

4.2 Creating Confidence – Embracing Interdependence

Leaders in education create confidence by perceptively encouraging, supporting and resourcing others in their learning, teaching, and leading. They recruit and promote wisely, invest in their teams, and cultivate shared vision, value, trust, and joy. They regard interdependence and service of others as crucial to their development, asking not just what can we gain, but also what can we give.

Creating Confidence

In the midst of doubt, failures, and a developing identity, Paul writes to his fledgling church in Corinth, “I am glad I can have complete confidence in you.” (2 Corinthians 7:16). His rich, re-assuring and life-giving words ring positively through history, and echo into the office of the contemporary leader concluding an appraisal meeting, or making a new staffing appointment. The assurance that someone else believes in us, despite any doubts we may have ourselves (concealed or exposed) is hugely edifying and empowering. The biblical narrative shows that God does not always call the equipped, but does equip the called, placing deep confidence in humble and unexpected people – the youngest brother in the fields with his sheep who would become David the King, or the uncertain disciples who are inspired and empowered to leave their nets and follow Jesus. Leaders creating confidence do not promote their own ego, but rather engender a sense of being part of something bigger, a wider mission, and being on a journey their teams would not want to miss out on.

Biblical leaders at their best place their confidence not in themselves, but in leaning on God and God’s wisdom – “I can do all this through him who gives me strength” (Philippians 4:13); resting in God’s security – “You are my strength, I watch for you; you God are my fortress, my God on whom I can rely” (Psalm 59:9);

bold in ambition – “For the Spirit God gave us does not make us timid, but gives us power, love and self-discipline.” (2 Timothy 1:7); expectant in prayer – “This is the confidence we have in approaching God: that if we ask anything according to his will, he hears us” (1 John 5:14). Christian confidence is not simply about boldly doing more, or becoming more self-assured, but about a choice of orientation towards God and God’s purposes, and a commitment to serving the community.

While confidence can be created in teams, it can also easily be lost, and works in harmony with humility, steering clear of arrogance or over-certainty, and becoming stronger through the faithfulness we have experienced in the tougher times. Leaders become more alive to the possibility of failure – things going wrong are a meaningful part of the human journey. Our confidence grows the more we have been shaped and formed through responding to our challenges and mistakes – Christians understand the Holy Spirit to be at work in us as leaders refining our character and building our hope. Just as teachers create confidence in their classrooms, so leaders create confidence and engender trust in their teams through feedback, faithfulness and encouragement. The goal is an ecology of encouragement, like the one Paul evokes in the opening of his second letter to the Corinthians (2 Corinthians 1:3-7).

1. How would your team know by your words and actions that you have confidence in them? What impact does that have on their behaviour, choices and long-term commitment?
2. To what extent are you able to place your ‘confidence not in [yourself], but in leaning on God and God’s wisdom’?
3. If you could accurately gauge these 4 concepts: ‘vision, value, trust and joy’ for your team – where would the gauges be reading at the moment? What could you do to ‘refill’ the team if it were near the red?
4. What could an ‘ecology of encouragement’ look like in your team?