

## **Leadership Reflection Essay**

Being the firstborn child and grandchild in my family, the mantle of leadership was placed upon me early in life. My upbringing was steeped in the understanding that my actions and decisions would influence not just my life but also the trajectory of those who looked up to me. I remembered an African proverb very well that said, "To whom much is given, much is expected," which let me know what an impactful life I was supposed to live. It greatly influenced my view on the concept of leadership: to empower, inspire, and uplift others.

### **Transformative Learning Experiences**

One of the most transformative learning experiences I had was during the English Immersion Program at the African Leadership University. This experience furthered my notions that the aspect of leadership was solely directive and hierarchical. On the contrary, I was introduced to the concept of servant leadership, whereby the leader is primarily supposed to serve the team and put them in a collaborative environment. The role-playing and the projects we did took me through how to use empathy, active listening, and adaptability. These skills have oriented my leadership style into one that is inclusive and people-centered.

Another pivotal moment was the group simulation project in my Advanced Start-Ups course. At the helm of developing and scaling a virtual venture, my team and I faced various obstacles that tested our resolve, creativity, and strategic thinking. I could apply a number of leadership theories, most notably John Kotter's 8-Step Process for Leading Change: building a guiding coalition and communicating a shared vision. The application of these principles really hammered home just how important clear communication and setting collective goals are to success.

### **Applying Leadership Theories**

The leadership theories have been so helpful in my development. One such situation where I consciously applied the theories of leadership was when I played the role of Finance Lead in a startup project. Drawing from Maxwell's 5 Levels of Leadership, first I started building trust and credibility with my team before driving performance. Letting them own it and giving value to their thoughts helped me build a very performing team who were committed to a common mission.

Engagement with Stephen Covey's "Circle of Influence" helped me to properly focus my efforts. The aspects over which I could exercise little influence outside the periphery became less overwhelming because, mentally, I channeled my effort on the important ones that made a real difference. The community project was actually done regarding inequalities in educational provisions, leading campaigns for the better implementation of sharing networks, wherein, after organizing it, changes can be highly realized.

### **Evaluating My Learning Journey**

I now realize that through this journey of learning, my skills, knowledge, and attitude have marvelously developed. There were several experiences whereby sailing through ambiguity and complexity taught me the art of critical thinking and acting decisively. For example, the International

World Children's Book Day planning effectively developed my project management and organizational skills while deepening my understanding of the importance of education as an empowering tool.

More than this, I have grown more self-conscious, realizing my strong points and weaknesses. Empathy, optimism, and diligence were my strengths, which allowed me to come closer to people and incite them toward the achievement of a common goal. On the other side, I worked on mitigating my weaknesses, such as being initially reluctant to provide honest feedback. By constructing an approach to feedback and emphasizing appreciation, I created an environment of openness and trust in my teams.

### **Connecting Insights to My Mission and Future Plans**

The learning process has, in essence, been closely linked to my mission of equal opportunities for education worldwide. The knowledge and skills I have acquired so far have empowered me to respond to systemic issues like illiteracy and resource constraints. For example, the financial modeling and strategy-building skills I learned from the course have prepared me to create scalable and sustainable educational programs.

The artifacts I have developed, such as a Theory of Change and stakeholder analyses, served to further my understanding of how the different elements interact with each other in the development of societal challenges. These tools have been priceless in my quest to advocate for policy changes and to introduce tech-driven learning platforms. It is with these insights that, after graduation, I will find an organization that seeks to eliminate financial barriers to education. By integrating innovative solutions into grassroots advocacy, I work to build a world where each child will be afforded the ability to thrive.

### **Conclusion**

For me, leadership is not about titles or positions; it's about service and the difference one can make. This journey has been one of constant growth, molded by transformative experiences and the application of leadership theories. My ethos as a leader is faith, integrity, and respect-continued to guide me in creating environments where individuals can realize their full potential.

This is achieved through reflection and adaptation that tuned my skills and strengthened my resolve toward addressing global challenges in education. My mission remains clear: that no child's thirst for knowledge should be hampered by limitations in finances. As I head into the future, I carry with me all that has defined my leadership journey: lessons, insights, and passion, so that I may create a legacy that will last and bring about empowerment and change.

## References

Depree, M. (1987). Leadership Is an Art eBook: Depree, Max: Kindle Store. Amazon.com. Retrieved February 4, 2023, from <https://www.amazon.com/Leadership-Art-Max-Depree-ebook/dp/B0053CT29A>