

Personal Philosophy of Leadership and Advocacy Assignment

Grace Ann Gibby

Liberty University

Abstract

Leadership is a popular topic that has been researched numerous times with the end goal of answering the questions: what makes a good leader, are leaders born or made, and can the effectiveness of a leader be measured? While this vast topic may seem insurmountable, it is critical that as counselors and future counselor educators we have some explicit articulation of a leadership philosophy that resonates with ourselves. This paper seeks to explore and discuss the factors of leadership and how they contribute to the construct of my personal philosophy.

Keywords: leadership, philosophy, effectiveness

The counseling profession can be characterized by key words such as empathy, listening, and basic attending skills. However, on a personal level the concept of leadership immediately creates a sense of apprehension, and anxiety as it feels contradictory to the counseling field. Through our class discussions and readings, my perspective and thoughts on leadership have substantively changed. Leadership represents the opportunity to influence, educate, inspire and empower others. My philosophy is strongly centered around being authentic, prepared, flexible and having integrity; individuals need to feel that they can trust you with their ideas, hopes and fears. A study conducted in 2017, showed a positive correlation between a leader's behavioral integrity and employees feeling heard and valued (He & Feng, 2020).

A review of the theories, behaviors, and styles of leadership discussed in our text highlights how several aspects of leadership can fulfill different purposes. For example, Initiating Structure emphasizes task-oriented systems with less time spent on relationships with individuals, or Fiedler's Contingency Model which discusses matching certain types of leaders to certain types of situations to improve efficiency (Lewis, 2012). Personally, there are certain factors that resonate with me: Consideration, Charismatic and Transformational Leadership (Lewis, 2012). I have a strong desire for helping and leading people when everyone feels like a winner; setting people up for success. I think great leaders choose to remain concerned about ways that cultivate this inspiration within the people they are surrounded by. Relationships are extremely important to me, not only because of the task at hand, but I believe that this is how we execute God's second greatest commandment: to love our neighbors. Within our areas of influence, it is helpful to prioritize relationships with people. This concept is also congruent with the path-goal theory, particularly supportive and participative leadership (Lewis, 2012).

As I reflect on what kind of leader I would aspire to be, I am reminded of the many examples of leadership that I have experienced and worked with. Within the framework of employment, unfortunately most of my superiors lacked the critical skills of being a good leader. They were either dictatorial or too permissive. My best forms of experience have been through professors while obtaining my education. At the undergraduate and master's level, I was blessed to meet wonderful and passionate educators who ultimately modeled the path ahead of me, and pursuing this doctoral degree at Liberty University has been life-changing. My experiences with the faculty have been nothing short of engaging, welcoming, valued and reflective. I have thoroughly enjoyed the space provided to reflect on different topics, the collaborative approach, and gleaned much information regarding leadership styles. Leaders who leave room and space for creativity, growth and miracles are cultivating a culture that produces unlimited dividends. This promotion of caring for individuals and executing that vision in institutions and organizations also known as Servant Leadership is supported by research (Greenleaf, 1970a).

As a leader in counseling education, a major focus would include helping students to become aware of their thoughts on leadership and emphasize the importance of understanding their natural style of leadership. I would also encourage students to expand their ideas of leadership; traditionally there is a negative connotation viewing leadership as authoritarian or dictatorship; also, a position or title. It is helpful to understand that leadership can exist in many different forms. Helping counselors become aware of this very important role in leadership and advocacy, strengthens the profession and supports progressive strides. Students must thoroughly learn the CACREP standards so that all critical components are addressed and accounted for (Lewis, 2012). At the postgraduate-level, the potential is limitless as counselor educators are similar to seeds within an apple; we may never know how many apples can be grown from the

one seed. As counselor educators, we have a powerful ability to influence and inspire without knowing how far that will travel. The task is both exhilarating and daunting, due attention must be given to the precious moments that arise in educating counselors.

My initial thoughts on a leadership philosophy articulated: “To build positive and healthy relationships that nurture, inspire, influence and empower individuals; understanding that when individuals feel cared for, they can often exceed expectations. To represent the truth, have integrity, and bear the responsibility to face hard realities and make tough decisions. Being an effective leader will require flexibility to understand that situations do change and a fairly quick ability to adapt to such changes in the most effective and precise manner possible is of vast benefit. Above all, I must represent Christ in all that I do.”

Currently, I have several avenues to execute leadership skills; at the high school where I am employed, I serve as the coordinator of the counseling department of two (2) counselors. This has afforded me the opportunity to serve and build others, collaborate, highlight their strengths, and speak the truth in love regarding areas of weakness. I believe I am doing a good job because the relationships are engaging, and thriving. Our department is working productively and we are achieving successes due to our close-knit family structure. Individuals have stated that they enjoy working with me. Additionally, I own and teach at a private music school, where I provide instructions to groups of 4-5 students music lessons. This further allows me to develop my leadership skills of organization, interpersonal skills, ability to set goals and achieve them, influence, inspire and empower my students.

When I consider how individuals who have worked with me have experienced my leadership style, I think they have learned the importance of treating all people with grace, mercy and a reminder that all individuals are made in the image of God; therefore, they have limitless

potential and a huge capacity for amazing endeavors. I believe my compassion and love for others above the task is emphasized and my relationship with individuals is stronger than before.

To further develop my leadership skills, several action steps include: exploring how to join Chi Sigma Iota, get involved – seek out leadership positions within ACA and begin the experience, continue to consume knowledge about leadership and the various types that have proven to be the most effective, and actively receive feedback about current leadership opportunities to ensure that my style is executed and congruent. Throughout the rest of the term, I will actively engage in the research to explore these options, each week there is time set aside for reading to expand my knowledge base, I can now include topics on leadership and further research Greenleaf's Servant Leadership. Informally, I will check-in with my colleagues to gain feedback about my current leadership style.

Conclusion

After careful consideration of leadership, I have seen the paradigm shift within myself and a stronger resolve to seek out leadership opportunities and challenge myself. While I am aware of how stressful leadership can be at times, I am encouraged by the clarity of my philosophy which requires a reliance on God at all times. Leadership is so much more than being the person in charge or holding a title, it requires an awareness and a combination of skills to be effective. There is a responsibility to care for and protect those who fall under your influence.

References

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