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Educational Leadership Philosophy Paper

My educational leadership philosophy has become more elaborate upon completion of this class due to helpful peer collaboration, leadership supported readings, and case studies of concerns and issues in leadership qualities. Establishing a shared vision, clear goals, and clear expectations is one element that I have absorbed due to the class and the readings. The shared vision must include everyone from the staff, community, groups, and stakeholders if a leader is able to establish clear cut goals and expectations for the organization that surrounds him/her. However, I believe a great leader must have a great background in ethics, values, trust, and practice these qualities on a daily basis in order to have success in the organization as well as successful relationships that create a positive, safe, and unified environment. Finally, I believe that leaders must be able to admit their strengths, work on their weaknesses, allow others to constructively criticize their characteristics and decisions, and allow for feedback from those in the organization to move forward in the adaptation process of the organizational entity.

An effective leader demonstrates on a daily basis the elements of trust, intimacy, authenticity, empowerment, responsibility, passion, and motivation. These qualities must be practiced and evident from the leader to those working in the organization in order to promote a sense of family, community, and accountability. . Bridges and Bridges (2000) state, "Since the ability to manage transition is tied to the realities of an actual leader in an actual situation, mutual trust between adviser and leader is essential." The quote emphasizes that before a change is made within an organization, the trust in each other must be present long in advance to make sure that the change will take place. I believe that establishing relationships with staff, community, and

stakeholders before making major changes for the organization is a vital piece that a leader must establish before the difficult decisions in order to have the full support of everyone in moving the organization forward and into the future. A leader must also be able to mentor, coach, and even mimic what values he/she wants others to exude throughout the organization. Lipman-Blumen (1999) writes, “Connective leaders also mentor people. They seek out people who are willing to assume responsibility at every level” (pg. 7). The quote reiterates that effective leaders should look to train and mentor others below them in the organization, so that when the people below the leader have been trained, mentored, and coached, they will be ready to assume responsibility, accept the role with pride, and feel empowered to do what is best not only for themselves, but for the organization.

Empowerment is the cause of a leader’s infectious passion, motivation, and purpose that helps others to understand their importance to the organization. In the article *Leadership and the Problem of Bogus Empowerment*, Ciulla (2010) states, “Empowerment is about giving people the confidence, competence, freedom, and resources to act on their own judgments” (pg. 195). The quote echoes that great leaders motivate others to their very best and that their contributions will be valued because the leader has allowed for the freedom of that person to assume responsibility, take ownership in the work, and demonstrate effective decision making skills that are key in the success of the organization. Ciulla (2010) also states, “When you empower others, you do at least one of the following: you help them recognize the power they already have” (pg. 196). The quote explains one of the most powerful things a leader could ever want those in the organization to have: the recognition that they are able to perform tasks on their own without being told what to do by the leader. To me, when the person is able to understand that they are able to embark in various independent endeavors and complete them with confidence, that person is more willing

to give back to the organization. The confidence from being empowered is a truly eye opening and satisfying element that all leaders should want of everyone in their organization. Once morals, ethics, and values have been established and practiced on a daily basis by the leader, the leader must move to on to fostering collaboration with others and forming meaningful groups.

In my opinion, collaboration, congruence, and established groups must be a focal point of emphasis for every leader to establish in order to promote a truly shared and unified vision that includes everyone. Wheatley (1997) writes, “Organizations that are clear at their core hold themselves together because of their deep congruence.” The quote exemplifies that honest collaboration among group members holds them together and the people are able to understand different ideas and perspectives that they will consider when moving the organization forward. Promoting honesty among colleagues and through collaboration allows the individuals and organization to address real problems and offer real solutions. I believe that an effective leader must urge his/her staff to ask and answer difficult questions that challenge the fabric of the organization, so that the organization is able to move forward and adapt to the ever changing and demanding world. In the journal *The Secret of Great Groups*, Bennis (1997) writes, “To be sure, Great Groups rely on many long-established practices of good management -- effective communication, exceptional recruitment, genuine empowerment, personal commitment.” The quote from Bennis goes to support my belief that communication plays such a vital role for the success of the group because all of those involved in the group feel empowered, committed, and enthusiastic to change the organization and foster success within it. To me, an organization is only as strong and adaptable as the people within the groups, teams, and committees. Leaders must be able to surround themselves with individuals who are empowered, challenge ideas, and

do their best to promote a vision, expectations, and goals that are shared by all within the organization.

Throughout this course, I have learned how many aspects go into leadership as a team. Setting clear expectations, unified goals, and agreeing on a shared vision between a leader and followers is what allows the organization to adapt to the real world, while also being supported by everyone along its journey. These are a few elements that are a necessity in moving the organization forward and what every person in a leadership position should strive to promote within their community. Lipman-Blumen (1999) states, “Connective leaders may have a vision, but they know that your vision and your neighbor’s vision are just as vital as their own” (pg. 5). This is another example of what I believe a good leader should focus on. A great leader will recognize that everyone within the organization has valuable ideas and perspectives. I believe that when a leader is able to take others ideas, perspectives, and goals into consideration, that leader is able to empower, motivate, and offer passionate incentives for those participating and contributing within that organization by allowing them to be a valued part of the community. Bugay (2001) writes, “This development of a shared vision provides a powerful force of motivation throughout the organization.” Again, I believe a leader needs to place importance on working together to come up with a shared vision. If everyone is motivated because of some personal involvement of constructing a shared vision, that leader has instilled passion, motivation, and all members will be more invested in the success of the organization.

Being able to listen to others’ constructive criticism and offer one’s self up for evaluation of strengths and weaknesses should be at the center of every great leader. Seifert (2001) states, “No topic is considered out of bounds for the members of the group, and constructive criticism is always welcome.” The goal to offer up constructive criticism remains at the heart of every great

leader and organization. I believe that when a person opens themselves up to this type of criticism, they open themselves up for constant improvement of their personal weaknesses and the weaknesses of the organization that they are trying to improve. Also, from the case study involving Principal Vogel, he did a tremendous job as a leader in offering an evaluation and feedback form for his staff to “chime” in on his leadership qualities. Allowing feedback to come from those involved in the organization not only allows for improvement of the self, organization, and overall environment, it creates an open line of trust and communication between leaders and followers to voice their concerns that can be listened to by the leader to make an informed decision about the direction of the organization.

Leadership involves such a broad, but important set of skills, qualities, and characteristics that must constantly be cultivated by an individual in a leadership position. The class has really opened my eyes on some great characteristics of what a leader should be, how they should act (whether with verbal motivation or by quiet strength), and how fast they are able to adapt to change to successfully lead their organization into the future. Seifter’s work in *The Conductor Less Orchestra* really resonated with me because of the lines of communication between colleagues, the groups’ abilities to trust each other, the ability of everyone to lead the group based on their experience, and the ability to make decisions in the best interest of the group. Empowering everyone in the organization is such an amazing tool because it can create an environment in which every individual gets a chance to be a “leader” instead of a “follower.” I have learned that when others are empowered, have a responsibility to self and others, and when individuals are accountable to the whole organization, that is when leadership is at its best. Believing in every person that they have the ability, purposeful drive, and motivation to lead and self-govern themselves is when the leader has truly created an organization, community, and

environment that makes not only the individual person feel satisfied, but also gives satisfaction to the organization that they are giving back to the people that surround them.