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# Recognition and development of hope for South African organizational leaders

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## Abstract

The significant challenges faced by South Africa at present are well known. How to deal with the problems from a political and economic perspective abound, but taking a psychological approach has been neglected. This paper proposes a positive approach to South African organizational leadership based on the psychological capacity of hope. After giving a brief background on the context surrounding South African organizations, the theory, research, and application of hope relevant to organizational leadership in the “Rainbow Nation” are presented and analyzed. Such an overlooked positive approach represented by hopeful organizational leaders seems needed at this juncture of South Africa’s present and future.

## Introduction

In these turbulent geopolitical and economic times, all countries around the globe are teetering on the delicate balance between fear and despair on the one hand, and hope and opportunity on the other. Although most of the world’s media coverage is focused on political

and military solutions, and perhaps new economic initiatives, at the more grassroots level in countries, organizational leaders are left to struggle with the realities of today's environment. Although any country in the world right now can be considered as a case, perhaps the best candidate for a country is South Africa where the organizational leaders are on the cusp between fear and hope and between threat and opportunity.

Why is South Africa a good example? This became a turning point in South African history ten years back, not only because this resulted in the first democratic election of a black majority government and the exclamation point putting an end to apartheid, but also because it initiated a paradigm shift for organizational leadership. Before 1994, South African organizations were under severe sanctions from the world community and therefore were isolated and had to turn inward to meet its very survival needs. After the free elections the sanctions were lifted and organizational leaders found themselves facing unprecedented changes almost overnight. Because globalization was beginning to take place all around them, and now they too were open to international competition, South African organizational leaders had the challenge of keeping their own domestic markets that they had controlled under the sanction years as well as competing in global markets. An even bigger challenge, however, was to deal with the post-apartheid organizational culture and business dynamics such as heightened ethnic and language diversity, legally sanctioned affirmative action and its consequences, adverse labor relations with the tendency toward open conflict and violence, and the continuing wide gap between the "haves" and the "have nots" in terms of income level, education, and opportunities (Roodt, 1997).

As in any paradigm shift, South African managers needed not only new approaches and techniques, but even more importantly, new ways of thinking. Although a number of managerial methods have been tried, e.g. Denton and Vloeberghs (2003) have recently reviewed approaches such as re-engineering, downsizing, and outsourcing among others, we propose that suggested new ways of thinking till date have been badly neglected. Although Denton and Vloeberghs (2003) call for systems thinking and employee empowerment, and others emphasize the need for more effective leadership (Lombard and Schoeman, 2002) and communication (Fletcher, 1999) during this transitional period, a more sensitive and healthy organizational culture (Booyse,

2001; Thomas and Lindsay, 2003), and specific change management techniques (Franzen, 2003; Viljoen and Rothman, 2002), the purpose of this paper is to present a more basic form of new thinking at this critical juncture for South African organizational leaders and their development: positivity in general and hope in particular.

At first glance, taking a positive perspective and the use of hope seems like just idle chatter and wishful thinking, instead of facing up to the harsh realities facing today's South African organizational leaders. However, we will show in this paper that the burgeoning positive psychology movement, and how we carry it down to what we call positive organizational behavior (POB) (Luthans, 2002a, b), is indeed relevant to South African organizational leaders. Specifically, we provide the theory and research-based positive psychological capacity for hope that we propose can make a significant contribution to South African organizational leaders' new paradigm thinking.

After providing brief overviews of the new South Africa and POB, we give the precise meaning of hope as a useful positive capacity for South African organizational leaders. Special attention is given to both the will power (agency) and way power (pathways) theoretical components of hopeful leadership (Peterson and Luthans, 2003; Snyder, 2000a). The balance of the paper then makes the case for advancing and developing such hope in South African organizational leaders and we suggest some specific guidelines for how they can be developed and positively impact their struggling organizations now and in the future.

### **Brief background of South Africa**

Historically during the 14th century, South Africa became a center of interest for Europe as a result of a search for the sea passage to the East for trade (Garson, 2003). Thus, South Africa has had a very long history, beginning with pre-colonialism, colonialism, union governance, an independent republic, and today as a country with true democracy with its first true independent elections resulting in black majority rule in 1994. This was historically significant not only because it marked the end of dreaded apartheid, but also international sanctions against South Africa, which had serious negative effects on its economic growth for many years and the infrastructure of the conduct of business and the management of organizations. With this

paradigm shift has come with huge changes not only at the societal level, but also for the leaders of organizations throughout the new South Africa.

Fortunately, South Africa is not only undergoing dramatic change and accompanying problems, but also offers a beacon of hope for all of Sub-Saharan Africa (hereafter referred to as “Africa”), the world’s poorest continent. The *Economist* (2004) recent special report on Africa noted that half of its 700 million people subsist on 65 US cents or less a day and is the only continent to have grown poorer in the past 25 years. However, now ten years after the end of apartheid, South Africa has a strong democratic culture, free press, independent judiciary, and advanced organizational systems, which account for 45 percent of Sub-Saharan GDP. The government’s budget deficit has been reduced from 9.1 percent of GDP in 1993 to 2.4 percent in 2003, and the overall economy has had a respectable 2.8 percent a year growth from 1994 to 2003 ( *Economist*, 2004). Despite these positive indicators, there are still considerable political, economic, and social issues and challenges facing not only the country as a whole, but especially leaders of South African organizations (Denton and Vloeberghs, 2003). Before examining our proposed role that hope can play in a positive psychological approach to organizational leadership in South Africa, the complex context needs to be further examined.

### **The demographic and economic context for organizational leaders**

There are historical, social, economic, and political factors making South Africa a very complex environmental context for today’s South African organizational leaders. Kock (2003) and others have noted the impact that cultural diversity has on organizational behavior in South Africa. For example, Van der Waal (2002) cautions that cultural differences in South Africa can lead to problems if managed incorrectly and Khoza (1994), Booysse (2001) and others point out the significant differences between the traditional white Eurocentric management culture and the emerging black Afro-centric management culture. The cultural diversity is evident in the population as a whole, which serves as the context for organizations. Of the approximately 43 million, 75 percent are black Africans, 15 percent are

white, and 10 percent are other (Statistics of South Africa, 1995). In addition, the country has no less than 11 official languages, including Afrikaans, English, Ndebele, Pedi, Sotho, Swazi, Tsonga, Tswana, Venda, Xhosa, and Zulu (International Marketing Council of South Africa, IMCSA, 2003). In terms of religion, South Africa has five different religions, including Christians (68 percent), Muslim (2 percent), Hindu (1.5 percent), and indigenous beliefs and animist (28.5 percent) (Statistics of South Africa, 1995).

South Africa has a relatively large middle class, and now about half of South Africa's middle managers and a quarter of top managers are black (up from hardly any a decade ago, *Economist*, 2004). The country has an abundant supply of resources, well-developed financial, legal, communications, energy, and transportation infrastructure, a stock exchange that ranks among the ten largest in the world, and an efficient distribution of goods to major urban centers and throughout the region (IMCSA, 2003). For example, since the sanctions were lifted, South African firms now invest in the rest of Africa more than firms from any other country: about \$1 billion a year since 1994, in everything from mobile phones to supermarkets ( *Economist*, 2004). The country is also the largest producer in the world of platinum, gold and chromium. Tourism continues to be one of the main sources of income in the country and provides a large number of local jobs. Some of the major attractions include wildlife, game reserves, historical attractions, beaches, botanical gardens representing indigenous plants of different areas in the country, footpaths in the Bushveld (bush field), and beautiful mountain ranges.

Despite this good news ten years after apartheid, a recent report on key economic issues in South Africa indicates that the country is still faced with a myriad of problems causing exchange rate instability (Blackmore *et al.*, 2002). There is also severe economic and political instability outside its borders (e.g. Angola, Mozambique, and, especially Zimbabwe), which has a spillover effect on labor issues, corruption, crime and the high prevalence of HIV/AIDS. However, there are enough good things happening to offer hope for South Africans in general and organizational leaders in particular. As the *Economist* report concludes: "If any country can set an example to the continent, it is South Africa" (p. 13).

## **The cultural context for organizational leaders**

Both collective and individualistic cultural values are represented in South African organizations (Mbigi, 2000). With the influx of more black South Africans into all levels of organizations, the resulting cultural diversity needs careful attention and proactive management. For example, the Afrocentric “Ubuntu” cultural value of communalism supports extensive social community networks characterized by cooperation and solidarity (Mbigi, 1997). This Ubuntu is in sharp contrast to the more traditional individualistic values prevalent in South African organizations and affects areas such as cooperative effort and teamwork, or what is referred to as “shosholozza” (Mbigi, 1997). It is stressed that the collectivism of Ubuntu and teamwork of shosholozza does not necessarily imply a depersonalization of the individual (Khoza, 1994), nor an oppressive conformity and loyalty (Louw, 2002). Specifically, Ubuntu refers to the saying: “Umuntu Ngumuntu Ngabantu” which means: “A person is a person through other human beings – I am, because you are, you are because we are” (Khoza, 1994). In other words, under Ubuntu there is an individual existence of the self and the simultaneous existence for others, treating the other person with dignity and respect. There is a humanness of valuing other individuals as worthy. It is also a continuous exploration of reconciliation and general agreement and a true appreciation of different views of others (Louw, 2002; Mbigi, 2000).

The nurturing and mutual understanding of cultural differences such as traditional individualism and the increasing Ubuntu and shosholozza values, if managed properly can form a positive strength-based perspective and result in an increase in productivity and improved competitiveness for organizations locally and internationally. The cultural diversity found in today’s South African organizations, if managed properly, can become a classic case and an example not only for Africa, but also for the rest of the world, of the whole being greater than the sum of the parts. Again, we propose that organizational leaders taking a positive approach, and especially utilizing the psychological strength of hope, can help reach this ideal goal for their South African organizations.

## The alignment of hope with the South African context

Hope is commonly used in everyday language and has a long tradition in clinical psychology (Erickson *et al.*, 1975). Because the concept has been defined and used differently depending on the situation, we begin by providing different ways in which it has been conceptualized. Traditionally, people think of hope in terms of hoping for the best or hoping things will turn out okay in times of trouble. This view of hope as the perception that one can reach a desired goal received scholarly attention in the early work on hope many years ago (Cantril, 1964; Farber, 1968; Frank, 1975, Menninger, 1959; Schachtel, 1959). Although shared by many, to date there is evidence that suggests this traditional view does not fully capture the rich, positive psychological process of hope (Snyder *et al.*, 2002).

In recent years, hope has been defined by positive psychologist Snyder (2000a, b) as both the willpower (agency) and waypower (pathways) that you have for your goals. Others have also portrayed hope as a general tendency of being positively creative and reactive towards the perceived future, by subjectively assessing what is probable or important in the future (Nunn, 1996); a future-referenced, affective cognition based on wish for events and some expectation of the occurrence of these events (Staats, 1987); and as a state of being, characterized by an anticipation of a continued good state, an improved state, or a release from a perceived entrapment (Miller and Powers, 1988). Although these various definitions of hope lend themselves to better understanding, the most widely recognized definition of hope in positive psychology and its relevancy to organizational leadership is Snyder's willpower and waypower and he more specifically 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 *et al.*, 1991, p. 287). This view of hope for organizational leaders seems especially relevant to the South African context and the one we use in this paper.

In particular, Snyder (2000b) posits that his conception of hope does not develop without a historical context. The individual's hope-related notions therefore, tend to confirm the person's idiosyncratic tendency towards hope as a result of the interaction between exploration and environmental circumstances. Given its historical context, it appears that the development of hope in South African organizational



leaders is what is needed to help them break away from negative historical influences and create a vision to help solve the challenges they currently face. As indicated by President Mbeki: "There exists within this continent a generation which has been victim to all the things which created this negative past. This generation remains African and carries within it a historic pride which compels it to seek a place for Africa equal to all the people." We propose that the recognition and development of hope can help South African organizational leaders to move from too much self-doubt to self-renewal, especially during these difficult times in the transition of the country.

### **Hope in the positive organization behavior approach**

From a clinical psychology perspective, Shechter (1999) notes that a lack of hope can have a very destructive effect. Applied to the organizational setting, this suggests that leaders must develop expectations of hope even in the challenging context of South Africa. These expectations should include a tolerance for negative outcomes, the ability to manage intra- and inter-personal conflict and/or economic downturns. This implies that to be hopeful, South African organizational leaders will have to be in touch with the vicissitudes of hope by managing the delicate balance between realistic hope and despair. Moreover, as McGee (1984) notes, a nurturing environment with supportive and competent others could result in the tendency towards hope. It follows that the development of a caring and proficient organizational setting largely provided by the leader should enhance a hopeful work environment for all participants and enhance business success (McGarvey, 1995). This is where a POB approach comes into play.

POB, is drawn from positive psychology. Research psychologist Martin Seligman is given credit for charging the field to shift the preoccupation away from the pathologies and dysfunctions of people to build theories and conduct research on what is right and good with people (Seligman and Csikszentmihalyi, 2000). To a degree, the same is true for the field of organizational behavior. Although not as pronounced as psychology, most of the organizational behavior field to date has also been concerned with how to correct weaknesses and deal with problems such as stress, and how to improve employee motivation and

dysfunctional behavior. A couple of years ago, following the lead of positive psychology, Luthans (2002a, b) defined POB as “the study and application of positively-oriented human resource strengths and psychological capacities that can be measured, developed, and effectively managed for performance improvement in today’s work place” (p. 59).

In the initial paper on POB, confidence (or self-efficacy), hope, optimism, subjective well-being (or happiness) and emotional intelligence were identified as meeting the POB criteria of being not only positive, but also unique to the OB field, based on theory and research (and thus separated from the popular books of Steven Covey, Spencer Johnson and others), valid measures, state-like and open to development (and thus separated from most of the trait-like virtues of positive psychology), and finally having an impact on effective performance (Luthans, 2002a). Subsequent POB theory building, research and application have focused mostly on hope, resiliency, confidence, and optimism (Avolio *et al.*, 2004; Luthans and Avolio, 2003; Luthans and Jensen, 2002; Luthans and Youssef, 2004; Luthans *et al.*, 2002, 2004a; Peterson and Luthans, 2003). The POB construct featured here is hope – described by Luthans (2002a, b) as the heart and most unique POB capacity. We believe that at this time the hope of South African organizational leaders is most relevant. Besides, there are examples of what hopeful South African national leaders such as Arch Bishop Desmond Tutu, Nelson Mandela, and the late Walter Sisulu were able to accomplish. The creation of the African Renaissance movement by President Mbeki creates a hope for the future, not only for South Africans and their organizations, but for the whole of Africa (African Renaissance, 2003).

Although originally conceptualized as being relatively fixed and trait-like, the conceptualization by Snyder *et al.* (1996) suggests that hope is both a disposition and state-like (as opposed to being fixed, trait-like). Thus, important to POB, hope is open to development and change. In addition, the psychometric analysis of the state hope scale (Snyder, 2000a) and comparative analysis among optimism, efficacy, and hope conclude that although there are some conceptual similarities to support each being part of POB (i.e. convergent validity), there are also sufficient conceptual and measurement differences so as not to be merely a proxy for one another (i.e. discriminant validity) (Luthans and Jensen, 2002; Magaletta and Oliver, 1999; Snyder, 2000a; Snyder *et al.*, 2002).

### **The willpower and waypower components of hope**

According to Snyder (2000a), it is this duality of both the willpower (agency) and way power (pathways) that sets hope apart as a POB capacity from the common usage of the term and from other conceptually close positive constructs such as optimism or self-efficacy. That is, agency and pathways thinking are interrelated and operate in a combined, iterative manner to generate hope. The agency notion of willpower or the determination to maintain the effort needed to achieve goals reflect the individual's motivation and determination that goals can be achieved and a person's belief that successful plans can be formulated to attain the goals (Snyder, 2000a). More specifically, it reflects a person's desire to get started toward a goal and to remain committed to that goal.

The way power, otherwise known as alternative pathways, develops through systematic observation and refinement of lessons of correlation or causality. It signifies one's perceived capabilities at generating workable routes to attain desired goals (Snyder *et al.*, 2002). This way power dimension suggests that high hope organizational leaders should not only have well formulated plans and goals, but also should have at least two or more alternative pathways clearly determined so that when faced with obstacles they can revert to alternative pathways. This formulation of several pathways is particularly important in turbulent, transitional environments such as the one facing South African organizational leaders. The implication is that a person with a strong sense of pathways thinking sees obstacles as opportunities rather than threats, and looks for alternative means to address them to achieve desired outcomes.

### **Hope and positive organizational outcomes**

Considerable research has demonstrated that hope is positively related to academic, athletic and health performance outcomes (Snyder, 2000a). There is also research evidence utilizing US organizations that suggests that high-hope leaders have higher performing business units and more satisfied associates with lower levels of turnover. For example, Adams *et al.* (2002) reported that firms with higher hope human resources are more profitable, have higher retention rates,

and have greater levels of employee satisfaction and commitment. Luthans and Jensen (2002) examined the positive impact of hope in the entrepreneurship process. Results showed that higher hope entrepreneurs express greater satisfaction with business ownership and consider themselves relatively better compensated than their lower hope peers. Most relevant, Peterson and Luthans (2003) found that high-hope organizational leaders had significantly better work unit performance, subordinate retention and satisfaction outcomes than low-hope leaders. Also, there is recent evidence that the POB dimension of hope carries across cultures where it was found that the level of hope of Chinese workers significantly relates to their performance outcomes (Luthans *et al.*, 2004b).

In addition to workplace performance outcomes, there is also considerable evidence that an individual's level of hope is related to a number of positive psychological outcomes, including goal expectancies, perceived control, positive affect, and the ability to cope with hardship and stress. For example, Snyder *et al.* (1996) found that hope is positively related with positive affect and negatively with negative affect. In sum, because evidence exists that suggests hope is a state-like psychological capacity that can be developed and managed, and that it is related to leadership effectiveness and employee performance, hope would seem to play an important role in the development of South Africa's organizational leaders to meet current and future challenges. Given its unique history and recent paradigm shift, South Africa provides a theoretical and practical context to fully explore the direct impact of hopeful organizational leaders.

### *The impact of hope beyond performance*

Although POB is aimed primarily at performance improvement, through leadership and human resources, there are also other desirable affects that can be derived from hopeful leaders. For example, many years ago Viscusi and Chesson (1970) argued that people have a degree of ambiguity associated with risk taking, which could switch hopeful behavior (with a higher mean probability of success) to effects of fear (with the diminishment of success probabilities). The implication here is that the leaders' implementation of hopeful goals in their organizations, through agency and pathways, could increase the crossover from ambiguity-averse behavior (fear) to ambiguity-seeking

behavior (hope). That is, willpower and different pathways need to be explored to reduce fear in South African organizational leaders as was pointed out by former President Nelson Mandela “as we are liberated from our own fear, our presence automatically liberates others”. This simple, and yet very powerful statement, suggests that gaining hope among South African organizational leaders is critical in mobilizing growth and transforming their organizations and thereby stimulating the economy for the betterment of all in the country and thereby the whole continent.

### *The relation of hope to other POB capacities*

Although hope has established its conceptual independence and measurement discriminant validity, it shares some similarities with other constructs that also meet the criteria of POB of being not only positive, but also based on theory and research, having valid measures, and being open to development and management for performance improvement (Luthans, 2002a, b; Luthans and Jensen, 2002). Particularly relevant to South African organizational leaders' challenges would be self-efficacy (confidence), optimism, and resiliency (Luthans, 2002b).

*Self-efficacy.* Among the POB constructs, self-efficacy has the most extensive theoretical and research support (Bandura, 1986, 1997, 2000; Stajkovic and Luthans, 1998a, b). It refers to an individual's conviction (or confidence) about his or her abilities to mobilize a specific task within a given context (Bandura, 1997; Stajkovic and Luthans, 1998a). This definition suggests that the specific task as well as the context plays an important role in the impact of efficacy on performance. Overall, individual (Walumbwa *et al.*, 2004; Walumbwa *et al.*, n.d.) and meta-analytic findings clearly indicate that self-efficacy is positively related to work-related outcomes (Stajkovic and Luthans, 1998a, for a review). The foremost distinction between efficacy and hope is in the use of the words can and will, with “can” pertaining to the efficacy to act and “will” tapping hopeful intentionality to act (Magaletta and Oliver, 1999). In particular, “whereas efficacy expectancies emphasizes the personal perception about how a person can perform the requisite activities in a given situational context, hope emphasizes the person's self-referential belief that she or he will initiate (and continue) the requisite actions” (Snyder *et al.*, 2002, p. 262). Although efficacy and hope are conceptually different, they also share

some similarities. For example, the agency component of hope is similar to Bandura's (1986) notion of efficacy expectancies, and outcome expectancies are similar to the pathways component of hope.

*Optimism.* Seligman (1998), drawing from attribution theory, defines optimism as a cognitive process involving positive outcome expectancies and causal attributions that are external, temporary, and specific in interpreting bad or negative events and internal, stable, and global for good or positive events. Optimists are easily motivated to work harder, are more satisfied and have high morale, have high levels of motivational aspiration, persevere in the face of obstacles and difficulties, analyze personal failures and setbacks as temporary, and tends to make one feel upbeat and invigorated both physically and mentally. These descriptions indicate that pathways and agency-like thoughts are implicit in the theory of optimism, and like hope, optimism is also a cognitive process (Snyder, 1995). Nevertheless, hope and optimism also differ significantly. For example, while optimism expectancies are formed through other forces outside the self (Scheier and Carver, 1985, 1987), the hope expectancies are initiated through the self (Snyder, 2000a).

*Resiliency.* Although there is little dispute that there are individuals whom most people would consider "resilient", the meaning and operational definition of resiliency is still open to considerable debate and controversy (Masten and Reed, 2002). Resiliency as a positive psychological capacity is the ability or capacity to rebound or bounce back from adversity, uncertainty, conflict, failure or even positive change, progress and increased responsibility (Huey and Weisz, 1997; Hunter and Chandler, 1999; Luthans, 2002a; Stewart *et al.*, 1997). Highly resilient people have a deep belief, based on a strong set of values, that life is indeed meaningful and an uncanny ability to improvise and adapt to significant change (Coutu, 2002). Considerable research work in clinical and positive psychology suggests that highly resilient individuals tend to be more effective in a variety of life experiences, including good adjustment and development under a variety of life-course threatening conditions (Block and Kremen, 1996; Coutu, 2002; Huey and Weisz, 1997; Hunter and Chandler, 1999; Masten, 2001; Stewart *et al.*, 1997). In other words, along with hope, self-efficacy, and optimism, resiliency is very relevant to today's South African organizational leaders.

There are some obvious direct parallels between hope and resiliency. First, both are cognitive processes and rely heavily on systematic pathway models that address patterns of behavior over time. For instance, Masten and Reed (2002) clearly state, “resiliency does not come from rare and special qualities but from the operations of ordinary human systems, arising from brains, minds ... and from schools, religions, and other cultural traditions” (p. 85). Perhaps the most salient distinction between hope and resiliency is that resiliency is defined in terms of external adaptation and is reactive as opposed to hope, which is characterized by internal adaptation and is proactive. Certainly South African organizational leaders need to have both hope and resiliency.

### **Advancing hope in South Africa**

The recent recovery in the value of the rand against the dollar and other major currencies and the other positive developments noted in the introductory comments has injected a recent hopefulness in South African society and in the economy. This positivity, however, is also dampened by many remaining difficult challenges resulting in a tendency to look at the unknown future restrictively and cautiously. Although many people are leaving the country for greener pastures elsewhere, especially to Europe (approximately 1 million having left since 1994), South Africans in general, despite the difficulties, are still hopeful of the future (Handford and Coetsee, 2003).

Adding to the complexity of South Africa is its unique history and diverse cultures. As pointed out in the introductory comments, the major challenge facing South Africa as a whole, and carried down to the organizational level, is to attain a cultural synergy that will accommodate the various cultures and traditions. Furthermore, these ethnic identities are linked to collective memories of past and present trauma (Volkan, 1998). Thus, in the deconstruction of problems in South Africa in relation to hope, cultural differences must be considered when developing pathways towards goals. Cultural sensitivity and synergy should be fully addressed and nurtured in South African organizations in order to advance hope. Specifically, the development of hope in South African organizations will have to take into account the particular needs of the different cultures. Attempts should be made

to advocate for cultural interdependence, understanding and synergy. There is also room to accommodate constructive cultural influences that psychologically enhances hope among the different cultures of the “Rainbow Nation”, for instance the embracement of Ubuntu. Specifically, Nelson Mandela notes, “the curious beauty of African music is that it uplifts even as it tells a sad tale. You may be poor, you may have only a ramshackle house, you may have lost your job, but that song gives you hope”. The importance of racial identity in the development of effective strategies of leadership and organizational development are well established (Booyse, 2001; Fouad, 1995; Thomas and Lindsay, 2003). However, to date in South Africa, little empirical research has been devoted to understanding the differences among the various racial groups. For example, although Hocoy (1999) investigated the role of racial identity, this study failed to consider the variety of black ethnic groupings as well as white and other cultural groupings in the country.

In sum, given its historical, economic and complex cultural contexts, we propose that hope can help South African organizational leaders address their challenges. In particular, our argument is based on successful attempts in the development of hope in other contexts that we believe have some interesting parallels to the South African situation. We are not suggesting that merely being hopeful is the answer, but rather we are proposing that through the development of hope, the willpower will be strengthened and the alternate pathways will increase the potential for attaining desired organizational goals and contribute to competitive advantage on not only the African continent, but also the global economy.

### **Developing hope in South African organizational leaders**

Based on the considerable hope theory, research and application, there are a number of practical guidelines that can be used to develop South African leaders and their organizations.

1. The development of hope can start with human resource development (HRD) interventions aimed at individuals (associates, leaders, etc.) or teams (i.e. collective hope) as well as organization development processes. Research has shown that systematic training can substantially enhance an individual’s hope. For



example, work by Snyder and colleagues in clinical psychology (McDermott and Snyder, 1999; Snyder, 1994; Snyder *et al.*, 2000) demonstrate that hope can be enhanced through solution-focused training interventions. However, for training interventions to be effective in enhancing hope, we recommend that they must be appropriately designed to reflect the complexity and uniqueness of South African culture and history. In addition, management from top to bottom must provide strong support for such developmental efforts. That is, they must act as role models and take the first step in “walking the talk” of hopeful behaviors, for example, as those portrayed by Arch Bishop Desmond Tutu, former president Nelson Mandela, and the late Walter Sisulu.

2. For South African organizational leaders to enhance their own and others willpower, they must be allowed to have input and “own” the goals that they strive to achieve. However, for goals to be meaningful and consistent with goal setting theory (Locke, 1968; Locke and Latham, 1990; Locke *et al.*, 1981), we recommend that leaders and their associates be allowed to set stretch goals that are specific and challenging. Indeed, Snyder (2000a) has recommended what he calls a “stepping method” to break the goals down into manageable substeps that will mark progress and enable at least small wins and success.
3. Leaders and associates can be exposed to discussion and considerable self-reflection. In particular, leaders and their associates can be sensitized to the extensive nature of the consequences of hopeful thoughts. Moreover, leaders’ and associates’ perspective-taking abilities can be enhanced through exposure to and discussions of hopeful situations with role models they respect and relate to. In addition, training in different models of hopeful thoughts can also expand organizational leaders’ capacities to think about issues in alternative ways.
4. Hope can be further developed by coaching and mentoring coping and hopeful strategies. This can be done through participation in leadership development programs designed to incorporate agency and pathways thinking, and coping strategies and techniques. In particular, the agency and pathways subscale scores from the state hope questionnaire (Snyder *et al.*, 1996) can be used to help assess the most appropriate tactics needed

to enhance overall hope. Also, “what if” contingency planning can help in the pathways development of hope.

5. Finally, the leadership development of hope can use rehearsals and experiential exercises (Luthans and Jensen, 2002; Luthans *et al.*, 2002). Such standard training and development techniques can be used to build skills of when and how to take an alternative path or what is called in the hope applications “regoaling”. That is, the leader and/or the individual empowered employee must know when persistence toward a goal is no longer feasible, regardless of the chosen pathways. This “regoaling” can prevent false hope which must be avoided in the effective developmental process for hope.

In sum, because the phenomenon of hope does not develop without a context (Snyder, 2000a), it is important to integrate the current South African economic and cultural context into the development of hope. By integrating the context as described in the introductory comments into the development process, there is greater opportunity for hopeful thoughts to be sustained and integrated into the leadership approach, while also potentially altering the context itself to make it more favorable to the further development of hope. Drawing from the work of Avolio *et al.* (2004), we submit that the development of hope requires inclusive organizational structures for it to be sustained over a period of time. That is, the organizational environments must provide open access to information, resources, support, and the equal opportunity for everyone to learn and develop the required knowledge and skill for hopeful strategies and techniques to succeed. Indeed, research suggests that well-developed inclusive structures with procedures perceived that are structurally and interactionally fair will engender trust in the system and in the implementers of decisions, and encourages positive, hopeful, organizational environments (Brockner and Siegel, 1995).

### **A final word**

Building hope through willpower and pathways seems to be a potentially powerful means of helping South African leaders meet their new paradigm challenges. Continuance of hopeful goals needs to be part of

an effective organizational strategy when working towards a future with a volatile past and uncertain future. Enhancing leader hope in organizational settings can create an empowering belief in the future of South African organizations resulting in their successful transformation and growth and contribute to a truly ideal “Rainbow Nation” for Africa and the world.

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