

Leadership is a relationship education essay



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When it comes to this sentence: “ Leadership is a Relationship”, we feel a bit puzzled. At first glance, such a topic sounds like a joke. Traditionally, the definition of leadership is described as the “ process of social influence in which one person can enlist the aid and support of others in the accomplishment of a common task.” But here, we must emphasize the relationship between leadership and relationship. Some people hold the opinion that leaders, like husbands or wives, occupy roles only as long as they are alive. (Is Leadership a Relationship? – by Mitch McCrimmon, Ph. D., 2010)

Leaders and leadership is a topic being discussed for a long time. The desire to call leadership a relationship is well intentioned. Generally speaking, leadership is a relationship because one cannot lead without followers. The very meaning of leadership, to some extent, is a relationship and the interaction between leaders and followers. Leadership is an ongoing relationship between the leader and superiors, leaders and colleagues, leaders and consumers, and especially between leaders and followers. (Leadership is the Relationship – by Kenneth Rice, 2006)

Now the concept of leadership is no longer conventional type, it isn't limited to fixed roles and what's more, group boundaries are breaking down. In my point of view, leadership cannot take effect alone. To put it another way, leadership needs the aid of relationship. “ Because the personal relationship defines the existing quality of interpersonal interaction between the leader and would-be followers, followers will not join the leader without the requisite relationship. Leadership is the relationship.”(The 9 Natural Laws of Leadership P. 12- by Blank, Warren, 1995)

Without good relationship in a team, a leader, if not supported by his team members, he can't accomplish the task successfully. It is just like a war. Even the bravest General cannot win the battle by his own, because he is just a drop in the sea. Only when he commands and cooperates with his soldiers will it be possible to win. In fact, leading is more than a relational concept. It is a relational term, and it does not imply a personal relationship between people. Instead, it means that leadership is a relationship is based on confusion or a failure to understand how relational concepts work.

There are too many outstanding leaders in the history around the world; I am just a small role. Leadership is an art. We can see the common points shining on those famous leaders: The speeches of Sir Winston Churchill showed his constancy of purpose; in 1863, General Pickett earned the trust of the soldiers he sent up the hill, though everyone knew they would die; Mohandas Gandhi was a pioneer of Nonviolent Protest, his views were the most enlightened of all the political men in 20th century; The influence from Martin Luther King's " I have a dream", witnessed great changes of the whole USA...It is well recognized that a qualified leader needs the skills as follows: Good Communication Skills; Good Motivation Skills; Adaptability; Know Your People; Work Delegation; Decision Making; Passion.

I remember my first time to be a leader. I would like to exemplify the notion above by my own experience. It was an unforgettable summer. I joined a youth camp in a remote village as a volunteer teacher. There were tens of youngsters of my same age, and what we were going to do is teach the students in the school some basic knowledge of preventing AIDS. I was seldom a leader and I didn't have much experience and talent of being a

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leader before. I used to think that leader must be those who have strong power of public appeal and are bold and resolute in action. To my surprise, I was chosen to be a leader on the first day I arrived. At that moment, I was both excited and timid: I was afraid that I couldn't be a good leader, but it was really an opportunity for me to have a try.

At first, I was too anxious to speak in front of the crowd. When I stood on the stage and said ' Hello" to those kids, I shivered and couldn't utter more words. Students were aged around 10 years old, and they were curious as well as surprised. They couldn't imagine such a coward would be there " leader", but of course, they couldn't imagine what this " leader" would bring to them in the following two weeks. Adaptability is the key to succeeding in our ever changing environment. I adapted to this new environment soon and I thought I could adapt to any unpredictable situation that may arise, too.

There are two kinds of leaders; those who want to be liked and those who want to be respected. If you are respected but not liked, your leadership might be wanted, but it will probably be short lived. It is possible to be both respected and liked and we should strive for both. Building relationships is one of the most important things we do in life on a personal and professional level. (Leadership Through Relationships - by Richard. R. Ramos, 2009) I knew that to get in touch with the students must first become their friends. I was a " leader", but I was like a friend more. I played with them, talked with them, shared jokes and funny experiences with them. We soon knew each other well. Though I was the teacher, I gave each of them equal opportunity to express what they thought. I encouraged them to air their own opinion. As a result, I also earned their respect and credibility.

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Trust is built on honesty and integrity. (The Essence of Leadership – by Stever Robbins, 2003) To build trust, involvement and communication is the key contributor. I always believe in that “ What you say and what you do must match up.” There are five trust techniques: Share thoughts, feeling and rationales; Make commitments you can make; Admit mistakes; Request and accept feedback; Test assumptions. I know that to respect and maintain self-esteem of my students sincerely is vitally important in the process of getting their trust. Every time when they got some accomplishments or made some contributions, I would recognize what they have done and praise them. Otherwise, I listened and responded to them with empathy to show my understanding of their feeling with attention, so they were all willing to talk to me and express their ideas.

For some relatively inactive children, I asked them for their help and encouraged them to involve. I valued their opinions and ideas, I was willing to share credit for achievements, and I valued their personal performance more than the results. They soon became optimistic and positive, and are more willing to join us in various activities. A good communication skill is necessary for a leader to listen to the opinions of others, and quickly convey their thoughts. We became close friends, and this is a progress beyond leadership.

If we say leadership is the matter of relationship, we can also say that relationship is the source of influence, which is the foundation of leadership. To put it another way, leadership can be defined in one word: Influence. Effective leadership needs influence, and in order to get influence, a strong relationship is needed. We can't deny that the essence of leadership is the <https://assignbuster.com/leadership-is-a-relationship-education-essay/>

art of influencing people. Relationship is the key mechanism for bringing out the best in people from the ordinary, both as individuals and teams. Also, this is the core purpose of leadership can only be achieved through strong relationships. (The Leadership Relationship: Building High-Impact Relationships – by Corporate Master, A Division of Integral Master Center)

Things went on smoothly. We not only taught children knowledge of AIDS but afterward sang songs and shared our outlook for the future. When the children were asked “ what are you going to do when you grow up”, they have various answers. I remembered some girls said they wanted to be designers because they liked beautiful clothes; some boys who have special interest in architecture hoped to be engineers; some of them dreamt of being professors; but what impressed me most is a boy who desired to be a leader. Gradually, I had more topics with those children and I got their trust. At that time, I felt that perhaps being a leader is better than what I had perceived before.

A leader is supposed to have a passion to perform. Being passionate about my work would empower me to find almost impossible solutions – be it invention, discovery, or innovation. Also, to me and to my students, passion was one of the sources of our joy and fun. In our class and in our life, passion made us happy and optimistic.

For me, as a so-called leader and a voluntary teacher, in addition to my colleagues, my students were also my “ workmates” – because I need their aid and cooperation in my job. My colleagues helped me with my lectures and students’ performance would give me more confidence. I devoted myself

into being a leader and I tried my best to be a better leader. After a few days of getting together, those students trusted me and relied on me. Once I was able to give your personal touch to them, I found amazing benefits from these efforts. Their personal lives had a great impact on the each of them. We talked about interesting news, anecdotes and stories together. I was attached to my colleagues and my students. Trust was really the best thing which could give me a warm feeling as the sunshine in winter. We were just like a big family. I had never felt that kind sense of success as well as commitment.

“ Relationship behavior is the extent to which the leader engages in two-way or multi-way communication. It includes listening, encouraging, facilitating, providing clarification, and giving socio-emotional support.” (Jossey-Bass Higher and Adult Education Series – by Bolman and Deal, 1997) I reminded myself that I was a leader every moment. I must set a good example in front of them so I behaved like a leader and played an exemplary role in my class. In the conversations with the children, I came to know their characteristics and their hobbies. They were really cute, frank, and innocent.

Just as technical research and development is essential for continued excellence and a competitive edge, so much coaching and development become the leader’s focal point for leveraging the organization’s human capital. Coaching is the process of equipping people with the tools, knowledge, and opportunities they need to develop themselves and become more effective. Coaching conversations involve finding out people’s vision or destination, where they are starting from, and the direction they need to move in order to get there. (Coach and Develop People – by Gebelein, S. H., <https://assignbuster.com/leadership-is-a-relationship-education-essay/>

Stevens, L. A., Skube, C. J., Lee, D. G., Davis, B. L., & Hellervik, L. W. Successful Manager's Handbook. 6th ed. Minnesota: Personnel Decisions International Corporation. 2000. 369-396)

Development is vitally important in acquiring the skills and learning the knowledge needed to achieve the goals. I know that the role of a leader is also to be a coach. In order to equip them with more knowledge they couldn't learn from the textbook, I brought them to the park, to the field, and went picnic in the open air. I told them how to observe an insect or a butterfly; I taught them how to draw an oil painting; we played basketball together and competed with each other...

Coaching forged our partnership, which was another example proving that "Leadership is relationship", and in other words, this was one of the sources our trust came; coaching inspired commitment of me and the students; coaching grew my managing skill and their learning skills, too; coaching promoted persistence of each one and finally shaped the environment – we enjoyed this harmonious environment very much. What's more, coaching is a continuous process rather than an occasional conversation, so we kept practicing during my stay with them.

But things have gone wrong sometimes. In the last few days before the youth camp came to the end, we had prepared for a welfare party. I arranged a chorus for the students and rehearsed for them time by time, day by day. For these kids, rehearsal was the most boring thing in the world and they got tired soon. They rejected and tried to give up, which disappointed me very much. I was so desperate because I felt that the time and toil I paid

was futile and would never reward. I tried hard to persuade and comfort them. However, nothing had a turn for the better; instead, they were more impatient and even shouted to me. I was helpless and sad. I recalled every picture that left impression in my brain but it didn't work at all. I was totally disappointed: They were my dearest but they even didn't respect me. I doubted my ability of management as a leader: I didn't succeed in managing a group of children well, let alone other adults. I tried hard to keep myself calm but things went worse. Those kids seemed pay no attention to me and made me more distressed. Consequently, I got angry and raged. I had never been so furious that I pounded the table angrily with a great thump. At this moment, those clamorous kids were shocked and astonished and kept silent immediately. There was not a bit voice. The whole classroom seemed isolated and time seemed to have ceased. I didn't know what they were thinking and I was not sure if they were scared of me or repented of what they had done. It was the worst memory in the process of being a volunteer teacher, but when I reflect it now, I came to realize that it was this bad experience that made me grow more mature.

It was clear that I needed to implement the essential ingredients of effective persuasion: I knew and concerned their perspectives; I considered my position from every angle; I listened to them actively and patiently; I shared solution with them and tried to make it better; and what' more, I insisted that communication do make changes. So I still believed that a leader should not give up first. " I am a leader." I told myself at the bottom of my heart.

After about one minute, I asked them, " Is there anyone want to quit?"

Nobody answered.

“ If anyone wants to quit now, you can stand out and tell me.”

Still nobody answered.

I continued, “ Yes, the rehearsal, it is indeed a piece of tiring work. But if you insist staying in our group, please do your best or you will let us down, let yourself down.”

Those children were upset. One of them asked me in a low voice, “ It is so boring. We don’t want to play it.”

Maybe it was the rehearsal that deprived them of their leisure. I stopped for a moment, anxiously thinking of this problem. No one knows how hard I struggled in my mind.

I pondered for a while, and explained slowly to them, “ Only when we spare no effort and try our best will the rehearsal be successful. Only when we encounter difficulty and sweats will the result be satisfying. I hoped that every one of you will perform the best in the welfare party. But at present, there is still much to be improved.”

And I continued, “ Listen, my dearest kids, now we must believe that we are the strongest and we can be the best! I have full confidence on all of you!”

Some of them nodded their heads.

A leader is the one not only commands and leads toward the victory but the one who comforts and encourages team mates when the morale of the

troops is sinking low. Most of them stood and listened with their heads low, but their eyes were filled with a desire to success. One girl approved me, “ Yes, you are right. I think I didn’t sing well enough. I will definitely work harder.”

“ Do you believe in yourselves?” I asked them, and embraced them.

“ Yes...” Though their voice was low, I could still hear their courage and persistence.

“ How about having fun when we finished the performance in welfare party? Then I will cook you delicious food to celebrate!” I added.

They seemed much satisfied.

Her words were like ripples and most children expressed their agreement. They promised that they would exert themselves and never be “ on strike” again. Some of them even proposed to play an important role in the chorus. I gave them a big smile and so did they. The crisis had gone and our trust came back again.

“ Have a good rest, guys! This is the end of today’s rehearsal, but tomorrow we must train harder.” I reminded them. I rewarded each one of them an ice cream and of course, they were pleased and contented.

Leaders require many skills in managing relationships, such as communication, interaction, crisis management, etc. The purpose of the relationship is not only to manage team mates in a good order but also to give each person the opportunity to grow and to contribute to his or her

fullest potential and what's more, to build strengths in the midst of differences. According to my students' strength and characteristics, I divided them into three groups in the chorus so that each one of them can achieve their best. Every time they rehearsed, I accompanied them, recorded and played to attain improvement. I couldn't do everything on my own. This was our combined effort. I also needed to give personal responsibility of the work to my students individually, and then keep track of their progress regularly. I found this process interesting and rewarding: They were like young trees and I was just the gardener. I saw them sprout, grow and bloom.

After many days of cultivation, the day of farewell party would be the day these young trees fruit. Frankly speaking, it is of the utmost importance for me to motivate them to accomplish objectives. A real leader utilizes the most efficient approach for doing this - leading by setting an excellent example. Behind the scene, my students seemed anxious. In fact, I was the most anxious one. I concealed my emotion of anxiety. They constantly asked me, "Is my clothes tidy?" or "Am I look good?" I gave each of them smile and some encouraging words. "You look superb!" "Come on, your performance is fantastic!" Gradually, these words had positive effect on me, too. I was encouraged by my words: I should be sure that they would be the most confident and competent team!

Before the performance, I gave each one of them a hug. The whole class embraced together and made a nice wish. Then they step on the stage confidently. They were so calm and devoted in the spot lights. The melody impressed every audience and finally the whole auditorium was filled with applause. They had made it! That was the most wonderful performance they

ever had! They were so excited and they ran toward me and hug me tightly. Leadership is a relationship and an act of influence as well as an impact.

Albert Einstein once said, “ We should take care not to make the intellect our god; it has, of course, powerful muscles but no personality. It cannot lead; it can only serve.” I used to presume that leadership is just for people at the top but I realized I was wrong. In fact, every one of us can learn to lead by discovering the potential that lies within ourselves, in order to make a difference of our life.

After two weeks, I had to go back to my city and continued my life and study. Those kids were all reluctant to see me leave. They held me tightly, and some of them even cried. Some students called me even “ Professor” to express their affection and thanks for me. I got many presents made by their own: paper flowers, pictures, chocolates, candies, and cards. Though cheap, they were exquisite and meaningful. At that moment, every scene and every moment we spent together was shown in my head again and again. I recalled everything from the first day I came to the last day I left. I didn't quite understand if this was power of leadership at that time, but there must have been something changed. When I reflected this experience after learning this course, I gradually realized it was myself who has changed. I changed from a student without any experience of being a leader to a real “ leader”! Leadership is like wine, only when time passes will it be the finest and the best. Being a leader is absolutely a difficult thing; it is never a piece of cake. However, the feeling of being a leader is extraordinary and terrific, though sometimes it was great pain and stress. I felt that the new “ me” is more courageous and confident; maybe it is because this volunteer

experience has taught me a lesson and refined my soul. If we say “Leadership is relationship”, I am sure that my leadership experience has won me not only relationship but also friendship, which has more profound meaning than only “relationship”. The students became my friends. They gave me beautiful memory.

To me, leadership is applicable to all facets of my own life and they are all beneficial: With the development of my self-awareness and confidence, I can gradually expand our perspective with a competency; I focus more on a goal and set the context of it; I understand the dynamics of human behaviors; I take the initiative to be the real “me”.

Generally, leadership development is not an event. Rather, it is a constant process. On one hand, leadership excellence is one of the most critical challenges facing not only organizations but small groups or individual nowadays. Leadership is not an easy job, so does to be a great leader. It requires commitment, talent, effort, guidance, and a most difficult thing – charisma. There is no doubt that leaders will face a great deal of pressure, which can be quantified. Nevertheless, after accomplishing a great mission or task together with those “followers”, a sense of achievement and fulfillment is more important than the actual rewards.

On the other hand, when we say “leadership is relationship”, that means relationship has profound influence in today’s society, too. I emphasize that the “relationship” here has nothing to do with bribery and corruption. I truly with that the competition is equal enough. We can safely draw a conclusion that nowadays, especially in a competitive society, no one can battle alone.

A wise leader with a strong organization as his or her supporters is more prone to succeed. Only if everyone in the team or organization is supposed to exert his or her utmost effort will it be possible that they have a happy end.

In all, to be a volunteer teacher in the village left me a valuable fortune. This was my precious experience that worth remembering all my life. I tasted the sweetness and the bitterness in the short two weeks. Though there were difficulties and crisis in this process, I won the respect and built firm relationship with my students. " Leadership is relationship", it is true. I did what a leader was supposed to do, and I had no regret at all. Those students have been my greatest friends because they also taught me a valuable lesson. This was my first time to be a " leader", but I have learnt a lot from this experience. What I should do is keep self-improving and never give up. I am still on my way to learning to be a good leader. On this way, there are still a lot of obstacles and much to learn.

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