Final Paper: Personal Platform of Beliefs

Tiah E. McKinney

George Mason University

EDUC 802 Leadership Seminar

Dr. Scott Bauer

May 06, 2010
Description of Core Belief

From this course, I have gleaned several important theoretical lessons about what effective leadership is, which has served to influence my core beliefs about leadership in my specialization, educational policy. In addition, throughout my educational career, I have held progressively responsible positions of leadership in education that have shaped my view of what leadership is and what it needs to be from a practical standpoint. My professional leadership experiences that I draw upon are varied and include working as a high school classroom practitioner, Director of Education for a regional science museum, president of a professional association for science educators, science supervisor for the state of Michigan, Curriculum Supervisor- Science for a public school district, an Albert Einstein “Distinguished Educator” Fellow, as a doctoral student; and, currently, as Executive Director for The McKinney Foundation.

Hence, my personal Platform of Core Beliefs not only reflect current theory and research that I find useful, but incorporate ‘lessons learned’ from past leadership experiences as well as what I believe are future trends for effective leadership in a global community. Accordingly, these core beliefs guide my decision making, actions and serve as a foundation for The McKinney Foundation, my latest endeavor. These core beliefs include:

1. Leadership is impacted by situations, relationships and the environment.
2. Effective leader have a strong sense of moral purpose, are passionate about the organization’s people and work performed and are consummate relationship builders.
3. Effective leaders are grounded in who they are and communicate a compelling vision.
4. Effective leaders are hard working, dedicated, honest and trustworthy.
5. Effective leaders are knowledgeable and can seamlessly employ tools such as the four-frames of leadership: structural, human resource, political and symbolic frame.
Reflection

During this process of reflection, I draw heavily from the work of Michael Fullan (2001) and Bolman & Deal (2008), which was instrumental in helping me put my past and current leadership experiences in context. Likewise, the aforementioned core beliefs are bolstered with current theory and research which helps to affirm my decisions regarding effective leadership.

Reading Fullan’s book, *Leading in a culture of change* (2001) has reconstructed my perception of leadership in several ways. First, effective leadership in a culture of change starts with a new mindset. Life is not chaotic, rather complex and leaders do not always need to do all the talking, yet at times should listen more. Secondly, leaders do not need to supply all the solutions, instead they serve as the “context setters” (Fullan, 2001, p. 111) for creating innovative conditions. As example, leaders act to forge new collaborations or relationships that will achieve ‘reculturing’ and enable employees closer to the problem to generate new and viable solutions. Third, effective leaders combine IQ intelligence, or innate ability, with emotional intelligence that can be learned. Additionally, Fullan (2001) introduced me to a new phrase, ‘complexity science’, which deals with the dynamic that is ignited when new relationships are brought together around a shared vision and the endless possibilities that can occur.

Fullan (2001) reinforced a valuable life lesson, during moments when you lose sight of direction and things seem out of control, this does not mean you lose control of yourself in the process. This underscores the critical need for leaders to be grounded in who they are. Next, sustained effectiveness depends upon building internal commitments from the people involved that activate their intrinsic motivation and ideas. This ties in directly with a sense of moral purpose and passion for the organization’s people and the work that is done. Finally, Fullan (2001) concludes that “leadership in a culture of change will be judged as effective or ineffective
not by who you are as a leader but what leadership you produce in others” (p. 137). In other words, effective 21st Century leaders must create situations that grow and develop other leaders, this is what the future demands and connects to how leadership is affected by people, situations and the environment.

The work of Bolman and Deal (2008) addressed the many qualities of effective leaders as recounted by numerous scholars in the field, such as the ability to inspire trust and build relationships, communicate a vision effectively and be humble. In addition, effective leaders are passionate and care about people, and are honest and truthful. These leadership characteristics all play a vital role in gaining cooperation of people. However, the most interesting lesson learned from reading the work of Bolman and Deal (2008) was learning about the four-frame model of leadership: structural, human resource, symbolic and political. Studying this model helped me to better understand both my personal leadership frame and the various lenses through which people operate from and view the world. My natural leadership orientation leans toward human resource and symbolic. With this understanding, I realize the importance of reframing in order to see things from an alternative perspective, such as from a political or structural viewpoint. In doing so, this process helps me in a variety of ways, it forces me to be more creative in my problem-solving approach, enables me to discover new issues that arise from using different maps. Yet, more importantly, reframing enables me to see situations from an opponent’s position and to develop a proactive and effective strategy to offset their line of attack. Lastly, Bolman and Deal (2008) make a compelling argument for using reframing in leadership stating, “Each frame highlights significant possibilities for leadership, but each by itself is incomplete” (p. 372). Hence, the authors believe that reframing offers effective leaders an opportunity to go beyond a limited and often time oversimplified view of leadership.
Delineation of Goals

Reflecting on my platform of core beliefs in leadership, I attempt to make sense of changes in my thinking that have occurred as a natural outcome of coursework completion, especially as I conclude my last General Culture Course, EDUC 802: Leadership Seminar, signifying a milestone in my doctoral program. Hence, the continuous process of reflection has been a familiar practice in preparation for my 1st Portfolio Review. Therefore, these leadership goals are a work in progress.

Although, changes have occurred in my thinking and leadership goals, the core of who I am remains the same. Thus, I begin my delineation of goals reflecting on what internal standards have served to guide me professionally, including what I consider ‘grounding principles’ which extract from past leadership experiences and my original goal statement. These are my belief in working hard, continuously striving to reach my highest potential, and furthering my professional, educational and leadership experiences.

Additionally, I remain steadfast in my belief that education affords me true freedom—this has both historical and spiritual significance. One key concern is ensuring educational equity, meaning to ensure 'access' and 'opportunity' to quality educational experiences for all learners, regardless of race, class or gender. This theme will undoubtedly be prevalent in my future writings, research and collaborations throughout my doctoral program and beyond. Finally, making education a priority, through its relentless pursuit, opened doors of opportunity and offered me a better quality of life that, I believe, will benefit all individuals, particularly, historically marginalized communities.
References
