

Maintaining High Standards: Ethical Leadership, Global Citizenship and Mentoring

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Introduction

The disparate topics of ethical leadership, citizenship and mentoring are connected to provide synergy for the task of building the next generation of educational leaders, those who possess and seek high standards in their practice. High standards evolve from both the individual and the inherent system in which one interacts and organically grows. The paradox of individualism and connectedness (Wheatley, 1998) create systems and new capabilities and talents emerge. The CHAIR Academy for Leadership and Development is a positive model for creating the synergy and foundation of change for new leaders. It is our intent to engage in a tripartite exploration of three key elements in the development of leaders in higher education.

Ethical Leadership

Ethical transgressions have permeated the contemporary landscapes in both the business and educational world. The succession of scandals such as Enron, Tyco, Arthur Andersen and Fidelity continue to disappoint society and assault our core values. Systems have failed and leaders have failed. Tichy and McGill (2003) suggest that all leaders should create a Teachable Point of View (TPOV). This process requires reflective practice and constructing a TPOV based upon four building blocks of ideas, values, emotional energy and edge. These four important building blocks synergistically intersect our personal histories, experiences and system dynamics.

It is the responsibility of the leader to adopt and espouse their values concomitantly and parallel with the organizational systems' core values and vision. It is the leaders' responsibility to teach and learn. Tichy concludes that:

Knowledge creation and organizational learning are greatest when leaders –up to and including the CEO- see themselves as teachers who share their points of view and see this process as an essential part of their leadership.

The richness of such teaching interchanges-back and forth, in search of knowledge-breeds more teaching across the organization, producing a cycle of leadership.

(Tichy, 2002, pg. 8)

Global Citizenship

Engagement and commitment to one's community is paramount for all effective leaders. While leaders are tempted to only act locally, they must think and act globally. The global perspective broadens the scope of leadership and expands the ethical dimensions of their actions. Resource inequalities exist both locally and globally and as educational leaders, we must understand the levels of disparate services and systems. The call to "action" is a reflection of the leaders' core values and ethical framework.

"Citizenship activities can reinforce ethical commitments of both the leader and the organization, putting faces, voices and perspectives on some of the most challenging dilemmas in life" (Tichy & McGill, 2003). The authors further suggest that high performing leaders transform the organizations by energizing workers, building bonds, mentoring, volunteerism and "active participation" in the community. One very important element of citizenship is building a sense of community. Nurturing and supporting provide opportunities for learning, mentoring and trust building.

Mentoring

The CHAIR Academy for Leadership and Development offers several program opportunities for leaders at colleges and universities to develop their leadership roles. As part of these programs, participants are encouraged to seek a mentor to help with the development process. The Academy regularly surveys mentors on their experiences, and information gleaned from these responses is included in the following sections.

Mentoring Approaches

Participants in the programs selected mentors from a variety of levels in the organization and for various reasons. Some participants chose mentors with whom they were very familiar, and others chose mentors who they did not know very well, but who they admired and respected. A mentor should be someone who has the time and will make the time to be available has shown strong leadership skills, and who is able to inspire others to a new level (Glaser and Steinberg Smalley,

1995). The mentors indicated that, regardless, of the reason or how well they knew their protégés, they were honored to be a part of the process.

Mentoring, also referred to as “coaching” in some instances, often entails a strategy or planned approach to ensure an effective partnership. It is important to develop relationships with individuals in order to be able to guide them and understand how to best assist others. Peterson and Hicks (1996) view the role of a mentor or coach as someone who is a “catalyst for development” and note that this is an extensive process that takes time to develop and cannot be accomplished in one or two meetings. (p.14)

A crucial aspect of the mentor/protégé relationship is building trust in the relationship. One of the mentors in the program indicated that “establishing trust and a comfort level are critical.” Another stated, “I stressed the importance of taking the time to develop interpersonal relationships with those you interact with in the workplace.” These aspects are critical if the mentoring relationship is to be a successful one.

In terms of strategies for these sessions, mentors identified a number of methods to assist with the mentoring process. For instance, many mentors helped their protégés identify professional goals to work towards during the year. Meetings were used to identify strategies to accomplish these goals and assess the progress made towards these goals during the year. Many started with shared expectations and stressed the importance of doing this in the beginning of the relationship. Ensuring that expectations are clear helps to avoid misunderstandings. However, mentors should work in guiding their protégés with these expectations, rather than dictating them, and they should be specific. While it is not necessary to detail how protégés should meet the expectations or accomplish set goals, it is important to make sure that they are aware of these. (Glaser and Steinberg Smalley, 1995)

Other strategies utilized by mentors included active listening, advising, and encouragement of self-reflection. Taking the lead in the relationship varied – some mentors chose to do this and others waited for the protégé to take the lead and set the tone for the relationship and the meetings. From their responses, mentors indicated that they used their meeting time with their protégés to discuss current work situations and examine ways in which to address related issues. Some mentors stated that they often used role-playing as a method to analyze various situations, which proved to be very helpful in understanding varying points of view.

Protégé Growth and Development

It is necessary to acknowledge that, in the growth process, each person develops in their own time and at their own pace. Peterson and Hicks (1996) discuss this issue and stress, “the importance of having a strong sense of ethics and personal standards, especially in terms of respecting the limits of those whom you mentor. For instance, while some positive change is expected, mentors should understand that each person has certain boundaries and must decide for themselves how far they are able or willing to grow past these limits.” (p.48)

Mentors were questioned about whether they had perceived any growth and development in their protégés throughout the process. While a few mentors indicated that they had not, the majority stated that they had seen much progress in their protégés in a variety of aspects.

For example, mentors stated that their protégés had become more efficient in their tasks, focused on their behavior, and self-assured. Protégés had seen new ways of viewing situations and gained new perspectives, particularly with the issue of handling conflict effectively. They had an increased sense of self-esteem, confidence, and initiative, particularly in decision-making abilities. One mentor indicated that his protégé was able to “more fully appreciate his unique strengths, and his limitations.”

Mentor Growth and Development

Zachary (2000) supports this view and believes that through “reflection, renewal, and regeneration,” a mentor’s own growth is nurtured. (p. 161) Additionally, Zachary stresses the importance of taking the time, as a mentor, for the self-reflection process in order to be able to better focus on the mentoring relationship. She states, “Mentoring also provides an opportunity for renewal and regeneration. Being critically reflective throughout the phases of a mentoring relationship generates new insight about oneself, mentoring partners engaged in the relationship, and the learning relationship. One of the gifts of renewal is the sense of redefined purpose and energy that it brings.” (p.163) Not making the time for self-reflection may limit the growth of both mentor and protégé alike.

In addition to the process of self-reflection, mentors indicated that through the exchange of ideas and resources, as well as sharing techniques and strategies, their own growth was achieved. One mentor stated, “The mentoring relationship forced me to think more about the why of decisions rather than simply moving to implement said decisions.” Other mentors felt that the process helped them to think about their own leadership styles and the personal relationships they had forged at work that enhanced the trust and communication with their co-workers. The mentoring program assisted one mentor in particular with realizing his leadership style, as he states that the

process “allowed me to do more intentional assessment of my own ways of leading and operating. It also required that I model more inclusive leadership.”

Conclusion

The mentoring process involves both parties being fully committed to teaching, learning, and growing in the mentoring relationship. Building trust, establishing expectations, creating a firm ethical foundation, and mutualistic teaching and learning are just a few of the key aspects of having a successful partnership. Domains of behavior (Sitkin, Lind & Siang, 2006) interact and a holistic, engaged leader emerges influencing their followers to exhibit loyalty, trust, community, high aspirations, independent judgment and stewardship.

Leading according to your values is essential. Maxwell (2005) refers to the idea that if you value “shortcuts” or “dishonesty,” then it is expected that your employees and those that you lead will follow suit and make decisions that are not based on integrity. (p. 244-245) As one mentor stated, “Being a leader is about being amongst your team and not sitting at the top.” Additionally, it is important to note that a person can be a leader and a mentor regardless of what level they are in an organization. It is not simply the top administrators that are looked to for leadership and guidance. As a leader, it is possible to “influence others no matter where you are in the organization, no matter what title or position you have, no matter what kind of people you work with.” (Maxwell, p. 295)

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