

Analyzing Inclusive Leadership with Effective Communication: A Thematic Study

^[1] Emma Cheryl, ^[2] Dr Jennifer G Joseph

^[1] Research Scholar, Vinayaka Missions Research Foundation, Salem, Tamil Nadu, India.

^[2] Professor & Head, Department of Humanities and Science, Aarupadai Veedu Institute of Technology, VMRF, Tamil Nadu, India

Corresponding Author Email: ^[1] cheryl@vinayakamissions.com, ^[2] jenifer@avit.ac.in

Abstract— Learning specific skills and strategies for effective communication are essential building blocks for inclusive leadership. By focusing on communication, one can learn tools and skills and gain resources to bring out the best in oneself and others. This paper deals with finding ways to use one's voice to change the world, and this requires inclusive leadership, which is underpinned by effective communication. Both of which are terms that will be explored in this paper. Using your voice to change the world does not mean you have to have some lofty goal like ending world hunger or bringing world peace. Using one's voice to change the world can be done in big and small ways. It might mean changing the world of your community, the world of your home, your school, or your workplace. This paper will also help define the nature of your world and the kind of change one wants to make in it. This paper will provide the framework for using communication as a voice to change the world.

I. INTRODUCTION

People affect the world around them in many ways, and we may not always know what influences or inspires others. That is why we all have the potential to be leaders in our everyday interactions. Empowering others through inclusive communication is one way to create change in the world around you. Therefore, making a connection, inspiring others, or creating change can [1] be as simple as changing your words. By learning how to use inclusive communication through this course, you can position yourself as a leader and use your voice to change the world. In today's global world, how we communicate is evolving at a rapid pace. To truly understand why effective communication is important for bringing out the best in yourself and others, one must understand the essentials of communication.

1.1 Living in a global and virtual world.

This may seem quite obvious, but differences in language, time zones, and access to information can help and hinder our ability to communicate [2] with others. Even our use of humor, emoticons, acronyms and personal stories (all of which can be very specific to our culture) are elements of communication that we must pay attention to.

1.2 Communication takes different forms.

Verbal communication involves using words, both written and spoken, to deliver a message. Non-verbal communication comes in many forms and includes our facial expressions, body movements, hand gestures, signs, and symbols, as well as the way something is [4] said (e.g., pitch, tone, volume, speed or pace, intonation, eye contact, and emotional affect). Silence is also an overlooked yet powerful form of non-verbal communication because it opens a space for connection to occur. [18] Verbal and non-verbal communication work in concert to convey messages in

everyday conversations and in forms of artistic expression such as painting and music.

1.3 Audience matters.

Whether you are having a one-on-one conversation, small group discussion, or talking to a large group (virtually or in-person; written or spoken), [13] understanding your audience is critical.

1.4 Culture matters.

Body language and other non-verbal cues are part of how we communicate, and these can look different across cultures. For example, a thumbs-up hand [3] gesture common in the US is a signal that all is well, but in Thailand, it is seen as an insult.

II. BUILDING BLOCKS FOR INCLUSIVE LEADERSHIP

Inclusive leadership benefits and impacts everyone positively. It doesn't matter whether you're a man or woman, young or old, of any skin colour, race, ethnicity, or nationality because anyone can be an inclusive leader. Anyone can be an inclusive leader and inclusion benefits everyone.

2.1 What is inclusion?

The dictionary says inclusion is "the action or a state of being included or including others in groups and structures." Catalyst research says that inclusion happens when you value both the differences [14] and the commonalities of others. Catalyst research also says that when women and men feel included in their work groups or their workplaces, they're more likely to do two things: [5] innovate and be a team player. Now taking a few steps back and talking about the being distinct part, is the uniqueness part. Standing out from a crowd and being recognized for what you bring to the table,

what's unique about oneself. The being similar part is the belongingness part. That's about not standing out too far out from the crowd, that you're on the side, alone, by yourself. It really is about fitting into that group. And to be a successful, inclusive leader you [6] have to make others feel included. Catalyst research also talks about EACH, the EACH method. As a leader, what can we do to make others feel included? Empowerment, accountability, courage, and humility.

III. COURAGE IN COMMUNICATION IS A POWERFUL TOOL

Courage is about helping one understand, address, and communicate across differences and move from exclusion to inclusion. Courage is about acting on our convictions to achieve what needs to [15] be done and ensuring that we stay true to our principles, even when it involves some personal risk-taking. And in the context of communication, courage is about having the willingness and the ability to engage across differences. It's about [8] stepping outside our comfort zone to consider things from another perspective or viewpoint. And it's a tool to help us lead inclusively, particularly in environments or situations that might be a little bit unfamiliar or uncomfortable to us. And in this way, courage is a tool for working across and through [9] our differences. It requires vulnerability and requires us to be willing, to step outside of our comfort zone to engage and interact with others. But we need to consider what we mean by the difference when we're talking about using courage to navigate differences.

IV. COMMUNICATING ACROSS DIFFERENCES

"Differences" are the individual, personal, and cultural attributes that make us unique. They can be our gender, race or ethnicity, nationality, sexual orientation, ability, cultural identity, age, religion or spiritual beliefs, or geographic location. They can also be personal attributes, such as personality, thought process, or opinions. You can probably think of many other ways you are different from other people. The difference in many ways is about, what we like to talk about, the things [11] that make us all unique, and the different attributes that we all have, whether our gender, our ethnicity, our nationality, our religious background, our age, or perhaps some elements of our characteristics, like our personality or how we learn. All of these things are the ones that make a person unique. And one probably can think of many, many more. We need to use those differences as a way of connecting us and bridging, helping us to bridge difficult situations and [17] conversations, and relating us in meaningful ways. Having courage can profoundly impact oneself in many ways and our communities by honouring differences. One can connect and bring out a sense of community and solidarity and create a sense of belongingness that can join us and move us into [12] action. All those things are ways courage can be used as a tool.

V. CONNECTING AND PRACTICING WITH COURAGE

Communicating with people who may be different from you can be challenging and can require a degree of courage. You may feel uncomfortable or defensive when engaging with someone who may not share your values or worldview, and you may also feel vulnerable. The inclusive leadership model focuses on courage as an attribute, and leaders that exemplify this help people [7] take risks, help people feel a sense of belongingness, contribute to their well-being, and enhance their ability and potential as leaders. And one of the things that I found compelling was what we heard from leaders about what happened when they implemented this courage in their communication. And in particular, they talked about how they share personal beliefs and personal stories, even talking about [10] things that might be emotional, which can be taboo in workplace settings.

VI. CONCLUSION

The idea of leading with one's heart isn't something we see very often. Still, the courageous leaders find it paid off so that the people they were communicating with, their co-workers, and colleagues were then willing to do that back in turn with them. It opened the door for the courage to permeate their working groups, enabling better connections as a result. One may be courageous enough to open up and share something personal or difficult about [15] oneself, and it might inspire another to do the same back with oneself, or again, then with others. That is why the difference is a tool for effective communication. It takes courage to step outside of what we know or think to use the difference as a tool. Inclusive leaders use difference even when fearful, uncomfortable, or confused to learn from other perspectives and create an environment where people feel included. Pushing past our discomfort and vulnerability to engage with people courageously gives us opportunities to connect and learn from each other and speak up or take meaningful action. These connections, in turn, help to create inclusive environments and relationships. Therefore, it is essential to use the [16] EACH behaviour-Empowerment, Accountability, Courage, and Humility to bridge differences.

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