Chapter 10

Tenets of Community Leadership

Mary F. Ziegler
University of Tennessee, USA

Jeral R. Kirwan
University of Tennessee, USA

Becky Smeltzer
University of Tennessee, USA

ABSTRACT

Local community leaders know what is needed in their communities. Interest in multilateral leadership is growing as communities aspire to more local control. This type of leadership employs structures and tools that benefit the collective good. This chapter presents five tenets of leadership that exemplify that focus on local control: transformation, communication, collaboration, planning, and integrity. A case study illustrates how these tenets have been applied in a real-world setting. These tenets are the foundation for a vision of leadership centered in the local community.

INTRODUCTION

Morse (2004) identifies three national shifts regarding people that affect the local community: cultural shifts as the make-up of the local community more closely reflects the national community in its diversity, more control by local citizens on issues that matter to them, and multilateral solutions to problems. Methods that have succeeded in the past may not be robust enough to address these shifts. As communities are becoming more diverse, top-down solutions to complex, multifaceted problems may not generate the broad-based local support needed to make them effective.

For example, Gibson (2006) suggests that leadership is not an individual or a group of individuals directing a group of followers; rather, leadership is a process of civic engagement. In this sense, leadership includes a cross-section of the entire community who become engaged with one another, identifying problems by including multiple “voices” or even rivals, to solve common problems. The civic engagement view of leadership differs from that of the charismatic leader.
Tenets of Community Leadership

who directs a group of followers toward his or her vision. One individual, one agency, or one sector cannot address complex systemic community problems. “Issues cannot be siloed; they must be addressed multilaterally” (Morse, 2004, p. 183). Interest in multilateral leadership is growing as communities aspire to more local control. What is needed is a different vision of leadership, a multilateral one that employs new structures and tools that benefit the collective good.

In this chapter, our goal is to approach community leadership with a view toward establishing a set of tenets that describe not only what community leadership is but how it is to function. We chose the word “tenets” because it is a belief generally held in common by members of an organization or in this chapter, a community (Tenet, 2011). What is key is the phrase “held in common” meaning one of the key roles of community leaders is to translate the tenets so they become “transparent” and “held in common” by the citizens who are a part of the community. First we describe the five tenets drawn from the literature on community leadership and our own experience working closely with local communities. Second, we review a case study that shows how these tenets come alive in the life of a real community. Finally, we conclude with implications for practice.

TENETS

We define community leadership based on Temkin’s conception of community leadership (2011) as a distinct leadership style. What differentiates community leadership from its counterparts is the way that communities and community organizations draw on basic leadership skills to face common challenges and find workable solutions. These tenets describe leadership characteristics required for what Gibson (2006) calls the “ethos of engagement” (p. 2). In practice, the tenets are not discreet since they overlap with one another in any given situation. In order to examine them more closely, we have separated the characteristics into five categories: transformation, communication, collaboration, planning, and integrity.

Transformation

Leadership is a process not defined by authority or position. Effective leaders are those who can inspire others through use of influence and motivation. From this perspective, leadership can be found in neighborhoods or boardrooms. Denero (1992) states, “True leadership cannot be exerted without followers-those individuals whose thoughts, feelings, and behavior leaders seek to influence” (p. 81). Although communities have many different types of leaders, our interest in this chapter is with leaders who have a transformational style. Transformational leadership involves a reciprocal process in which the vision of the leader and the citizenry is not only shared but mutually developed for the benefit of the community as a whole. Leaders who are intentionally transformational focus on interpersonal relationships and mutuality of power (Miller, 2007). Power is mutual when it is shared between leader and followers. Many transformational leaders would not describe themselves this way (Collins, 2001), yet they are able to put the collective good above their self-interests. “The transforming leader looks for potential motives in followers, seeks to satisfy higher needs, and engages the full person of the follower. The result of transforming leadership is a relationship of mutual stimulation and elevation that converts followers into leaders and may convert leaders into moral agents” (Burns, 1978, p. 4).

Gilley, Dixon, and Gilley (2008) suggest that successful transformational change depends on innovative leadership. Innovation is the implementation of creativity and the “emergence of new ideas” (p. 155). Innovation is also referred to as new directions and transformational change. While companies rely on innovation and change to remain competitive in emerging markets, communities rely on innovation and change to
Related Content

Facilitating Students with Special Needs in Mainstream Schools: An Exploratory Study of Assistive Learning Technologies (ALT)
[www.igi-global.com/article/facilitating-students-special-needs-mainstream/2970?camid=4v1a](www.igi-global.com/article/facilitating-students-special-needs-mainstream/2970?camid=4v1a)

Computer-Supported Collaborative Work and Learning: A Meta-Analytic Examination of Key Moderators in Experimental GSS Research
[www.igi-global.com/article/computer-supported-collaborative-work-learning/2993?camid=4v1a](www.igi-global.com/article/computer-supported-collaborative-work-learning/2993?camid=4v1a)

Beyond the Phenomenon: Assessment in Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs)
[www.igi-global.com/chapter/beyond-the-phenomenon/128594?camid=4v1a](www.igi-global.com/chapter/beyond-the-phenomenon/128594?camid=4v1a)

A Mobile-Based E-Learning System
[www.igi-global.com/article/a-mobile-based-e-learning-system/102694?camid=4v1a](www.igi-global.com/article/a-mobile-based-e-learning-system/102694?camid=4v1a)