

Why authentic leadership is critical for SA's youth

Issued by [Sivuka Youth](#)

25 Aug 2021

The last few decades in South Africa have not been easy, let alone the last few weeks. When we are facing this kind of layered and deeply entrenched collective trauma, we need to take a moment to pause. To reflect on how these situations influence our people and especially our youth. What do we need to do to move forward, together?



At Sivuka Youth – a recruitment, training and consulting company – staff get first-hand insight into the kind of support and nurturing young South Africans need, especially in times like these. Sivuka's youth programmes are tailored for students and young people who have just entered the workplace, providing them with emotional support and the skills they need to face current circumstances with understanding and maturity. However, their success is impacted by their leaders. We all need to take a moment to think about the kind of leaders we are, and the kind of leaders young people need us to be – no matter our title or role. Whether you're a manager, mentor, policymaker, or cabinet member, you need to step up and make space for the Mandela in you so that South Africa's youth can thrive under the guidance of authentic leadership.

Understanding authentic leadership

Authentic leadership represents one of the newest areas of leadership research and is still in its formative stage of development. According to Dr. Fred Walumba, a leadership researcher, authentic leadership can be defined as “a pattern of leader behaviour that draws upon and promotes both positive psychological capacities and a positive ethical climate, to foster greater self-awareness, an internalised moral perspective, balanced processing of information and relational transparency on the part of leaders working with followers, fostering positive self-development.”

Authentic leaders do not operate from a place of ego, power, greed or authority, but from a place of deep understanding of themselves and how they can positively impact the world.

We talk of active citizenship, morality, diversity, inclusion and self-understanding. However, today, we need these premises to be intrinsically intertwined into our decision making, policies, procedures and strategies. It needs to be clear in how we act, speak and behave, no matter our role or position. Reach out to a young person and offer compassion, care and understanding of their unclear path. Respond to the LinkedIn message from a job-seeker and share your wisdom with them. Even if you can't employ them, your message will give them the hope they need to keep going. Ask how someone else is doing, and really listen to the answer. Our compassion and empathy will create space for those around us to move easily and with calm.

Authentic leadership starts with understanding yourself in order to impact your community, your organisation and your country. We need to go back to basics in understanding ourselves, to take stock of where our thoughts, feelings and ideas come from.

This is why, at Sivuka, we use authentic leadership as a building block in our programmes and coaching sessions. When we apply this notion to young people, we introduce them to an internal leadership dialogue – without a title, role, or even a job. This is a call to every leader to do better for our youth.

What can we do right now?

As leaders, we need to be braver than our circumstances and step into our light fully. In moving forward in our paths, the hope is each one of us turns and looks at who is around us. Our young people are watching, learning from us and feeling their own light ignite because of ours.

Be aware of how the youth need our guidance, leadership and strength of character. They have their own paths to take, but we have gifts to pass on so that their paths may be a little brighter. Renowned author and speaker Simon Sinek inspires action, “Leadership is not a rank or a position, it is a choice – a choice to look after the person to the left of us and the person to the right of us.”

In showing up fully for your teams, your organisation and the people who look up to you, you are actively changing our reality. Through the process of developing this leadership paradigm in ourselves, the collective effect is larger than us. It will mean looking at your own beliefs, strategies and processes with honesty and consideration. It calls on each of us to recognise how we are bringing inequality into the world, and how we can let this go to make space for the new. We are able to make a collective shift through individual change.

Active citizenship and authentic leadership is critical in building healthy societies in new democracies. You are changing the narrative of our experience. With every conversation you have, every strategy you create that will make a positive change and every young person you mentor, you are taking our country to a new place, just by going back to who you were meant to be, with or without a title.

For more, visit: <https://www.bizcommunity.com>