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A PERSONAL LEADERSHIP STATEMENT

DALYS CECILIA HURTADO FABRA

ÁNGELA PATRICIA MERCADO MÉNDEZ

SORY ENERIED NEGRETE RUIZ



UNIVERSIDAD DE CÓRDOBA

FACULTY OF EDUCATION

ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHING PROGRAM

DIPLOMA COURSE

Lifelong Professional Development: Empowering Foreign Language Teachers

MONTERÍA - CÓRDOBA

2020

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Statement submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of English Teaching

Program

MENTOR

PEDRO PABLO AGUAS CASTILLO, PhD

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Our Leadership Profile

As future leaders, we see ourselves as responsible, visionary, and self-aware human beings; who seek to guide our teams in the development of tasks; purposed to get positive outcomes. We see ourselves working hard and wisely to provide others with useful tools that will foster their qualities; and, at the same time, will allow them to enrich their personal and academic growth. Through the different processes that leadership encompasses, we will assist others to hone their skills to achieve short, medium, and long-term goals that subsequently will support teamwork. Additionally, we will promote a respectful and social work environment framed into the principles of unity by facing challenges and adapting ourselves to the different contexts or situations that will emerge.

—*Dalys Hurtado, Ángela Mercado & Sory Negrete, Personal Leadership Statement*



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1. Introduction

The construct of leadership is described as a non-rational (Low, 2010) and coherent activity prone to develop a cycle that consists of planning, implementing, and evaluating programs (Mott, 2006, p. 456) designed to ease complex situations and solve contingencies in academic environments. In its regard to education, leadership is concerned with the practice of self-aware, proclivous, and visionary human beings, who exert accurate guidance, provide opportunities to hone group qualities and skills, optimize resources available, and “create a culture of trust and progress” to evince as a result, “self-maturation” professional and personal growth plus schools success and effectiveness. (Fairholm & Fairholm, 2009, p. 2).

Current literature on leadership states that it implies diverse perspectives as that of instructional, principal, managerial, transformational, moral, participative, and contingency leadership, which core, basis, and emphasis are aligned to focus on different educational segments (Cambridge international examinations, 2015). In the first instance, to implement leadership it is ineluctable to know the backdrop of the issues that emerge in institutional environments, the mechanics required to initiate the process. Subsequently, explore the peculiarities that unfold the basis of different leadership perspectives, in addition to the benefits that it would trigger to the covered setting, altogether, purposed to “build consensus among school leaders and faculties” and contribute to the academic progress. (Vesely, 2010, p. 1). Understanding the array of leadership

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perspectives helps to identify and guide our role within the process, to select, suitable leadership, taking into consideration the immersed workplace, its demands, vision, and outcomes.

After reflecting on this concept, we comprise leadership as a dynamic social practice and a group-oriented process that helps to discern talents, abilities, and qualities to use them to promote an educational enterprise. The leadership cycle demands appropriate delegation to carry out projects aimed to provide great cognitive and social development to the participants, strengthen integral personal and professional growth, accomplish targets, and improve school performance for overall institutional effectiveness.

2. Our assumptions

Teacher leadership has become a matter of great importance in the educational setting since it is a key factor in the improvement of school effectiveness and quality (Cambridge international examinations, 2015). From our teaching perspective, it is known that it is overriding and valuable to contribute to the academic development of our workplace. The desire to support emerges from an institutional need or vision for transforming and improving the work field, which makes that desire stronger. As pre-service teachers, we believe that it is not possible to execute a plan aimed at achieving such development without being motivated and aware of the benefits that may arise from the improvement that likewise spurs our professional growth.

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Based on the aforementioned, we can state that motivation and educational awareness are key factors in teacher leadership since they inspire teacher-leaders to make changes. As our primary concern is to improve the quality of instruction, classroom processes and to contribute to educational development, it requires us to be “responsible for supervising, directing, influencing, changing, motivating, and transforming others” (Shillingstad & McGlamery, 2009, p.26).

Regarding collaborative work, it can be said that it has been essential in our leadership learning during the course. As future teacher-leaders, we recognize that, in order to achieve a common goal, it is necessary to work with others and communicate effectively with them. Collaborative work has helped us to improve our communication skills as it has provided us with opportunities to interact, share thoughts, make decisions, and draw conclusions about different issues related to our learning and teaching practice. Additionally, working together has allowed us to get to know each other better, to build good relationships, and to have more appreciation for the role each of us performs in the team and the efforts we make. Thus, collaborative work has been a key component in our personal and professional growth.

Some inquiries that we have asked ourselves to improve as future teacher leaders are: What do we need to be great leaders? What other skills should we develop to be great leaders? How can we demonstrate that we are real leaders when facing challenges in our workplaces? What changes can we make to improve our teaching practice? During our leadership learning process, some of

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those questions have been answered but there are others that need to be answered in order to have a deep understanding of our future role as a teacher- leaders.

3. Leadership Empowerment and Implications for the Future

Empowerment is a widely recognized term in force in disciplines such as psychology, economics, politics, education, among others, so the definitions vary somewhat depending on the context. However, in a more global term, empowerment is defined as a process by which a person or groups of people acquire autonomy to take actions and influence institutions, organizations, companies, etc., and whose consequences affect their life and the development of their communities (Whitmore, 1988 in Lord & Hutchison, 1993).

Teacher empowerment is related to the knowledge of themselves and their colleagues to achieve collaborative work that increases their motivation and fosters student performance (Dee, et al., 2002, in Balyer, et al., 2017). If we take into account that the recent changes in society - globalization, competitiveness, socio-economic and environmental problems - have increased the demand for better professionals, then we can understand why empowerment is a theme that has become relevant in the field of education.

At this moment, we are experiencing one of the most difficult situations in our history due to the Covid-19 pandemic; undoubtedly, one of the most affected areas is education; hence, currently, the academy requires teacher leaders who are capable of facing this challenge and adapt to what Sivan and Rabinovitch (2020) allude to, 'New Normal 1' framework.

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Education is depending on technology, which, as Fullan mentions, is considered “as one of the vital change agents of education sector today” (Fullan, 2007 in Luqman et al., 2012). However, it seems that a large part of the educational community was not prepared to face this pandemic. This has left students, parents, and societies at a disadvantage, and unfortunately, as Luqman et al., claim “institutions lagging behind in technological sector are unable to face the pace of the world” (2012, p. 4) so we will soon see the consequences of these technological gaps that have come to light now that education has become virtual around the world.

As future teacher leaders, we are aware of our responsibility to mitigate the negative impact of a virtual education that has not been implemented in the best way, in which, among other factors, the lack of leadership has had a lot to do with. Therefore, we would take into account 5 of the 7 key areas through which according to Balyer, et al., (2017) teachers are empowered:

1. Through providing decision making
2. Through Providing Opportunities for their Professional Growth
3. Through Developing their Self-efficacy
4. Through Supporting their Autonomy
5. Through Improving Social Attractiveness, Trustworthiness and Communication

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This would be essential if we want to form a team that is prepared for any challenge and with which we can apply the *3NN strategic framework* and its three-part tactic – *Defense, Offense & Difference* recommended by Sivan and Rabinovitch (2020), which consists of evaluating, renegotiating and creating emergency tools and then going on the offensive in the short term, taking advantage of all the resources that the institutions have and finally making a difference by implementing new strategies, products, approaches, everything that is useful to close a bit the gap that has increased due to the closure of schools and virtual classes.

4. Conclusion

It is essential to note the importance of leadership empowerment as a basis for overall institutional performance. Multiple benefits are known for leadership as an innovative tool in education; hence, report the success of the execution of plans. The favorable results lie in several variables, for instance, the commitment for planning, implementation, and evaluation stages of the projects. Furthermore, its success also depends on a pragmatic vision that encourages all entities immersed to be motivated and engaged, through immediate learning enrichment and growth, and eventually, the decision-making processes before the emerging challenges that the practice encloses.

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To ensure innovation and quality of foreign language education, schools also need to focus on curriculum alignment, congruous relation among its components. Acknowledging that teaching provides cognitive, social, and in general, a holistic development, it is necessary to raise the teaching standards and include new approaches and teaching channels, such as inclusion, that in its environment, requires leadership practices as a pillar to develop collaborative work and ensure effective communication and comprehension to foster students and teachers performance.

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