

Hope in Leadership

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Hope Attributes

Effective leadership creates a vision of hope. Hope is defined as the active expectation of a better tomorrow and the power of endurance, flexibility and adaptability to survive the changing environment.

Leadership builds on an understanding of hope, influence, making decisions, taking appropriate actions at the right times, and projecting the leader and those around him/her into a future that is better. Hope reaches out into the future and celebrates the small steps along the way.

Hope has also been described as 'a present alive with possibilities'. It is a motivating factor, without which it is difficult to explain your existence and impossible to imagine a future.

"Without wavering, let us hold tightly to the hope we say we have."

It is expected of a successful leader to regenerate and create an atmosphere of hope among the team and followers.

It is acknowledged that throughout history the effectiveness of a leader has been attributed to the leader's ability to generate hope. The Psalmist cried out:

"I have set the LORD always before me; because He is at my right hand I shall not be moved. Therefore my heart is glad, and my glory rejoices; my flesh also will rest in hope."

Because he sought to rely upon God, he enjoyed the hope that allowed him to rest. It took scientists nearly two centuries to discover the theory of hope in leadership. From early 80's, the concept of hope has served as the basis for numerous studies. This has led to the development of several instruments to measure hope, defining hope as:

"a multidimensional life force characterized by a confident yet certain expectation of achieving good which to the hoping person is realistically possible and personally significant."

Effective leaders have been described as those who influence, teach, and serve as role models. They teach more through being than through doing, through the inner character that never gives up always

looking beyond the present. The confidence of this to the followers spreads life fire and greatly creates a hope for which they are willing to die for.

It has been voiced that effective leaders put words to the formless longings and deeply felt needs of others. This rekindles the fire inside that is able to support hope for things not yet seen.

Consequently, the modern scientist in Hope theory defines hope as,

"a positive motivational state that is based on an interactively derived sense of successful agency (goal-directed energy), and pathways (planning to meet goals)," (Snyder, Irving & Anderson).

In other words hope is not just an emotion; it is a dynamic, powerful, and pervasive cognitive process that is observed across numerous contexts including that of formal organizations.

The search for more understanding on the theory of hope has contributed immensely to organisational leadership. Hope is seen as the motivational impetus to leaders and followers burning up the indispensable energy necessary to pursue and attain organisational goals and build up team spirit.

The studies conducted in health, illness, and age highlight these attributes of hope: confident expectation of significant future outcome; expectation that goes beyond visible facts; a brighter moment that transcendence the present situation; an inner power that facilitates movement beyond results in quality or achievement.

When observed across numerous contexts, hope attributes are complex, multi-dimensional, and dynamic. However, they apply to leadership within a family, group, community, and organisations.

Researchers have expressed these attributes of hope critical to leadership as: affective (feeling of expectancy), cognitive (vision and goal setting), and affiliative (relationships/team building).

These are some of the attributes transforming modern organisations to learning organisations. It is with the understanding that learning organisations have to evolve in order to be able to respond to the various pressures capable of bringing

about their own continuing transformation.

Such organisations thrive under transformational leaders whose followers are inspired, have a vision, and passion to achieve great things. This is achieved by injecting enthusiasm and energy.

The hope and faith of strategic leaders in their interaction with team-members generates effort, endurance, perseverance, a 'do what it takes' attitude, a willingness to establish stretch goals, and to strive for excellence.

In an effort to further understand hope in relation to leadership, linkages have been identified between hope and theories of motivation, goal setting and goal pursuit commonly applied in leadership studies.

Leaders initiate the generation of organisation vision, values, change, shared power, engagement, and resources. However, these factors do not emerge in isolation. When organisation participants contribute to their formulation, they buy into the ownership and commit to making them a reality. Through this interactive process a mission is identified and actions taken to accomplish the mission. They are partners in hope for the success of the organisation.

These actions include creating a viable structure, establishing goals and aligning individual and group goals with the vision and mission, constructing a culture and building the capacity to fulfil the organization's purpose. One of the catalysts for the concentrated effort and vigorous activity that is needed to fulfil an organization's purpose is the phenomenon of hope.

Leadership involves three components: strengthening the hoping self, minimizing hope inhibitors, and creating a vision of hope in others.

Strengthening the hope of the leader involves increasing connection between the leader and the team, enhancing uplifting memories, reflecting on priorities in life and shaping plans for the future, learning to pause and reflect, developing short and long range goals, engaging in activities that provide meaning and purpose in life, and employing completion thinking.

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