

Competency # 1 Leadership: A Reflective Self-Assessment

Mozhda Radmanish

University of Kansas

Leadership

Leadership is defined as inspiring people to take on difficult challenges (Heifetz et al., 2009). The ACPA&NASPA competency rubrics describes leadership as a process that involves individuals working together to plan, visualize, and execute change in an organization (2015). This competency is categorized into four components: foundational and theoretical principles of leadership, self-awareness and continued reflection, teamwork and interpersonal skills, and change management and innovation (ACPA&NASPA,2015). One component of leadership competency is the leader's ability to have knowledge of theories and leadership models to exercise an effective leadership process. Foundational skills are the individuals' ability to identify one's strengths and challenges and look for opportunities to develop these skills. Reflection and self-awareness are the other components of this competency. It is about having the capacity to use reflection to understand one's values and beliefs that shape their leadership behavior and style (ACPA&NASPA, 2015). Based on my knowledge of leadership theories and my experiences in higher education and human resources management fields, my leadership competency is at a foundational level. I am continuing to develop my strategic decision-making, change, and crisis management skills.

Adaptive Leadership Theory and Practice

I began learning leadership and building my foundation in leadership theories and models through my participation in the Kansas Women's Leadership program in 2016. During the program, I had the opportunity to observe and engage in civic leadership activities, where I gained practical experience in effective leadership practices that impact our community. Additionally, through attending adaptive leadership training, I developed a deep understanding of leadership theories and various types of leadership styles. I also had an opportunity to observe

and learn from the world's women leaders throughout attending in guest speaker events. The concept of adaptive leadership is about change that enables individuals' capacity to thrive (Heifetz et al., 2009). The three stages of adaptive leadership include: observe, interpret, and intervene. Understanding this framework has helped me look at my life challenges as a learning opportunity and enabled me to quickly adapt to change. For instance, in my current job as a graduate assistant, I have been practicing this leadership framework by helping international students adjusting to life in the U.S and connecting them with the resources they need to succeed. Further, when supporting international students, I first observe their challenges. For most part, I interpret that their challenges are not technical, but adaptive. My interventions are based on identifying cultural aspects of adjustment and building their confidence in navigating challenges and adapting to a new environment.

Approaching leadership practice from this perspective, I can also distinguish between technical and adaptive challenges when advising student leaders. As an advisor for two student organizations here at KU, I use this model to not only help solve student problems, but to motivate them to act and make their own decisions. Many issues that students' leaders from the International Women Student Association and Jayhawk for Afghanistan bring to advising is the conflict between members, unclear expectations, and issues related to budget that cannot be fixed through policies. In moments like these, I learned to acknowledge their concerns and find a bigger picture. By diagnosing the root of the problem, I was able to help students find common values and support them to work together to achieve a common goal. This has been a major growth area for me because it enabled me to reflect on adaptive leadership as a process that inspired me to overcome challenges to achieve my personal and professional goals. Throughout my educational journey in the U.S, I developed leadership traits such as resilience, adaptability

to change, and being able to collaboratively work with a diverse group of individuals. In addition, as an international student myself, I know challenges that other international students face while adjusting to a new environment. Therefore, using my awareness of leadership, I am putting this into practice and leading with empathy while communicating and constantly seeking to help them thrive through difficult and high-pressure situations.

Reflection, Self-Awareness, and Personal Growth

Beyond my leadership experience with the KWLI program, the most significant part of my leadership development skills comes from my graduate school coursework. I studied leadership, diversity, equity, and inclusion through my graduate certificate at KU. The LDST 760 leadership and communication class coursework has helped me to understand the concepts of DEI and apply this knowledge in helping and supporting students on campus. This course also equipped me with the confidence to work collaboratively with a small and large team in the U.S workplace. In addition, it was beneficial in developing my inter-personal communication and managing crucial conversation in the workplace. Beyond that, my master's coursework in higher education administration has enhanced my knowledge in different leadership styles in colleges and higher education institutions.

After taking the ELPS 786 Introduction to College Leadership, I learned the leadership theories and concepts that further expanded my understanding of leadership practices within colleges and student affairs. In addition, apart from class readings, the assignments were focused on developing leadership skills that are necessary for student affairs professionals. One example of this is reflecting on my philosophy statement and designing a leadership development program for international students' leaders. More specifically, in my leadership philosophy statement assignment, I was able to reflect on my personal leadership values as a leader. This

practice has strengthened my ability to lead with empathy, particularly in uncertain situations, when people need more clarity, support, and trust. Overall, using course contents to develop leadership programs, designing my leadership philosophy statement, and learning from current leaders in student affairs expanded my ability to assess the situation and lead in a way that values diversity, equity, and inclusion.

As part of the college leadership course and to better understand myself as a leader, I took the Myers Briggs Personality Test that helped me to learn about my strengths and weaknesses. Based on my personality test results, I am introverted, protective, responsible, and caring. As an ISFJ person, I enjoy helping others and dedicating my time to supporting my friends, family, and the people I work with. These personality traits are reflected in my work helping and supporting students. For instance, in my previous job I worked closely with students who needed additional support in terms of availability of resources and navigating college life. I prioritized their needs and allocated some time outside of my work to meet with each individual separately to understand their needs and support them in any way possible.

Being an ISFJ means that I value responsibility and commitment, which influences my leadership style. Rather than seeking attention or authority, I lead by example and focus on creating a supportive and dependable environment. My caring nature allows me to build trust with students, which helps them feel comfortable asking for help. However, being introverted can sometimes make it challenging for me to assert myself in group settings or take on highly visible leadership roles. Recognizing this weakness allows me to intentionally work on becoming more confident in expressing my ideas and stepping outside of my comfort zone. Taking the personality test was beneficial to me because as a leader, it encouraged me to be more intentional

while serving a diverse group of students on campus. It also enabled me to be more self-aware of my actions and behaviors when leading and serving students.

Further, reflecting on my leadership philosophy statement along with my self-awareness assessment helped me connect my values and beliefs that guide my leadership practice. My core leadership values are empathy, equity, and inclusion as I believe that leadership is about creating spaces where people around me feel safe, valued, and supported. I demonstrated these values through supporting, advising, and working with international students at the university. At the ISS, most of my responsibilities are facilitating the ISS Atlas events, international students' orientation, and recruiting students' leaders. By doing that, I often practice leadership in a way that aligns with the university and department mission. I also seek to learn more about current issues and events about international students and how to support these students to succeed in college.

Conclusion

Based on the theoretical leadership principles and reflection and self-awareness on the ACPA&NASPA competency rubrics that I discussed in this paper. Leadership begins with developing self-awareness through reflection. I established my leadership values and treats by creating an environment that allows me to use empathy to understand students from a diverse background and support them better to achieve their goals. This growth ties directly into my coursework in adaptive leadership, introduction to college leadership, leadership, and communication. In addition, my current role as graduate assistant with the international support services office has empowered me to practice these leadership competencies through designing programs such as ISS Atlas Series, International Student Orientation, ISS Conversation Series, Global Partners, and recruiting international Orientation Leaders. Although my leadership

competency is still at foundational level, I am eager to seek out feedback and attend workshops that help me to expand the horizons of my leadership knowledge and skills.

Artifact # 1: ELPS 786: Leadership Philosophy Statement

One artifact I submitted with this document is my leadership philosophy statement that I integrated the concepts from college leadership class to prepare my philosophy statement. In this assignment, I talked about my values and principles that guide my leadership practices in my personal and professional relationships. Additionally, using what I learned about leadership in the classroom, I developed the core tenants of my leadership philosophy, which stems from my lived experiences as an Afghan women refugee and international students living and studying abroad.

Artifact # 2: Adaptive Leadership, Resilience, and MBTI Personality Test

Another artifact I submitted with this document is my MBTI personality test result and how it relates to my leadership practice as well as shaped my values as a leader.

Artifact # 3: Lead Jayhawk for Afghanistan, and International Women Association

As a graduate student, I am an advisor for two student organizations. I practice my leadership skills in helping, supporting, and advocating for underrepresented student groups on campus.

References

- ACPA—College Student Educators International, & NASPA—Student Affairs Administrators in Higher Education. (2015, October). *ACPA/NASPA professional competencies rubrics*. Authors.
- Heifetz, R. A., Grashow, A., & Linsky, M. (2009). *The practice of adaptive leadership: Tools and tactics for changing your organization and the world*. Harvard Business Press.