

A Framework of Professional Leadership in Military

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ABSTRACT

This article describes a new idea in military leadership based on enabling data from Malaysian Military, which is Malaysian Armed Forces, Malaysian air force and Royal Malaysian Navy as respondents for these studies. In the military, the formation of a leader's character requires modification of one's identity, which is certainly difficult to apply. Various leadership development programs have been designed and implemented by the country's military organization's administrators to produce quality, efficient and effective leaders. The leaders who are produced also need to have spiritual as well as physical strength to carry out the tasks. Nevertheless, the overall model of leadership development that is referenced tends to be physically worldly and marginalized strong spiritual construction. Therefore, to produce future leaders who are spiritually and physically strong, the development of leadership characters should consider the spiritual elements that are the backbone of life. The objective of this study is to formulate guidelines for the development of leadership characters amongst members of the Malaysian Armed Forces. The research methodology used the qualitative method of interviews, focus group discussions, observations and document analysis that provided answers to the questions and objectives for this study. Thematic methods were used to obtain the results for this study which is organizing interview questions into four themes. The themes are professional leadership, programs contents, the role of coach and management support. These themes are derived from an in-depth reading of the highlights from previous studies. Twenty-five in-depth interview questions were constructed based on this theme. Then twenty-five respondents consisting of officers, coaches and platoons in Malaysian army were interviewed. New result from these studies is a guideline for Malaysian Military to develop professional leadership among military that can be used for government policy in improving a holistic training system for the Malaysian military.

Keywords: character; guideline; leadership; Malaysia; military

INTRODUCTION

Research on leadership character development programs in training institutions tends to focus on excellence in external terms alone. Yet it is undeniable that training institutions such as the Royal Military Academy Sandhurst United Kingdom and the United States Military Academy West Point United States are renowned for producing successful leaders. They have been trained professionally in qualifying themselves as military leaders. However, the occurrence of some incidents in several conflicting countries makes their professional level questionable. For example, incidents of attacks on several countries that were not in line with the Western policies based on combating terrorism, attacks on houses of worship and civilians, corruption and many others had raised questions about the level of professionalism applied amongst military personnel. The character of professional leadership is highly demanded in all circumstances for someone with a military degree. As a member of the military who is responsible for defending the country, the character of professional leadership is very important to save the country from being threatened by negative elements.

According to Burhanuddin (2015), the process in educating a strong, professional and competent military person was an important task, whereby not only providing sophisticated and modern equipment, but it also involved human capital that consisted of leadership and management aspects. The big trust entrusted by the Malaysian Armed Forces (ATM) organisation is to form and train human capital with various attitudes to become quality military personnel. Various changes were made by the ATM's Department of Education to further strengthen the existing system and modules to meet the education of officers and the ATM members. In fact, the ATM's Director of Education commented that the ATM is required to act fast in injecting reforms into the education system to be comprehensive and integrated to achieve the target to be more dynamic and comparable with other developed countries

LITERATURE REVIEW

The value of professionalism and good image of military personnel can be undermined due to misconduct that occurs amongst its members. The phenomenon of misconduct by some members of the armed forces was often reported by the public in both print and electronic media. The increase in the crisis of misconduct amongst management support plays an important role in improving the training effectiveness of leaders. Thus, it can be concluded that elements such as course content (program content), the role of coaches and management support are important elements in designing a military leadership model to produce military leaders with quality work performance and high organizational commitment.

The role of the instructors plays important role in producing a member of the military with noble morals. The existence of the Armed Forces Religious Corps (KAGAT) is a way to achieve the goal of developing the morale of military personnel. The task of KAGAT has almost succeeded in fulfilling that responsibility (Mohd Mazli 2004). Training institutions also play an important role in contributing to moral development among Malaysian Armed Forces (ATM). Religious activities performed are not only able to provide religious understanding but also able to generate spiritual strength in a member of the military. Therefore, the existence of institutions such as the Institute of Training and Islamic Understanding ATM (ILMI) which provides religious activities to military personnel is an effective measure because the activities that have been done have a significant relationship between religious activities and spiritual appreciation (Mohd Rashidi & Azmil 2015). In addition, the educational programs (MET) in the Malaysian Armed Forces taken by each member have also had a significant impact on the members. Azri Mokhtar (2016) has studied the cognitive, effective and psychomotor domains of military personnel through military moral and ethical testing.

The effectiveness of the MET program implementation elements is at a high level. However, there is still a lack of spirituality among the Malaysian Army (TDM). The implementation of spiritual guidance activities during operations against TDM is still at a moderate level. The task of spiritual guidance towards TDM is borne by KAGAT through the KAGAT doctrine manual with a focus on proper operational task training to guide their spirituality in shouldering responsibility (Zulkepli & Khazri 2018). In another study, Azman Ismail et. al (2015), have conducted a study related to leadership development program is considered as a strategic issue in the field of human capital development and management. The objective of this study was to measure the relationship between leadership development programs and leader job performance. This study explain that the role of coaches and management support can act as an important predictor variable to the job performance of military leaders. Programs content is incapable of acting as an effective predictor variable to the job performance of military leaders (Azman et all. 2015).

While Azman Ismail et all. (2010) conducted a study to examine the effect of training programs on training effectiveness is indirectly influenced by training motivation. This relationship gives less emphasis on existing training program models. These studies used quantitative methods with "stepwise" regression analysis. The implications of this study are training theory and practice, the limitations of the conceptual framework and methodology. In another studies, Noor Azmi Mohd Zainol et all. (2015) examine the role of training motivation as a mediator which is given less explanation in the training program. The study was conducted with 329 usable questionnaires gathered from Royal Malay Regiment personnel of the Malaysian Army. The implication of this study is that training motivation does act as an important mediating variable between training syllabus and

instructors' roles in the relationship with training transfer, whilst there is no mediation effect in relationship between superior's support and training transfer.

In addition, Noor Azmi Mohd Zainol (2015) has also conducted a study related to the role of leadership development programs as a predictor variable. This study aimed to measure the relationship between leadership development programs and training transfer. The implications of this study explain that programs content, the role of coaches and management support have a significant relationship with training transfer. Programs content; role of coaches and management support are effective predictor variables to training transfer in military training centers.

Therefore, based on the studies that have been conducted, researchers are more likely to conduct a study that revolves around examining the effects and relationships between the role of coaches and the transfer of training. The authors did not specifically mention a study related to guidance in professional leadership development among military personnel.

Therefore, based on the empty gaps that existed in previous studies then the goal of this study is to review and further recommend a guideline to professional leadership in Malaysian Military to enable the leadership values that are formed will be better in the future.

METHODOLOGY

Qualitative methods were employed for this research to allow the researchers to integrate the training program's literature and in-depth interviews. In-depth interviews were conducted, which involved 25 experienced military leaders, namely training staff officers, instructors and commanders at the company's levels, platoon and section in the infantry battalions. Information gathered through this interview method assisted the researchers to understand the context relating to the objective of this study.

Four phases of the interviews were conducted at the Pusat Perkhidmatan Kejuruteraan Aerospace TUDM (PUSPEKA), Tentera Udara Diraja Malaysia (TUDM) Subang Selangor, Pusat Latihan Asas Tentera Darat (PUSASDA), Port Dickson, 71 Rejimen Semboyan Diraja, Camp Sungai Besi, Kuala Lumpur and KD Pelandok, Lumut Perak.

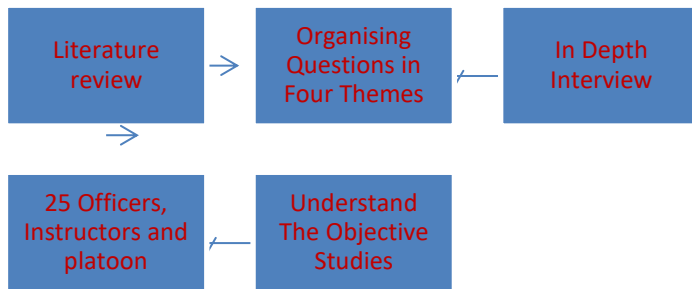
Table 1: Number of respondents

Phase	Unit/Team	Total
1	PUSPEKA, TUDM Subang	6
2	PUSASDA, Port Dickson	5
3	71 Rejimen Semboyan Diraja	5
4	KD Pelandok	9

Thematic approach was applied by organizing the questions into four themes. These themes were identified from the highlights of literature reviews that were related to professional leadership in the military.

The themes were 'Professional Leadership Model' (Adanan and Mohd Azhar, 2008; Sharifah Hayaati, 2008; Tengku Sarina and Fadillah, 2007), 'Program's Contents' (Noor Azmi et al., 2015; Paul, 2009; Hatfield et al., 2011; Azman, 2012; Azri Mokhtar, 2016; Zulkepli and Khazri, 2018), 'The role of the Coach' (Noor Azmi et al., 2015; Mohd Mazli, 2004; Mohd Rashidi and Azmil, 2015) and 'Management's Support' (Noor Azmi et al., 2015; Azman et al., 2015).

Figure 1: Flowchart



RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Based on the interview's findings, the leaders from PUSPEKA, TUDM Subang emphasized that the program's contents, the role of the coach and the management's support should be changed according to the suitability of the situation and atmosphere to produce quality military personnel, while producing the best work commitment when returning to the team. For example, Officer Cadets from the National Defense University of Malaysia (UPNM) who entered the team showed quality as an officer in alarming circumstances. The coaches who were selected to educate the Officer Cadets at UPNM should pass several conditions to be able to guide the Officer Cadets professionally. The program's contents should be well set, and it was encouraged to be reviewed every five years, whereby a quality product should be introduced each year. A coach without any experience but merely has knowledge and shows the level of maturity and thinking of a leader, is not in a suitable position to lead. Good management support will always give support to subordinates preferably if it does not violate what is set. Consequently, a lot of monitoring from the management is required to identify the weaknesses and problems that need to be fixed so as not to affect the quality of an army member. The coach played a role in creating a training atmosphere. A small number of members makes it easier for the coach to concentrate; however, too many members would make it difficult for the coach to focus during the training.

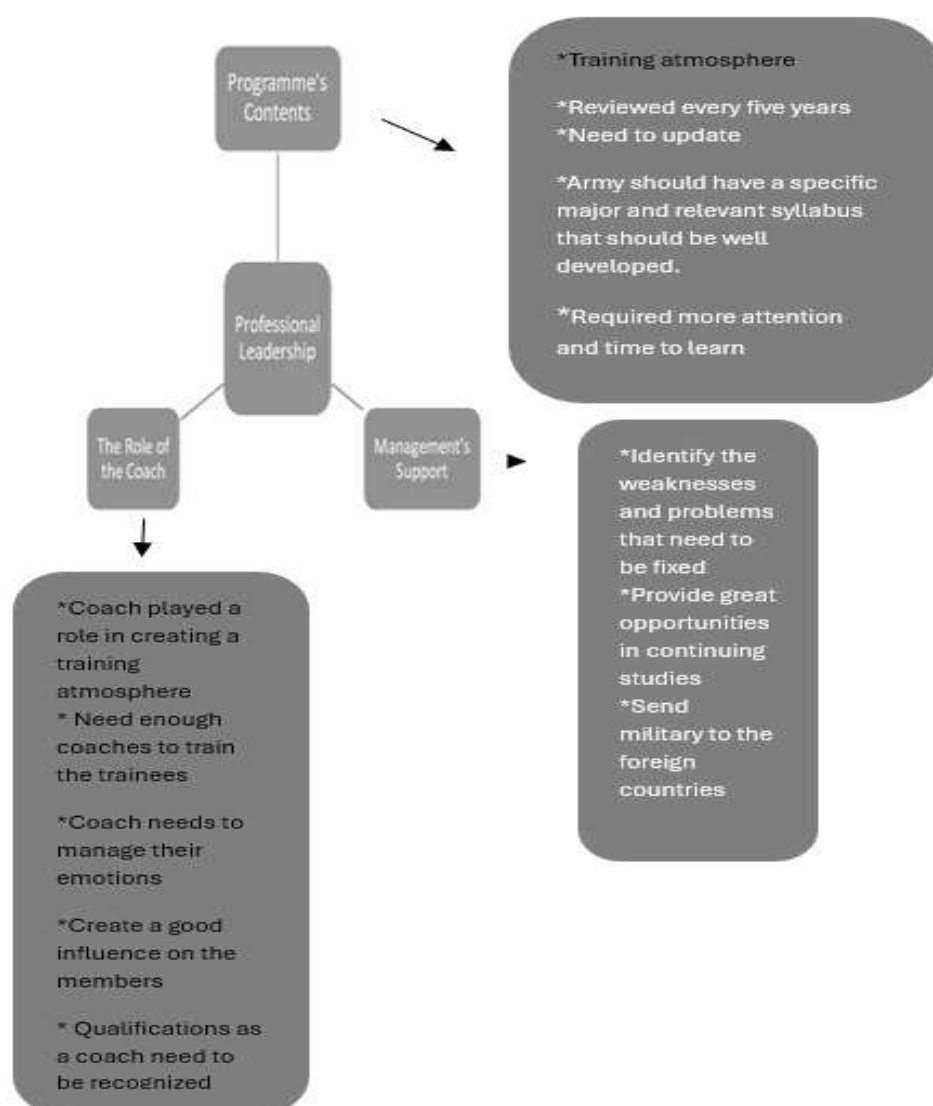
Respondents from PUSASDA agreed that the RPL used was not renewed according to the suitability of the time until it affected the members undergoing the courses. In other words, there was a need for the program's contents to be updated. Additionally, the respondents also stressed that the officers who attended the courses should be placed according to the appropriate expertise and skills. It was suggested that the army should have a specific major and relevant syllabus that should be well-developed. The ground service did not consider in more detail the great opportunities that would be available if military personnel could increase their knowledge by continuing their studies. For example, the navy has academic standards, while the army is not given the opportunity to improve on the academic standards. An academic is one of the important factors or foundations in assisting a military member to build thinking behavior and self-integrity. This also means that the army is not given the recognition it deserves, causing many military personnel to opt for early retirement. Furthermore, once a member has completed his or her service, the member's expertise is not recognized by public organizations, causing the existing expertise to be redundant. The coach played a role in educating and evaluating members who attended the training to become an officer, whereby the selection was based on set criteria. The coach was required to be wise in managing emotions in developing human beings, whereby it could create a good influence on the members. Additionally, a coach was also required to train the members' attitudes from the very beginning of one's entry into the military world.

The ATM has a well-equipped organization, whereby it takes good care of each member's welfare and is used as a motivation for members to continue their services. Additionally, there is a system known as the Malaysian Army Standard (MASTI), which has been developed from the beginning, but is not properly recognized. Amongst the factors that encouraged members to be committed in performing their duties were attitude, knowledge, skills and the programs contents, which would be incomplete if one of the factors was not met. The respondents' suggestions were to send military personnel to foreign countries to learn about the learning

environment and the members need to share the knowledge and experience with other military personnel upon returning to the original team. There were two problems with KD Pelandok, Lumut, which were the equipment for training needs and insufficient time set for learning sessions that catered for theory learning only. Theoretically, it could still be accepted, but the practical training for the equipment required more attention and time to learn. The management was also aware of the problems that occurred, but the management still used the existing equipment.

Therefore, due to the lack of equipment and the out-of-date syllabus, it was difficult to conduct any courses and training for members, and eventually the training objectives would not be achieved. The coaches were required to undergo training for six months and were trained to be wise in managing problems, either small or large. The coach's study period and attendance would be recognized as a qualification with a certificate to enable the coach to use the qualification and certificate in the outside world. The role of the coach should also be to create a 'mentor - mentee' system to facilitate a better learning system. Therefore, professional leadership amongst the military in Malaysia consisted of three important elements, namely the programs contents, the role of the coach and the management's support. These three elements were the criteria for professional leadership amongst the military, especially members of the Malaysian Armed Forces, the Malaysian Air Force and the Royal Malaysian Navy. The diagram below explains briefly in relation to the guidelines towards forming military personnel with professional leadership. This guide can be a reference to organizations, coaches and policy makers, members of the program development committee and management support in military.

Figure 1: Guideline to Framework of professional leadership in the Malaysian military



Sources: Interview results from PUSPEKA, PUSASDA & KD PELANDOK respondents

CONCLUSION

The main finding of this study is a guideline for a framework of professional leadership in Malaysian Military. This study proposes that the guideline emphasizes the need for improvement of program courses, especially every 5 years. It aims to balance the needs of the members appropriate to the time and circumstances at the time. This coordination will increase more value in leadership to each member, including officers and platoons. The second one is about the role of coach that is required to create a good vibe while conducting training sessions especially with their emotions as a coach. An important thing as a coach in military, they need to have recognized qualifications as a coach. To ensure the effectiveness of training delivery mentor mentee system needs to be realized. The third one is management's role towards the teams. As a management, they should identify if any problem occurs among their team and they need to fix it. Besides that, providing opportunities to further study is one of element to ensure the trainee excellence to become a professional leader.

As a comparison between previous studies with these studies, these studies stated that the role of coaches, programs contents and management support is an important element in a guideline to build professional leadership in Malaysian military. All these elements are the most required in good military force formation. Meanwhile, effective leadership certainly starts with a good example from top leaders. It complements previous studies that have emphasized training institutions, religious activities and educational programs in professional leadership formation.

Therefore, with relevance programs content that is appropriate currently it can balance and complete the need to produce professional leaders. The same goes for the role of coaches and management support. Meanwhile, in previous studies, researchers tend to examine the role and the impact of training and programs content on trainees. Most studies are conducted quantitatively to answer the objectives studies that have been determined. For example, from one of previous studies, the inputs and implications were specific only to one team. In addition, the study also provides input on conceptual theory and training methodology practice in the field of military research. Even the studies also tend to explain significantly particularly for training administration department and organizational managers directly related to training.

In conclusion, professional leadership in the military need's improvement over a period. Improvements in the program's contents had an impact on the production of quality personnel in the military. Thus, the military personnel themselves explained that the training contents should also be adapted according to the current needs. The program's contents should conform to the proper expertise and skills.

The well-equipped management and organizational support in taking good care of each member's welfare was the motivation for members to continue to serve more efficiently. Management also played an important role in ensuring that trainees or military personnel receive appropriate training according to the needs of each member. Therefore, guidance towards professional leadership in the Malaysian military consisted of the program's contents, role of the coach and management's support. These three elements are the backbone of professional leadership, and they should be emphasized in the military organization.

The implications of this study particularly are for Malaysian Military where this study is a catalyst for the improvement of the military training system. This study proposes appropriate guidelines for military leadership character development programs that can then be used for the construction a model for personality development of military personnel in Malaysia. Professional leadership can also certainly produce a transparent administration, especially in the management of military organizations. It will produce a range of professional leadership values and succeed in effective management based on the principles outlined by the organization. In addition, professional leaders can also create a team that always provides outstanding cooperation and united in producing a decision together.

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