

Philosophy of Leadership and Advocacy

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Leadership is a critical component to counselor education and supervision. Defining it has become more difficult throughout the years because there are so many models and approaches that work better in different settings. When it comes to leadership in academia, I believe that strong Christian values, having a servant's heart, and displaying humility make the most impact in the people we are leading. I will elaborate on these and more throughout this paper.

Beliefs about Leadership

My beliefs about leadership in counselor education at the graduate level include a focus on modeling what we want to see in our students. I think modeling certain traits, behaviors, and attitudes towards education shows others how they can advance the profession. When we talk to students about doing research, writing publications, or presenting at conferences, that shows them both the expectation and the actions necessary to contribute to the field of counseling. Part of the reason why I believe this is important to a graduate student's development is because I had a professor who was a great role model for me in areas outside of academics. I learned that leadership did not necessarily have to be with doing research, publications, or even presentations, but rather it can be on developing Christian character. I remember noticing how much of a voice my professor had when he was around his colleagues and though he was knowledgeable and informed about several topics related to counseling, it was his character that made him stand out to me more than his knowledge or position. As a graduate student who eventually wanted to end up teaching in the classroom, I wanted to do the same. I wanted to develop the ability to relate and inspire in others a desire to follow Christ because of the Christian character qualities that I would display. I appreciated that part of my professor's leadership so much that it was a focus for

me for much of my graduate school training. In a post-secondary context, character, virtue, and grace are the values that I hope to instill in my future students. A good leader influences others to develop character over anything else. If people can develop good character, that will influence how they do everything else in their lives.

Impact and Influence

Every person who is in leadership wants to make a difference in the lives of the students they lead. There is an innate desire for our students to want to follow our lead, but we must be leading them in a direction where they, too, can make a difference. In my own life, I think the most impactful ways that I have made a difference as a leader has been by genuinely desiring to know who people are. I give great effort to learning what their desires are, what experiences in their lives shaped them into who they are, and what they have learned from those experiences. The only way to know if I have made a difference in the lives of my students is when I hear them say that I did. Thankfully, I have had some experiences where students were able to share this with me, but more often than now, we are not able to hear this feedback from our students which leaves us questioning whether we have actually made a difference in anyone's lives. One conclusion that I have drawn based on my teaching experience is that no matter what I feel, think, or believe about my impact, there is always at least one person who is impacted. If I can influence one, through them I can impact people that that person will influence. That brings me a great sense of comfort and confidence to continue leading as best as I can in counselor education.

Future Aspirations

As a leader who is always seeking to improve, focusing on developing new skills, growing in knowledge, and caring for those I lead is a necessity. Having a plethora of skills allows me to understand how I can best contribute to the growth of the people I lead. The more

skills I learn, the more I can help them grow. Acquiring new skills also provides a confidence in the evidence of being able to learn many different skills. I believe when a person has several skills, they can choose what to delegate to others. A leader will keep or maintain authority over their strongest skills and delegate their weakest skills to others. Additionally, when a leader has multiple skills and has perfected them over the years, he can help those he leads to reach new levels of growth. This can be especially true when it comes to obtaining knowledge.

Growing in knowledge, both experiential and informational, is another factor that can help one lead well. John Maxwell once wrote, "Leaders are readers." The more one reads, the more information they have available to them. Thus, leaders must be continually reading to know how to adjust to the changes in science, technology, and culture, because each of these have different effects on a person's overall mental health. As leaders move and learn with changing times, they can be more effective as they prepare the future steps for the people they are leading. I read to prepare for what is to come, especially as Christians continue to build out a niche for themselves in the mental health field. The goal of reading is to use the information to apply to any present experiences. As counselor educators and leaders, the more theoretical and practical information that we can gather, the better it will be for us to prepare how the next generation of counselors can address modern mental health concerns.

Action Plan

The action plan I create is rooted in three characteristics that outline my leadership style and approach. I believe kindness, respect, and authenticity are the key areas to grow in as a leader. I genuinely desire to see others grow and leadership entails seeking various ways to help people reach their full potential. It includes being able to see the strengths that God has blessed them with and helping them enhance those skills as they encounter new life experiences.

Inspiration and empowerment originate in the mentality of a leader who wants to help others grow. When kindness is present, people feel cared for. When respect is established, people understand the boundaries established. When authenticity can flourish, people can trust each other more. I have seen each of these be present in my previous position as a GSA Coordinator and even now in my current workplace.

Now, here is how I would develop my action plan to continue building on kindness, respect, and authenticity. Kindness is developed through continuous actions of service to others. Serving others is an act of kindness. The more we do for others, the kinder we become. Next, to create a culture of respect there needs to be open, honest, and direct communication. When people are open about how they feel and think, it provides opportunities for them to build trust. It can show vulnerabilities that others may not be willing to share, but because I am open about them, it may also establish a common ground with others who are also feeling similarly. Lastly, authenticity stems from the first two because it moves me to be open and honest with myself. When I become comfortable with who I am as a leader and can accept my strengths and weaknesses, I can be the “fully accepted me” to others, which is what authenticity is. Authenticity is important for me to develop because it continues to establish trust between me and those whom I serve. The purpose of authenticity is to create trust between two parties.

Conclusion

In conclusion, I wanted this paper to share my philosophy of leadership by expounding and elaborating on what my beliefs about leadership are, what impact and influence I want to have on the students I lead, and explain how my future aspirations will help me grow in skills, knowledge, and care. I provided an action plan on how I would develop

References

Maxwell, J. C. (2022). *The 21 irrefutable laws of leadership (10th ed.)*. Thomas Nelson.