the content, and the context. Leaders usually encourage their followers by using several techniques such as legitimate authority, goal-setting, team-building, rewards and punishment.

An example of a vision statement can be observed in some companies such as Toshiba, whose vision is “Energy for Sustainable Life”. The vision is stated in the company profile in which they aspire to see “the world where people everywhere can access the energy they need to improve their quality of life” (Toshiba, 2022). Regarding the nature of vision, Foster and Akdere (2007) determine that based on the literature review, some researchers suggest that there is no specific nature or correct framework or formula to define organisational vision. Every organisation has a unique vision determined by its leadership, culture and purpose. However, organisations should state their vision clearly and communicate it to followers and outside stakeholders

A vision statement is always complemented by a mission statement. Lussier and Achua (2010) define mission as the general purpose of an organisation and the reason for its existence. A mission statement usually consists of

values that are related to principles and ethical standards and purposes that are related to the goods and services description and the broad needs of customers. An example of the mission statement is by companies such as Apple Inc. Its mission is to be “committed to protecting the environment, health and safety (EHS) of our employees, contractors, and customers in the design, research, manufacture, distribution and use of our products and services and the global communities where we operate” (Apple Inc., 2022). This mission is communicated to their customers in their report in which they affirm their support to the environment noticeably through their manufacturing, recycling, total carbon footprint, transportation, product use and facilities. Therefore, the success of an organisation relies on sound agreement on both formal mission and vision statements.

A strong vision influences the followers in an organisation in ways that they will act, behave or work according to it because they have a strong belief. According to Quigley (1994), some of the strongest vision that has ever existed in the world come from religion. The vision of Buddha, Moses, Christ and Mohammed or Islam still induces their followers all over the place. For that reason, developing a clear vision plays a significant role in the organisation's success.

Lussier and Achua (2010) list several important roles of a clear and inspiring vision in organisation:

1. It helps people in the decision-making process. So, they can determine whether it is good or bad, important or trivial.
2. It inspires followers in a way that makes them feel important and useful and to be part of something great.
3. It connects the present to the past. It helps in justifying the change within organisations.
4. It gives meaning to people and reasons why they do things they do.
5. It determines a standard of excellence

Thus, a vision has a great deal in followers and organisations. Foster and Akdere (2007) mention the concept of a learning organisation where organisational vision plays a role in guiding activities, motivating employees and guaranteeing processes that follow the vision. They further explain that it is a great opportunity for organisations to be able to craft and develop a unique, purposeful and effective vision to define their organisations. In line with this, to enhance competitive advantage, there is a need for managers and leaders to promote greater strategic flexibility across and within their organisations. One of the most crucial factors in strategic flexibility is the ability to develop an organisational vision (Zaccaro & Banks, 2004).

Kantabura and Avery (2010) stated that there are several specific guidelines to develop a vision:

1. The vision should be brief so that it would be easy to remember and repeat.
2. It should have the main goal.
3. It can incorporate organizational interests.
4. It is not a one-time, specific goal that will be discarded once achieved.
5. It should be able to motivate employees to give their best contribution by specifying a degree of difficulty or stretch.
6. It should offer the organization's long-term perspective and future environment.
7. It would not be altered due to changes in market or technology
8. It is regarded as necessary by the employee.

Developing an inspiring vision that will last long might not be easy for an organisation, especially the leader. It is not created by the leader only; it needs a long process and the participation of each stakeholder. Marcus and Smith (1997) mention the use of the participative model in the visioning process. They examined the use of this model in one institution, Midlantic University. This model was used by the president of the institution by involving communities such as students, faculties, staff and trustees. They gave their view on the future of their university and their plan to get there. Some meetings and forums were held to discuss certain questions and gain their opinions. Three successive drafts were formed and then circulated to the university communities to gain more views, comments and feedback. In the end, the revised vision statement was finally approved.

3. VISIONARY LEADERSHIP: A CASE IN STATE-OWNED ELECTRICITY COMPANY (PLN) INDONESIA

An example of a leadership situation is discussed to understand the importance of vision in an organisation. It focuses on the leadership style of the former CEO of *Perusahaan Listrik Negara (PLN)* or a State-owned Electricity Company in Indonesia. His name is Dahlan Iskan. He was a controversial figure in Indonesia for his braveness in imposing a new vision into PLN. A brief overview of PLN, Dahlan Iskan's profile and his innovative and inspiring vision are discussed

PLN is the sole provider of electricity for public needs in Indonesia and belongs to the government. The company aimed to carry out the business of supplying electricity for the public interest in sufficient quantity and quality as well as to generate profits. It carries out Government assignments in the electricity sector to support development by applying the principles of a Limited Liability Company. As stated in the company's profile, its vision is to be the leading electricity company in Southeast Asia and the #1 customer choice for energy Solutions (PT PLN (Persero), 2021).

For a long time, PLN has had concerns regarding its ability to provide electricity fairly and equitably in all areas of Indonesia. As the only electricity provider for public needs in Indonesia, PLN is responsible for these issues. Some of the problems are the blackout all over Indonesia caused by PLN's failure to provide enough electricity and the increase of subscription or basic fees for customers while PLN was in bad management and service (Saragih, 2011a). There are many other electrical problems in Indonesia. However, since Dahlan Iskan was elected as CEO of PLN in 2009, it was expected that he would be able to solve, manage and minimize electricity problems in Indonesia.

Dahlan Iskan is considered a charismatic person. His corporation Jawa Pos Group, which involves publishing, property development and sports promotion, is an example of a successful corporation in East Java, Indonesia (McMichael, 1998). According to his interview in *Managing the Nation* (Saragih, 2011a), he was the CEO of two private electricity companies and established several private local TV stations. He owns several stocks in several corporations and is one of the most successful and rich entrepreneurs in Indonesia.

The election of Dahlan Iskan as CEO of PLN was to replace Fahmi Mochtar who was criticized for his inability to manage a blackout in Jakarta and all over Indonesia. It was surprising because Dahlan had never been involved or worked in PLN. In other words, he is totally from outside PLN. It is common in PLN and other government-owned corporations that the elected CEO would be a person who worked there. At that time, the President of Indonesia asked Dahlan Iskan to be the CEO of PLN not for his experience in the electricity business but for his leadership and management skill to repair the bad management in PLN (Saragih, 2011b).

Dahlan Iskan might be a controversial leader but he proves that he was capable in what he was doing and all of his decisions are to improve PLN's performance. Dahlan Iskan's vision was to increase and enhance the function of PLN to provide electricity to meet public needs. To support his vision, he had many surprising decisions and actions. He withdrew the obligation to use uniforms in PLN for financial and corruption reasons, removed several PLN regulations that detain the decision-making process and built and fixed electricity generation. In addition, he fired incompetent managers and hired competent people. The last decision evoked some resistance from inside PLN. However, he stated that when asked to be CEO of PLN, he gave only one condition. He should have incumbency to form his managerial system consisting of people he considered to have not only skill and proficiency but also integrity and passion (Saragih, 2011a). Dahlan Iskan might be a controversial leader, but he had proved that he owned skills and capabilities, and all of his decisions were to improve PLN's performance.

4. CONCLUSION

Vision is essential in an organisation, and a leader cannot be outstanding without a clear vision. However, a leader should also know how to develop, manage, implement and preserve the vision. Dahlan Iskan, in his position as CEO of PLN, was a committed person who believed in transformation and tried to change the culture within PLN from bureaucracy to corporation to be better at serving people. He had a strong, clear and inspiring vision and was also knowledgeable to make strategic choices and decisions for a better future for PLN.

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