TANZANIA
ENHANCED PUBLIC SERVICE LEADERSHIP PROJECT

TESTIMONY OF A PARTICIPANT

Background

I am a trustee of the CEO Scholarship Trust Fund and being involved in the logistics may lead to the assumption that I was very informed about what I would go through as a participant. Maybe I had some ideas, but the truth is the experience surpassed my imaginations and expectations.

As you might be aware the CEO Scholarship Trust Fund is a new approach to relations between the private sector and the public sector. The underlying purpose is to create better understanding of each other and to counter the legacies of past policy orientations not necessarily matching present challenges.

The First EPSL Session

As a participant it was possible at the outset to see a different approach from other capacity building initiatives.

The Methodology and Seminar contents

The "moderators", this is how they introduced themselves had the participants sit in a round table in a no hierarchy arrangement to begin the readings and the discussions. As moderators and not facilitators the two facilitators sat facing each other on opposite direction and moderated the discussions rather than leading them.

The approach used is not only strange to participants who in formal settings are not used to discussing anything without a leader, but the discussions were to go on irrespective of the status of the sources of ideas or backgrounds. In this way the readings and the emanating ideas and views were explored and further explored openly until exhaustion sets in, taking the cue the moderators coax the discussion group to move on.

It was amazing that in spite of the amount of reading and the discussions ensuing, the same level of participation and interest continued. The participants were in every new reading in a familiar but yet unfamiliar territory and this kept their interests. Through guided reading and discussions a hypothetical happening became less distant but lead to meanings useful in our present lives and our role as leaders of others. Most of the times we have to think out of the box, reality can change and we make reality by our attitudes and perceptions and as they change we can change reality. Some of the readings were classic or contemporary materials from philosophers, politicians, human right activists, or about heroes and heroines, the foolhardy or courageous, the aggressive, the laidback and the situational, and as there were no direct and prescriptive solutions to problems, the intended outcome of "transformation of consciousness" was to be achieved by individual and group reflections from the readings and the interactions within the sessions. Whatever was achieved is likely to be long-lasting as the learning and the internalizing was more natural and gave little room for myopia and defensive attitudes.

Some personal learning

1. As a leader any decision matters. It is therefore important to improve our abilities to make better decisions.
2. Accepting differences can make one and a community tolerant and harmonious.
3. Listening and considering the ideas of others is helpful to good leadership.
4. We can always improve the status quo.
5. As leaders our attitudes and behaviors signal what is important to our followers. We must make the right signals.
6. What we take for granted now came about through struggles and sacrifices by our predecessors. We have to work to preserve the rights and freedoms we enjoy.
7. To realize our development aspirations we need to play our part. The aggregation of individual efforts will lead to the achievement of collective aspirations.
8. Free environment to provide ideas makes possible to realize desired level of participation. It makes people feel important and valued and increases the strength or level of their contributions to goals.
9. Leadership approach better be situational. That is the techniques and methods should be relevant to context.

Conclusion

The EPSL program is expected to involve a series of sessions over a three year period and the discussion project is the first basic foundation program. It is apparent that the end result of mindset transformation can only be observed through the outcomes of actions of public service leaders in their courses of duties.