

Leadership, culture, and a feminised workplace

Summary

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Three themes resonate from the research conducted at the Centre, with the communication imperatives associated with leadership in our organisations. The first theme is that of the relationship between leadership, organisational culture, and the performance of the organisation or work unit. The second theme is the trainability of the leadership that leads to improved organisational culture and organisational performance. The final theme is that of the feminisation of the work environment, and the impact this has on leadership and organisational performance.

Leadership culture and performance

Research conducted at the Centre shows that the leadership demonstrated in the workplace and the culture of the workplace, impact upon each other in roughly equal amount. The research also shows that of these two variables, the leadership within the workplace has the greater direct impact upon the performance of the work unit. Therefore, leadership development must include consideration of the cultural characteristics of the workplace at the same time as it includes consideration of the behavioural and communication aspects of leadership performance. Work on the development of leadership behaviour and communication will not be optimally successful unless the cultural environment of the workplace is characterised less by system, procedure, precedent, hierarchy and more by attitudes representing empowerment, delegation, creativity, innovation, and intellectual stimulation. This cultural environment must also be representative of a balance between evaluating the past with monitoring and controlling systems on the one hand, and building the future through valuing and shaping the human resources of the organisation, on the other hand.

The trainability of leadership

Through considering the behaviours and communication tactics of leaders concomitantly with the culture of the organisation or work unit, we have been able to successfully develop leadership capability within participants in leadership development programmes. At the Centre for the Study of Leadership, we have been able to increase the demonstration of leadership by up to 13%, and the extra effort of followers by up to eight per cent, with just two days interaction and three months application back at work. Such findings make exciting the possibilities of being able to develop leadership within the work units environments of our organisations.

Gender characteristics of the workplace

Research into emotional intelligence has shown that emotional intelligence involves an ability to be aware of one's own emotions and the impact of those emotions on others. It also involves having an empathy with the emotions of others and the impact of those other emotions on oneself. Research has shown that emotional intelligence is conceptually similar to effective leadership. Emotional intelligence is also conceptually similar to a 'feminised' workplace, and research in New Zealand has shown that on average, women are better at displaying leadership than men are. The implications are more for the way we undertake our leadership challenges than for the gender make-up of our workplace, but an appreciation of emotional intelligence, leadership styles and a 'feminised' workplace will help greatly our understanding of work unit and organisational effectiveness.

Relevant literature

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