Personal Philosophy of Leadership and Advocacy

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Leadership is considered one of the topics that has been most researched and written about throughout history (Cheng, Barrio Minton, Dixon, Myers, & Sweeney, 2012). Leadership has been provided with a vast series of definitions as well as several theories that describe the intricate dynamics of what leadership entails. Cheng et al. (2012, p.23) indicates that leadership comes with the ability to influence others, create, communicate, and lead others towards a vision. Through the years, I have developed a personal philosophy of leadership that is drawn from the integration of my Christian values, Biblical principles and some theories of leadership. Some of the theories of leadership that describe my leadership style are the trait theory, path-goal theory, and charismatic theory.

My leadership was established by God since he formed me in my mother’s womb because he created me with the personality of a leader (Psalm 139:13-18). As a child I remember my teachers always telling me I had leadership skills and although I felt intimidated by the tasks they assigned me I performed each of them with responsibility. My response led to more leadership assignments in the following years in school, church, the community and now in the academic world. I feel a sense of urgency to lead and help others through the counseling profession, leadership and advocacy. This description could be summarized with the term servant-leadership coming from a sense of God’s calling to the counseling profession and ministry. The theories trait describes some of my personal characteristics. My extrovert personality has influenced me to lead people with purpose and confidence. The extraversion trait has been identified as the most important trait and although is not associated with effectiveness the fact that I have other traits connected to my extraversion helps me be effective (Cheng et al., 2012).

I consider myself a strong and confident leader, but I am also considerate and attentive to the needs, feelings, and wellbeing of others. I value relationships over task without neglecting the importance and value of completing the task at hand. Leadership is a balance between a relationship style focus and a task-oriented focus. I follow the path-goal theory because I help those I lead reach their goals by guiding them and illuminating the path before them instilling energy on them, providing resources, and motivating them. This is a style I follow not only as a leader but also as a counseling supervisor. My leadership is very supportive, participative, and achievement-oriented. I am commitment to excellence which lead me to be a hard-working and self-motivated person. This leadership style compels me to do my best and motivate others to do their best; nonetheless, because I have a high value for relationships I do encourage others to lead without neglecting such value.

My personality is very enthusiastic and charismatic by nature which is my greatest strength in leading and motivating others. These traits are described best through the charismatic and transformational leadership (Cheng, et al., 2012. Although growing up my leadership was identified by others, it wasn’t until I sensed a calling from God that I was able to identify my own leadership skills through the various experiences I lived. Consequently, the passion I feel for God’s calling to counseling education and supervision compels me to use all my skills, strengths, and abilities to inspire others. I use my actions, words, and deeds to inspire others to reach their full potential by doing their best. I believe in leading by example and encouragement, and this is reflected in my counseling, teaching, supervision, leadership and advocacy skills.

**Personal Action Plan**

 Currently I am involved in several leadership endeavors. Nonetheless, one program that I am fully invested while I finish my academic journey in the PhD program is associated with the mentorship program within the CSI honor society at Liberty University. I am currently the chair for the CSI Mentorship Committee. I lead with a co-chair and five members in the mentorship committee whom we work together to provide mentoring to students at Liberty. I have led this group with enthusiasm while also delegating tasks to motivate them and prepare them for future leadership positions. I am currently mentoring two students to prepare them for leadership positions within the CSI organization by encouraging them, identifying their leadership skills and strengths, and by providing opportunities for them to lead and serve within the organization. This effort is with the goal of preparing for succession of leadership next semester when I am no longer the leader of this committee.

The action plan for succession of leadership in this committee began at the beginning of this spring 2019 semester. Part of this plan have included introducing those I lead to other leaders in the organization, meeting with them to inquire about their feedback, insights, experience, and their suggestions for future improvement efforts within the mentorship program. I met with some of the mentors and the CSI leadership team to introduce them as future potential leaders in the mentorship program. I have always communicated with the mentors and committee with enthusiasm making sure that what they hear from me first is a word of encouragement.

I have encouraged some of the mentors to create videos with testimonial interviews to present at the induction ceremony with the purpose of promoting the program through lived experiences. This effort not only provides them with the opportunity to be leaders to their mentees but also to participate in a bigger spectrum of the organization by being a part of the induction ceremony. Following the induction ceremony, I have planned to meet with the mentors and committee to discuss their vision for the mentorship program and lead them into establishing an action plan for their vision. In the meeting, they will be asked to identify the needs of the program, create an action plan to meet those needs, and establish some goals for the program for the new academic year.

Through this process I will communicate and share with them what has been done in the past including those efforts that were effective as well as the ones that were not. The mentors will be invited to provide feedback about their experience in the process to help them continue developing their analytical and organizational skills. This is an effort to pass the baton of the mentorship leadership. Constantly through the process of my work in the program I have always encouraged them for their contribution to the program and thanked them for their investment of time and efforts. This form of leadership is a parallel process of modeling leadership; as I model leadership charismatic and transformational leadership to them they can be inspired to model the same for those they will lead.

 One personal goal to continue to develop my leadership is to implement leadership and advocacy as part of my counseling supervision process. I want to take my supervisees to a higher developmental level in their counselor identity where the supervisee is not only supervised and trained as a professional counselor but also as a leader and advocate in the community. I am implementing an advocacy project as part of the supervision process of the supervisees where they are encouraged to engage in a leadership role or event once a month. In my next supervision session, I will include leadership and advocacy topics as part of the supervision process. They will be encouraged to be involved in promoting and advocating for the field of counseling. I work with various organizations in the community providing psychoeducational information about mental health and counseling issues. My plan involves inviting my supervisees to participate of those educational events and having them participate with me co-leading-teaching some of the educational meetings. It is my goal and prayer to inspire and model for others in leadership and advocacy as other leaders have invested in me.

References

Chang, C. Y., Barrio Minton, C., Dixon, A., Myers, J. E., & Sweeney T. J. (2012). *Professional counseling excellence through leadership and advocacy*. New York: Routledge