Leadership Ethos for Sustainable Development Goals

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Abstract

Leadership is anchored by unspoken behaviours and ethos. The notion of leadership as the exercise of power and force does not exist anymore. The true essence of leadership is bringing all together wholeheartedly. It facilitates the accomplishment of goals within specified time frame while leveraging available resources. Additionally, it contributes to organizational growth. But the recipe would be incomplete without a perfect set of ethos. The outcomes of leadership are enormous. The results are in the terms of employee engagement, team agility, organizational productivity, good culture, and overall effectiveness. The Agenda of 20230 regarding sustainable development, with its 17 sustainable development goals (SDGs) has put an immense encumbrance on our leaders. It demands leaders to have a grasp of how to contribute and accomplish the targets. Sustainability is a multifaceted task that requires significant changes in organizations. Ethos of leaders is one of the primary transformative agents. With their perspective, leaders and not organisations effect change This article explores the various approaches of leaders which contributes in meaningful ways for sustainable development goals.

Keywords: Leadership, Ethos, Sustainable Development Goals, Challenge.

Introduction

"Culture eats strategy for breakfast."

While expressing this statement, renowned author Peter Drucker emphasised the significance of the human element in every organisation. No matter how comprehensive your plans, strategies are, if the people executing it do not nurture the appropriate culture, then the plan will stumble. A good leader with a right set of ethos might develop culture overtime.

Leadership

The primary objective of every organization is not just to maintain its operations, but also to secure its long-term sustainability through the improvement of its performance. In order to remain competitive in today's marketplaces, businesses are compelled to consistently enhance their performance. Previous studies (Avolio and Gartner, 2005; Shafique et al. 2019) have shown the importance of leadership in driving organizational success. Leadership is often associated with positive outcomes such as increased profitability, a competitive advantage, and improved overall organizational performance (Lussier and Achua,2007; Yahaya and Ebrahim 2016). Leadership entails acknowledging the responsibilities owed to all stakeholders and to society as a whole. (Caldwell, 2012). They are instrumental in cultivating an organizational culture grounded in trust and a commitment to ongoing learning (Senge, 2006 and Shockley-Zalabak et al., 2010). Their mindset and values strengthen organizational commitment (Covey, 2004). Many studies confirmed that organisational failures are typically the result of the wrong path being taken by top management to realise the organization's goals. Leadership is the power to change someone's values, beliefs, behaviour, and attitudes. (Ganta, and Manukonda, 2014).

Organisations must prioritize their investment in leadership ethos to yield greater returns, focusing on growth, learning, deliberative, and thoughtful mindsets. As mindset adapt and evolve, the thinking, learning, and behaviour of leaders will naturally improve, as they will perceive and interpret their situations more accurately. Improving their ideas, learning, and action will result in increased performance and accomplishment. Employees who are committed to organization's goals and value system, contribute success to the organization by carrying out significant responsibilities (Schaufeli and Bakker, 2004;Demerouti and Cropanzano, 2010).The growth mindset framework is frequently used in the context of learning and education. Nonetheless, the need of a growth mindset has been shown to be just as important for leaders and coaches (Asbury et al., 2015; Boyd, 2014;Chase, 2010; Heslin and Keating, 2017).

Sustainability

Sustainability is explained as the capacity to maintain something over a period. (Basiago.1999). Similarly, Stoddart (2011) defined sustainability as efficient and fair resource distribution intra- and inter-generationally with socio-economic activity within a finite ecosystem. According

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to Ben-Eli (2015) sustainability is a state of dynamic equilibrium in which a population and the carrying capacity of the environment interact in such a way that the population grows and develops to its full potential without threatening the sustainability of the ecosystems on which it depends.

Sustainable Development

Sustainable development explains to the concept of fulfilling the requirements of the today without jeopardizing future generations' needs. It is a way of harmonizing economic, social, and environmental contemplations to achieve long-term prosperity and wellbeing for all. The term was first introduced in the 1980s by the Brundtland Commission, which elucidated sustainable development as "development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs." Attaining sustainable development requires collective action at all levels, including individual, community, corporate, and government action. It also requires a long-term perspective and a commitment to making difficult choices and trade-offs to ensure that we leave a better world for future generations.

The 2015 UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development presents a roadmap for peace and prosperity for people and the planet. The 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are an urgent call for all countries, developed and developing, to work together. They understand that eradicating poverty and other deprivations requires methods to enhance health, education, disparity, and economic progress while combating climate concerns and preserving our oceans and habitats. The 2030 Agenda would be difficult to implement due to its unprecedented level of ambition, and a compartmentalised strategy to development would not be sufficient.

Fundamentals of Sustainable Development

Sustainable development is a visionary and prospective development paradigm that places an emphasis on a constructive transformation trajectory based on socioeconomic and ecological considerations. Taylor (2016) identified economic development, environmental preservation, and social parity as the three core issues of sustainable development. Accordingly, the framework of sustainable development is based on economic, social, and environmental sustainability, known as conceptual pillars of sustainable development.

Economic Sustainability

At first, it was anticipated that advances in technology would result in an increase in the availability of natural resources for industrial use**.** (Cooper & Vargas, 2004). Assuming infinite natural resources, economists have overemphasized the market's capacity to distribute resources proficiently (Du & Kang, 2016). The fact that natural resources are finite and not all of them are capable of being renewed or refilled is something that has become widely recognized in recent times.

Economic sustainability requires a production system that sees existing demands without compromising forthcoming requirements. (Lobo, Pietriga and Appert, 2015). Hence, economic sustainability necessitates those decisions be made in the fair and judicial manner , considering all dimensions of sustainability (Zhai & Chang, 2019).

Social Sustainability

Social sustainability focuses on the growth of individuals (Benaim & Raftis, 2008). The realm of social sustainability covers the area of equity, participation, entrusting, availability, cultural existance, and organizational stability (Daly, 1992). At the societal level, (Saith, 2006) explained that sustainability means nurturing the progress of people, communities, and cultures to attain a meaningful existence, leveraging healthcare, education, gender parity, peace, and stability.

Environmental Sustainability

The notion of environmental sustainability focuses on the natural environment and the ways through which it can be fruitful while also remaining resilient to sustenance mankind. Moreover, ecological equilibrium and ecosystem carrying capacity influence environmental sustainability (Brodhag and Taliere, 2006). To preserve the sustainability of natural capital, it must be utilized judiciously. Both, a source of inputs and a receptacle for outputs. (Goodland & Daly,1996). The extraction and removal of natural resources and waste must not exceed the rate at which they can be replaced or assimilated by the ecosystem. (Diesendorf, 2000; Evers, 2018). This is so that balance can be maintained within the constraints of the earth systems' limits or boundaries. Environmental sustainability is concerned with how the natural environment may be kept productively stable and robust to support human life and growth.

Sustainable Development Goals & Leadership

To put the concept of sustainable development into practice, general public involvement must be improved. Everyone on the planet needs to realize and accept the fact that their survival as well as the survival of future generations is contingent on practicing responsible consumption, accountable production, good stewardship of the environment, and progressive social values. Although everyone has a role to play in ensuring sustainable development, international, national, regional, and local institutions are encouraged and expected to show ownership, leadership, and citizenship in this endeavour.

Sustainable development demands effective leadership, which begins with self-understanding and a relational worldview. Reflection involves "understanding one's own abilities, knowledge and values within the framework of communal groups." This reflecting mechanism allows feedback loops and growth and change cycles. Hence, leadership is inclusive, collaborative, and introspective.

Leadership at the national and organizational levels must foster a feeling of shared responsibility for achieving the SDGs, focus on the long term, and build procedures to assure their long-term achievement. Leaders must grasp the necessity for national and organizational collaboration, be open to learn, exhibit and promote ethics.

Ethos

Ethos means a person's perspective or viewpoint of life, as well as attitudes, conventions, and principles that impact a person's actions as well as the ways in which they relate to and behave with other people. (Dweck and Leggett 2000). Another meaning of ethos is mindset, refers to the collective mental framework shared by members of a community at a certain period and place. (Hong, Chiu, Dweck, Lin and Wan 1999). Consequently, depending on the mentality or ethos of leaders, sustainable development can be promoted or impeded. Micro-credit famed Nobel Laureate Professor Mohammed Yunus once explained : "My greatest challenge has been to change the mindsets of people. Mindsets play strange tricks on us. We see things the way our minds have instructed our eyes."

Ethos isn't static and one-dimensional; rather, they are the product of a complex interplay of many different aspects of their lives. As mentioned earlier, ethos is multifaceted and evolve over the course of our lives. Furthermore, they are formed, deconstructed, and reconstructed through many processes at various times of our lives. For instance, the norms and attitudes that are formed in the early stages of life are frequently influenced by the values that are taught by parents at home and those that are learned at school. Some of these norms and attitudes may shift in during maturity because of exposure to higher education, the exchange of information, and the work environment.

Mindset in Leadership Ethos

1. **Agile Mindset**: Agile mindset holds that change is feasible and required to address various alternatives prior to rapidly arriving at a solution; failure is transient, and any impediments can be quickly surmounted. Agile leaders' mindset adopts a comprehensive perspective on situations. They believe in proactive attitude, employs inquisitive thinking and critical reasoning.

2. **Problem Solving Mindset**: Problem mindset explains that the capabilities of humans are not static; rather, they may be continually improved via the application of effort and the acquisition of new knowledge. Leadership characterized by innovative attitude is daring and adventurous, open to trying new things, good at finding solutions to problems, imaginative and resourceful, able to bounce back from setbacks, and highly determined to succeed.

3. **Evidence-based Mindset**: Leaders that have an evidence-based approach feel that having adequate data is essential to making sound decisions. The mindset of this kind of leader is one that is driven and

motivated to making use of data, ensuring its validity, and recording it.

4. **Foresight Mindset:** The attitude of foresight begins with the presumption that present and future transformation is achievable. If we ask the appropriate questions, make a strategy, and get ourselves ready for the future, we can have an impact on the future and foresee trends.

5. **Result oriented Mindset**: The decisions that put an emphasis on the outcomes are the ones that are considered productive. The result-oriented leader's approach is centred on acting and getting outcomes.

6. **Collaborative Mindset**: Collaboration amplifies the effect of an endeavour. A collaborative attitude values learning, co-creating, sharing experiences, and conversing with people.

7. **Digital Mindset**: Digital technology has the potential to assist in the settlement of a wide variety of problems, if it is utilised effectively. The mindset of the leaders is centred on using the benefits of technology to enable the transition of governance while simultaneously addressing the dangers it poses.

8. **Ethical Mindset**: Respecting the opinions of other people and adhering to the moral and legal guidelines established by one's company are all essential components of ethical mindset.

9. **Transparent Mindset**: Building smarter judgements requires establishing trust, maintaining open lines of communication, and being honest. Leaders with transparent mindset considers new concepts and openly discloses information that is not classified.

10. **Personal Accountability Mindset:** Leaders establish the standard for the organisation. Without responsibility from senior executives and middle managers, people feel adrift and disoriented. Personal accountability involves taking responsibility.

Toolkit for Ethos

Leaders need a toolkit of competencies to be persuaded to embrace diversity and inclusion. It includes following skills:

1. **Emotional Intelligence**: It mentions to a person's ability to observe, comprehend, manage, and express their feelings in a constructive manner. It also involves recognizing and influencing the emotions of others, which can be essential in building strong relationships and effective communication. Emotional intelligence encompasses four main capabilities such as knowledge about self, self-discipline, awareness of social aspect, and relationship management. Evolving emotional intelligence skills can be beneficial in both personal and professional settings.

2. **Communication Skills:** Leaders need to be able to communicate in a way that resonates with all sectors of society, including those who may have different beliefs, cultures, or experiences. This requires active listening, empathy, and an ability to communicate complex ideas in a clear and concise manner.

3. **Respect for Diversity**: It involves recognizing and valuing the differences among individuals and groups, including their unique needs, perspectives, and backgrounds. This means that leaders should be able to adjust and respond to the changing needs of individuals and groups, especially those who are marginalized and vulnerable.

4. **Negotiation and Facilitation:** Leaders need these skills to resolve conflicts and establish agreements to address the special challenges of vulnerable people. They should protect disadvantaged groups. To find the best answers, leaders may need to negotiate the process through direct or guided conversations with stakeholders, who may have different take, approaches and strategies due to the complex dangers of vulnerable. .

5. **Engagement and Collaboration:** Inclusive and participatory policymaking is critical for creating policies that are effective, equitable, and sustainable. By involving diverse stakeholders, policymakers can build stronger relationships with their communities, foster collaboration, and innovation, and ultimately achieve better outcomes for all.

Conclusion

Leaders drive change and create a sustainable future; thus, their ethos are crucial to achieving sustainable development goals. Sustainable leaders can impact company culture and values, influencing decision-making and action toward sustainable development goals. Leaders' ethos helps to achieve sustainable development goals for these reasons:

1. **Vision:** Leaders with proper ethos have the potential to inspire people with a clear vision for a sustainable future. They may rally support for sustainable development goals by emphasizing their importance.

2. **Innovation:** Sustainable development goals require innovative approaches to complex problems. Leaders with a correct ethos can encourage innovation, risk-taking, and experimentation to find new solutions for existing problems.

3. **Collaboration:** Sustainability requires collaboration across different sectors and stakeholders. A right ethos of leaders can build bridges between different groups and facilitate dialogue and cooperation, leading to more effective solutions and better outcomes.

4. **Accountability:** Sustainable development goals require leaders who take responsibility for the outcomes of their decisions and actions. By holding themselves and their teams accountable, leaders can track progress, measure success, and adjust strategies as needed to achieve sustainable development goals.

5. **Adaptability:** An adaptable approach is needed to meet sustainable development goals. Sustainable development leaders must also learn from mistakes. They consider failures as learning experiences. Leaders can uncover problem reasons and build new solutions by evaluating mistakes and failures.

The ethos of a leadership is a game changer when it comes to attaining the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) because the SDGs are complex, interconnected, and require a holistic approach to achieve. A leader who is committed to the SDGs and has the right ethos can inspire their team to think creatively and proactively about how they can contribute to achieving the goals. A leader who prioritizes collaboration can help their team to work together effectively, leveraging diverse skills, perspectives, and expertise to achieve common goals. This approach is essential for tackling the interconnected challenges of the SDGs, which require a multidisciplinary and cross-sectoral approach.

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