Reflection of Student Social Work Association

318681

Tarleton State University

Over the past three semesters, I have been a member of the Southwest-Metroplex chapter of the Tarleton Student Social Work Association (SSWA). This has been an amazing learning experience, as I have begun to appreciate the many skills needed in leadership. My first semester with SSWA began with several others student and myself coming together to create our chapter. I was elected President, and have retained that office. The two subsequent semesters showed substantial development in the organization and in all of the members. Through this past semester, I developed as a leader personally, interpersonally, and I noted vast development in the organization itself.

My personal leadership development can be described by the Hershey-Blanchard Situational Leadership Theory. First published in 1969, this theory argues that one should utilize different leadership styles depending on the maturity of the team members (Hersey, Blanchard, & Natemeyer, 1979). The model states that a more directing approach may help immature individuals, while more mature people might require a more participative or delegating style (1979). The SSWA is made up of young and middle-age adults. Their maturity levels differ due to various life experiences. Therefore, I attempt to use a combination of Participatory, Transformational, and Delegative/Laissez-fair styles. Participatory style works well, because our lower member count requires more individual man-hours. I preside over meetings, and I also have a vote. I create committees, and I serve on them myself. Using the Participatory style allows me to be more engaged and better understand other members’ perspectives.

I also try to use the Transformational style. This style notices a need for change, and motivates others towards that change. The SSWA is very new to our campus, and we are still learning how to run a successful student organization. A large part of what we do consists of trying new tactics, and deciding if it works or not. An example is our monthly awarenesses. We began these events by posting flyers for awareness about specific illnesses. We now do flyers, ribbons, and even on-campus events raising awareness.

A third leadership style I implement is Delegative/Laissez-fair. This style assumes that members are capable of completing tasks without micromanagement. This can be seen in our various Committees. Members volunteer to head up the SSWA committees, and they do most of the organization for their respective committees. They then give a report on progress at a designated time.

Over this past semester, I have also developed my interpersonal skills. These include my listening skills, problem solving, and cooperation skills. I have worked on active listening by asking questions and pausing before responding. These tactics have been very beneficial while working with SSWA members.

Problem solving is another skill that I have worked to develop. Throughout the semester, there have been instances of contention. An example is when the SSWA was overloaded with service event, and needed to choose. In order to make the decision, I listed all events for the members, discussed pros and cons, and allowed members to find a mutually agreeable outcome.

This leads me to my final interpersonal skill: cooperation. This past semester has taught me that I am incapable of completing all tasks on my own. It is much better to delegate certain tasks to others, while I complete the tasks that I am capable of doing.

Overall, being a part of the SSWA has help shape my leadership skills immensely. I have grown personally and interpersonally, because of the work our organization does. I hope to develop these skills even further in the future through my connection with the SSWA.

Reference

Hersey, P., Blanchard, K., & Natemeyer, W. (1979). Situational Leadership, Perception, and the Impact of Power. *Group & Organization Management,* 418-428.