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Transformational Leadership Plan

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Abstract

Due to her experiences in a course entitled Transformation and Innovation in Leadership, the writer has realized her ignorance as it pertains to the history, characteristics, theories, and styles of leadership. Through much research and various experiences in the class, she has determined that much work and dedication to growth will allow her to become the leader that she has been called to be. Consequently, this paper will examine the writer's current understanding of leadership and innovation, and translate that understanding into a three-year plan for the growth and development of her personal, transformational leadership skills.

Transformational Leadership Plan

Throughout the eight weeks of a course entitled Transformation and Innovation in Leadership, the writer was challenged to expand her understanding of leadership characteristics, conduct extensive research concerning the history of leadership, delve into the various theories regarding effective leadership, and participate in a variety of discussions and assignments focusing on transformational leadership and innovation. While the process was somewhat painful at times, the writer has realized the need to create a personal leadership plan that will guide the development of her leadership abilities as she continues to expand her understanding of leadership and innovation as it pertains to the personal, professional, and academic arenas. Consequently, this paper will examine the writer's current understanding of leadership and innovation, and translate that understanding into a three-year plan for the growth and development of her personal, transformational leadership skills.

The Writer's Understanding

Throughout the history of the world, humans have looked to the strongest, most capable members of their community for leadership. . "Human beings have always been keenly interested in leaders and in leadership. Confucius sought laws of order between leaders and subordinates. Plato described an ideal republic with philosopher-kings providing wise and judicious leadership" (Sorensen, 2002). As a result of this intrinsic human need to seek leadership, there has been much research into the various characteristics and traits common to successful and effective leaders throughout history. Each era has seen slight changes in leadership styles, with both advances and regression, and the evolution of leadership theory was made evident through the writer's thorough examination of its history. The writer concludes that the outcome of this evolution has been the emergence of the transformational leadership style.

Transformational leadership has been defined as a process wherein “leaders and followers engage in a mutual process of ‘raising one another to higher levels of morality and motivation’” (ChangingMinds.org [CM], n.d.). Additionally, transformational leaders appeal to their followers’ social and spiritual values, thereby motivating them to work harder to reach the goals and achieve the vision of their leader(s). Further, transformational leaders encourage their followers to collaborate rather than to work independently, which may be seen to be a more effective tactic and which is believed to encourage better performance than other leadership styles (CM). The writer therefore concludes that the transformational leader is one who is able to encourage his or her followers to effectively reach the goals of the group or organization while also motivating them to strive towards personal success and growth. This is something towards which she believes she should strive and will, therefore, address the need to develop such skills in her personal leadership plan.

In addition to her newfound knowledge of transformational leadership, the writer has developed an understanding of innovation, which can be summarized in its definition: “innovation can be defined as “the process of making improvements by introducing something new” or “a new idea, method, or device” (Wikipedia, 2006). Her current understanding of innovation can also be directly related to her personal experiences with innovation in the workplace. As a classroom teacher, she is encouraged to engage innovative methods and activities to expand her students’ understanding of basic concepts and to develop their skills in a variety of ways that are not a component of her school’s established curriculum. The ability to implement innovative ideas and methodologies on a daily basis has allowed the writer to fully appreciate the need to allow those who follow her, in the classroom and beyond, the opportunity to also enjoy the sense of freedom and creativity that accompany such experiences. As a result,

her personal leadership plan will reflect the need to develop her transformational leadership practices and to implement and encourage innovation within each leadership experience.

Current Leadership Style and Techniques

At the current time, the writer believes herself to be a situational leader who utilizes both transactional and transformational techniques in her daily leadership responsibilities. Through her personal observations, the writer has determined that many classroom teachers are transactional leaders, offering extrinsic rewards for good behavior, especially with younger children who have yet to understand or experience intrinsic motivation. The writer freely admits that this is one approach to classroom leadership that is currently implemented in her early childhood classroom. However, she has further developed her situational leadership style to include both transactional and transformational leadership tendencies.

It has been said that, “The best action of the leader depends on a range of situational factors” (ChangingMinds.org [CM], 2006). The writer has taken this to heart, developing a leadership style in which she responds to the various situational factors surrounding each leadership experience. These factors include team goals, enthusiasm and ability of group members, type and quality of resources available for use, and the relationship between herself and her followers. In this type of leadership style, “the leader's style is highly variable” and the leader will “not only consider the likelihood of a follower accepting a suggestion, but also the overall importance of getting things done” (CM).

As a teacher, the writer must respond to a variety of situations each day, only some of which she may have encountered before. The daily activities and teaching methodology used in the early childhood classroom must vary depending upon the emotional and physical state of each individual child as well as the individual abilities of the group, thereby determining what

type of leadership style she represents (i.e., transformational or transactional). Without a situational leadership approach, the writer believes she would not be able to adapt and change to the individual abilities of her students as needed. She also believes that any other leadership approach would result in becoming a less effective educator and, in turn, a less successful leader.

As an administrator, being a situational leader is very effective. There are a variety of situations that are presented to the writer on a monthly basis in her role as Network Administrator. Each day may find her addressing the needs of students and teachers concerning their individual challenges with technology. Being able to adjust her leadership style accordingly is of great benefit, considering that a different approach to leadership of children versus adults may be necessary. Additionally, addressing the needs of individuals who have a high level of technological literacy may require a different approach than addressing the needs of those who have little or no technology skills. Therefore, maintaining a situational leadership style has allowed the writer to diversify her leadership abilities and to adjust to each leadership situation accordingly. Still, she realizes that she has a long way to go in becoming a highly effective, successful transformational leader that could have an even greater impact on the field of education.

Rationale for Implementing a Leadership Plan

When approached with the opportunity to develop and implement a plan that would foster the growth of her personal leadership abilities, the writer posed the following question to herself: “Why are you doing this and what do you want to accomplish by following this plan?” (Chambers, 2006, November 15). This question was taken under consideration regarding the

writer's finances, current and future administrative duties, personal relationships, and physical and emotional health.

The writer originally started out on this endeavor to create a personal leadership plan as the result of a required course assignment. After much thought and introspection, however, she has realized that the opportunity presented by the assignment will allow her to expand her understanding of leadership and develop her personal leadership skills in a way that would be very meaningful and greatly effective. Consequently, the development of a personal leadership plan has become a pursuit in which the writer plans to invest an abundance of time and energy.

Eventually, the writer hopes to become a successful and prominent leader within the educational community, even if only within her local area. To do so would hopefully result in an increase in her finances, which would be realized through the opportunity of teaching at the university level, advancing in administration within her current school, developing and establishing a new early childhood education center, or from working as a consultant to schools and programs within the community. The writer believes that further developing her leadership abilities will allow for the possibility of all of these opportunities and many more as yet unimagined experiences and the corresponding financial rewards they might entail.

In addition to the possible financial benefits of developing her leadership skills, the writer has also recognized the positive impact that could be realized within her current and future administrative duties. Presently, the writer serves as Network Administrator and Head of the Technology Department of her current school. The responsibilities of these duties include: the management and supervision of all technology classes in grades Kindergarten through twelve; the supervision of all teachers in the use of the school's online grading and attendance system; the training of all teachers in the use of existing technology and software; and conducting all

research before proposing the various software and hardware purchases needed to keep the school up-to-date in the field of technology. Additionally, the writer is being groomed to become the administrator over the early elementary department of the school, which will include the management and supervision of all teachers in preschool through third grades as well as the responsibility of revamping the school's previously ineffective and unsuccessful preschool program. The writer has therefore realized that developing her leadership abilities and implementing a personal leadership plan will better prepare her to become a more transformational leader and, consequently, become a more effective administrator and leader within her current school.

While the financial and professional benefits of developing a personal leadership plan are both key determining factors in the plan's creation, the writer believes that the most important and significant effects of such an undertaking will be realized in the personal arena of home and health. As the mother of a teenage son and a pre-adolescent daughter, the writer has recently begun to experience situations in which her leadership skills are being tested at every turn. The writer has recently realized a variety of opportunities in which she should be modeling to her children effective and successful leadership, yet has recognized that her attempts at doing so have been unsuccessful and ineffective. The result of this lack of leadership abilities is not only manifesting itself in her relationship with her children but also in her physical and emotional well-being. The effects of stress and the inability to manage her household effectively are, according to her physician, showing themselves primarily in a lack of energy and increased instances of illness. Becoming a more effective, successful leader through the implementation of a personal leadership plan will, therefore, allow the writer to realize a more successful, effective

relationship with her children, provide them with a prime example of leadership skills, and reduce the effects of stress as realized on her health and sanity.

Developing the Plan

The writer believes that charting a course is the most appropriate and most effective first step that must be completed before embarking on any new journey, especially when the journey concerns making life-altering changes that will result in the personal and professional growth of the traveler. Each step of the way should be outlined as a map to be followed throughout the journey. The traveler should realize that adjustments in the plans may be necessary as various challenges and roadblocks are encountered. Through all of the trials that may be faced, though, the goal of personal and professional growth should be the guiding factor, encouraging the traveler to follow the plan through to the end.

As a result of these beliefs, the writer has determined that her personal leadership plan will be composed of a three-year plan in which she will incorporate and develop transformational leadership and innovation to realize her goals of becoming a better leader within her current leadership roles and prepare her for future leadership experiences. The writer has chosen two people other than herself to whom she will be held accountable through this process. The first person is her husband, who will help her assess and examine her leadership abilities in the home and in her school. The second person is a personal friend and fellow administrator at her current school, who will observe her leadership abilities within the school and help to assess the growth and development of same. Throughout the three-year plan, the writer will continue to assess her personal growth and discuss such growth with both of her chosen cohorts. As each benchmark is reached, she will meet separately with each cohort and determine her success or failure at reaching her chosen goals. Finally, the writer has determined to incorporate the use of a “360-

degree leadership assessment that allows for multi-rater feedback from a wide range of personal and professional sources” (Chambers, 2006, November 13, p. 5). This comprehensive leadership assessment will occur at the beginning, in the middle, and at the end of the implementation of the personal leadership plan to fully assess the writer’s growth and development in leadership.

The Three-Year Plan

To fully realize the successful implementation of a personal leadership plan, the writer has determined to break down each piece of the plan into manageable chunks of time. To begin the process, the writer will implement a 360-degree leadership assessment that will include input from colleagues, peers, superiors, administrators, friends, and family. During the first year, the writer’s leadership skills as well as the plan itself will be assessed and evaluated at the end of every three-month period. During the second year, the assessments and evaluations with her cohorts will occur at six-month intervals and the leadership assessment will be repeated at the eighteenth month of the plan’s implementation. Finally, the third year of the leadership plan will realize an assessment and evaluation of the writer’s goals and any adjustments to the plan will be made as needed to address any changes in those goals from the original plan as well as adjustments that may be realized concerning the writer’s then current level of leadership ability. A final leadership assessment will then be implemented to determine the overall growth and development of the writer’s leadership skills through the feedback of her colleagues, peers, superiors, administrators, friends, and family.

In addition to the development of an outline for the plan’s implementation, the writer has determined that anticipating any possible obstacles to the implementation of her personal leadership plan will be a beneficial step in the plan’s development. Additionally, this could help her possibly avoid or quickly overcome any roadblocks that may arise during her leadership

journey. After a great deal of consideration, the challenges that have been determined to be possible obstacles the writer could face during the implementation of her plan are personal responsibilities (to include family, work, and school), financial obstacles, and problems with time-management skills. The writer has further determined that each situation should be addressed as it is encountered, realizing the most appropriate approach will be to recognize from the outset that these situations will occur and that each must be handled expediently and with the goal of personal development always in mind.

Year One

The first year will begin with extensive research into the various leadership styles and theories that have existed throughout history. The writer will use her experiences from the Transformation and Innovation in Leadership course as a springboard from which she will begin her personal leadership journey. The first three months of the plan will realize the completion of much of the historical research and the writer's synthesis of the learned information into her personal leadership philosophy. The second three-month period will find the writer conducting research into the vast amount of recent and current leadership styles and theories. The third chunk of time will provide opportunities for the writer to implement a variety of leadership techniques into her personal and professional leadership responsibilities, allowing her to personally determine the techniques most suitable to her in her roles as teacher, administrator, and mother. The final three-month period will find the writer integrating various leadership theories, styles, techniques, and skills, while also incorporating all of the input from her cohorts, allowing her the necessary time to fully realize her personal approach to leadership. Throughout the entire year, the writer will continue her scholarly pursuits in the field of educational

leadership and apply any new knowledge into the plan as appropriate and after discussion of same with her cohorts.

Year Two

The second year of the plan will realize the writer further developing her leadership skills through the implementation of her ever-emerging leadership philosophy, based on her personal leadership experiences and the feedback received from her cohorts throughout Year One. During Year Two, the writer will find herself engaging in further research into current leadership trends and incorporating any applicable and appropriate techniques into her daily leadership responsibilities. This time will find her spending more time in her scholarly pursuits as well as engaging in ongoing efforts to find the right combination of styles and techniques to be an effective leader in her personal and professional duties. The end of the first six-month period will find the implementation of the second 360-degree leadership assessment and allow the writer to further assess her ever-growing success and effectiveness as a leader in all aspects of her life. The second six-month period will find her adjusting her leadership techniques and skills as needed based upon the feedback from the leadership assessment. She will also continue to depend on the advice and suggestions of her chosen cohorts based upon their observations and assessments of her continued efforts at developing her leadership skills.

Year Three

As the final year approaches, the writer will meet with her cohorts to finalize five to ten specific objectives that will be implemented for the conclusion of the plan. These objectives will be determined based upon the previous two years' experiences, the additional scholarly learning that has taken place during Years One and Two, the goals as outlined in the original leadership plan, and the updated personal and professional goals of the writer. Any necessary adjustments to

the leadership plan will be made through the assessment and evaluation of the plan's success, the writer's progress, and any changes that may have occurred in the writer's personal or professional life. The end of Year Three will realize a final assessment and evaluation of the development of the writer's leadership skills through the feedback of her cohorts, the final 360-degree leadership assessment results, and the writer's personal assessment of her progress through the three-year plan.

Conclusion

Developing a personal leadership plan has allowed the writer to reflect on her personal leadership experiences, evaluate her leadership learning opportunities, and define her personal goals and beliefs regarding leadership. Through this experience, the writer has found that she will be able to fully engage herself in her proposed personal leadership plan while focusing on the perceived outcomes of such an endeavor. Indeed, doing so will allow her to better herself as a leader and advance herself in the areas of personal finances, administrative skills, personal relationships, and physical and emotional health.

The writer believes that the conclusive step in determining the proposed outcomes of her personal leadership plan is to define what her personal leadership legacy should be, answering the question "What would you want people to say about your leadership and the impact you had on them?" (Lucas, n.d., p. 6). As a classroom teacher, the writer would want people to realize that her leadership style in the early childhood classroom was both appropriate and effective, allowing her to prepare her students for their future educational experiences while also providing them with a solid foundation of learning upon which future learning could be built. The writer would also want the students and their parents to remember the positive impact her leadership had on both the successes and failures realized in the first and second grades and beyond.

As an administrator, she would hope that her followers and superiors would both recognize her ever-growing leadership skills and abilities as well as realize the importance of the time and effort spent by the writer to develop such skills and abilities and its effect on the overall success of the school itself. Finally, the writer would want her children, friends, and family to realize the significant impact of her leadership abilities on the daily interactions between the writer and themselves. She would also hope that her children would begin to emulate some of the successful and effective leadership skills demonstrated to them by their mother as a result of this endeavor, allowing them to also become successful and effective leaders in their chosen fields.

Finally, the writer has realized that “Leadership can occur by happenstance or by design” (White & Albright, 2006). For her, both aspects of this statement are true. While her current leadership duties may have, indeed, occurred through happenstance, the writer believes that there is a Divine Design that has lead her to her current path. Further, she believes that the path on which she currently finds herself has been a critical aspect of this Divine Design, as is the personal leadership plan that she has created that is but a step on this current path.

Her personal leadership goals directly coincide with the calling that she has felt upon her life and, as a result, she believes that the outcomes of implementing her personal leadership plan over the next three years will be both successful and effective. Following the path that has been set before her will allow her to adapt to new leadership responsibilities and opportunities as they occur and as they have already been determined. The overall result will be the realization of the writer’s personal leadership style and its legacy on her students and their parents, her colleagues and current school, and, most importantly, the impact of its success on her family, finances, physical and emotional health, and her personal and professional goals.

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