

Personal Philosophy of Leadership and Advocacy

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Abstract

This paper will explore my personal philosophy of leadership. Similar to a philosophy of counseling and teaching, leadership must also have a well thought out philosophy to craft and enact. The underlying foundation is Biblical and draws from Jesus' example of servant leadership. By being able to craft a vision for current and future leadership, an evaluative method can begin to know the impact that my leadership has now and will have in the future. Finally, I will craft a three step action plan to work through in order to ensure that I am consistently and intentionally being a leader and advocate for counselor education.

Personal Philosophy of Leadership and Advocacy

The term leadership has taken on many interpretations and images for individuals across disciplines. Within the field of counseling, the concept of leadership and counseling can be argued to be not on the forefront of many counselor's minds. The Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs (CACREP) has addressed this deficit by identifying leadership and advocacy as one of their 5 core competencies for education in counseling (CACREP, 2015). Thus, as a future counselor educator, it is necessary for me to develop a personal philosophy of leadership and advocacy. Not only is this important to meet CACREP standards, but to be a part of influencing the field of counseling and being an example for the future counselors that I will teach. The approach that I will present is one from a Biblical perspective and reflects my journey towards becoming a servant leader.

Theoretical Approach

There are numerous theories of leadership including trait, behavioral, contingency, leader-member exchange (LMX), and transactional; however, states, there is a missing component of service (Chang et al., 2012). The idea of a servant leader was first proposed by Greenleaf (1970). The difference in the servant leader versus many of the other theories is that it is devoid of motivation for power, position, or self-gratification. The servant leader is motivated by a desire to help and push another to greatness and make the environment they are in a better place. The other aspects such as context, vision, and action are beneficial and needed (Chang et al., 2012). However, without the proper motivation, they can quickly lose focus and not have the impact that a true servant leader can have.

Motivation

Stemming from the perspective of a servant leader, my Biblical worldview gives context and the source for my motivation for leadership. I believe that all individuals are created by God and thus have an incredible amount of value. Thus, my philosophy of leadership will entail viewing all individuals through this lens and seeking to enrich their lives and help them reach their full potential. This does not come from a position of power to be used for selfish gain, but to be used as a service to others. Therefore, my motivation becomes a desire to share power with, not over, individuals (McKibben et al., 2017). While I have not traditionally considered myself a leader in many areas, the positions I have found myself in (counseling clients, teaching students, leading small groups) have shaped my perspective on leadership in those areas.

Impact and Influence

Building upon the Biblical example and evaluating my leadership experiences up until this point, several aspects of impact and influence can be observed. Leadership and advocacy can only be discussed in light of the impact that it has on the individuals and field that it is applied. The main aspect that I consider to be the determination of leadership success is the ability to see the success of subordinates under me and the organization as a whole. Therefore my philosophy is grounded in the concept of authentic leadership (Gardner et al., 2011). As an authentic leader, I must strive for success in three areas: (1) acceptance of personal and organizational responsibility for actions, outcomes and mistakes; (2) the nonmanipulation of subordinates; and (3) the salience of the self over role requirements. I have seen much success when attending to  these areas within my past through online teaching, residential teaching, and leading a small group.

Perhaps the greatest influence I have had in the past points toward the future. Teaching has become my main passion and my success is evaluated through my students. In teaching well, I must know and accept what are my responsibilities and what are my students'. I must also not use my students as a way to reach my own goals, but truly seek to be a servant leader for their own success. Finally, I must be able to identify my different roles and be willing to fill in the gaps in a selfless way. In one specific way, I remember making several videos designed to help my online students. This was over and beyond my stated goals and has the possibility of not being noticed by leadership. However, several students have stated they benefitted from the videos. This is one minor way to use influence to selflessly help those under my teaching.

Personal Action Plan

Carrying this perspective into counselor education, the servant leadership model takes the form of three specific steps. These include, (1) building a strong foundation of knowledge and skills, (2) being open and willing to share that knowledge and skill wherever needed, (3) and inviting as many others as possible to join myself in the leadership activities I find myself in. Jesus is perhaps the greatest example of this as he held incredible power, but used it to serve others and ultimately give his life for the salvation of humanity.

The first part of this plan is nearly complete with my PhD projected to be completed by early next year. The education that I have been receiving is going to open up opportunities to have influence within counselor education. The knowledge and experience I have gained will allow me the resources I need to have an impact in students and the counseling field. However, this knowledge and experience cannot be used for personal gain or to lord over others. The second step is where servant leadership will begin to be manifested. This step will also include

seeking ways to be a servant leader in influential organizations starting with local, state, and national, specifically within the American Counseling Association. I want to also be a servant leader in the department in which I will eventually teach. Being willing to do the hard work that others may not want to do is perhaps the greatest representation of servant leadership.

Finally, this servant leadership will not have the impact I desire unless others and specifically students are invited to join me in the activities in which I find myself. I have greatly benefitted from professors pushing me to be involved in Chi Sigma Iota (CSI) and present at conferences. Thus, I want to do the same for my future students to encourage them and give them the confidence to become servant leaders themselves.



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