

PERSONAL PHILOSOPHY OF LEADERSHIP AND ADVOCACY

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Personal Philosophy of Leadership and Advocacy

Until this class, I didn't understand the full responsibility of a counselor as an advocate and leader. I understood that I could help people through the office of counselor on a person-to-person basis and provide them with means to additional social organizations targeted to assist the community. I also understood I could use the techniques and knowledge to teach. Since this class I understand the profession to consist of so much more. We are not only counselors; we are a living, breathing, dynamic organism that each has the responsibility to educate and advocate by conducting research for the gaps we recognize in the profession and in the community to build an even stronger Counseling leadership and advocacy organization.

Personal Philosophy of Leadership and Advocacy

There are so many different theories about leadership. I see where several of these theories intersect with one another. For example, many of the contingency theories touch on aspects of both the trait theories and the behavior theories. The leadership traits that I possess are extraversion, conscientiousness, openness to new experiences, and emotional intelligence such as empathy and recognition/identification of body language (Chang, 2022). The behavior theory characteristic that I strongly align with is that of consideration. Consideration is being aware and in tune with the feelings of others (Chang, 2022). I can see how this behavior trait coincides with the trait theory characteristic of emotional intelligence.

The behavior theory has another characteristic which is initiating structure. Though I can organize or create processes and assign goals, I am much better at facilitating the completion of tasks once the structure has been created. I do not believe I function 100 percent within any leadership style or theory. I do believe that I have components of many styles. Additional styles that I show characteristics of are that of the contingency theory. Here, I am more relationship-

oriented than task-oriented. Creating an environment where the employee, team member, or client can prosper and be seen leads to productivity or positive results rather than charging everyone solely with tasks and not acknowledging their needs to be able to function.

Fiedler's Contingency Model stipulates that internal and external variables determine leadership decisions and actions depending on the current situation (Childs M, 2022). Internal variables are considered experience and resources such as employees. External variables are things like force majeure (natural disasters), economic trends, social trends, socio-economic backgrounds of clients or communities, to name a few (Childs M, 2022). Within the constructs of Fiedler's contingency model, I agree with his stance that to improve leadership effectiveness and output either the leader or the situation needs to be changed (Chang, 2022). When he refers to a change in leadership, I do not believe everyone can use leadership education alone to be effective. Sometimes it requires a shift in leadership to meet the environment of the team.

However, studies have proven that leadership education through an EMBA program can improve the effectiveness of leaders when integrating a dialogic leadership approach. The dialogic leadership approach depicts leadership not only as a role but as a wholistic organism. This organism (leader) understands the human nature of the role and supports trust-building during the creative process of his group. This approach also strengthens the leader's ability to work effectively with culturally diverse groups (Campos J.A., 2020).

Personal Action Plan

I do not believe that an individual can be an effective leader without both empathy and emotional intelligence. Having the ability to create structure, plans, and organization are strong leadership traits. However, I do not believe they are effective alone. These characteristics must be balanced by empathy and emotional intelligence. I was in corporate America for 36 years

before I left for counseling. In those 36 years, I was able to see several different leadership styles, behaviors, and traits.

What was consistent in 36 years is the leader that was more structured and had no emotional intelligence or empathy tended to not only manage by fear but fail as they had no support from their subordinates. Those who had emotional intelligence and empathy, but no structural ability had the love of the employees but did not always have the dependability or output needed. An effective leader seemed to be one who had a balance of the two characteristics. I learned even before counseling everyone wants to be seen, not looked at but recognized and understood. However, people still need structure and guidelines to perform. I was even a leader more than once in business. Both times I had teams that knew I was empathetic and emotionally intelligent but that I needed strong structure and organizational capabilities. The result of both endeavors was manipulative subordinates pursuing their agendas rather than company requirements. In that experience, I learned I needed balance and that I should not pass red flags during the interview process to bring in support for the organization.

Once again, there are multiple theories about what makes a leader and how to identify a leader. Knowing that a counselor educator is a leader for both the profession and the client, these goals will require considering both focuses. Establishing a leadership plan will require establishing both short-term and long-term goals. These are the current areas that I need to improve.

Short-Term Goals

1. Obtain membership in professional organizations locally.
2. Learn about community-based organizations to determine which to support.
3. Research classes or books that will assist me with organizing and creating structure as well as turning visions into well-thought-out plans and organizations.
4. Research the professional advocacy activity of Liberty doctoral professors and identify which activities I would like to support.

5. Explore and identify my areas of interest.

Long-Term Goals

1. Once a member of a professional organization, attend a conference, understand current advocacy activities, begin research, and submit papers.
2. Attend and complete identified classes or documentation that will assist me in being more structured and organized.
3. Reach out to Liberty staff regarding participating in advocacy activity.
4. Begin creating a structure and organization around my individual advocacy plans and continue to write and submit papers.

Conclusion

There is much to consider and reflect on when understanding leadership. There is no single factor that has been proven to always identify an effective leader. Each theory posits a valid positionality and belief. Not all the theories are always effective. Yet, each characteristic is circumstantial to the environment or opportunity.

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