UNIVERSIDAD DE CÓRDOBA

FACULTAD DE EDUCACIÓN Y CIENCIAS HUMANAS
DEPARTAMENTO DE IDIOMAS EXTRANJEROS

A PERSONAL LEADERSHIP STATEMENT

DANIELA DE JESÚS SÁNCHEZ YÁNEZ

DORA LUZ SIERRA ARIETA

KAREN ROSA VILLALBA TORDECILLA

UNIVERSIDAD DE CÓRDOBA

FACULTY OF EDUCATION

ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHING PROGRAMME

DIPLOMA COURSE

Lifelong Professional Development: Empowering Foreign Language Teachers

MONTERÍA - CÓRDOBA

2021

UNIVERSIDAD DE CÓRDOBA

FACULTAD DE EDUCACIÓN Y CIENCIAS HUMANAS
DEPARTAMENTO DE IDIOMAS EXTRANJEROS

A PERSONAL LEADERSHIP STATEMENT

DANIELA DE JESÚS SÁNCHEZ YÁNEZ

DORA LUZ SIERRA ARRIETA

KAREN ROSA VILLALBA TORDECILLA

Statement submitted in fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of English

Teaching Program

MENTOR

PEDRO AGUAS CASTILLO, PhD

UNIVERSIDAD DE CÓRDOBA

FACULTY OF EDUCATION

ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHING PROGRAMME

MONTERÍA – CÓRDOBA

2021

UNIVERSIDAD DE CÓRDOBA

FACULTAD DE EDUCACIÓN Y CIENCIAS HUMANAS
DEPARTAMENTO DE IDIOMAS EXTRANJEROS

"VIGILADA MINEDUCACIÓN"

ACREDITACIÓN
INSTITUCIONAL

Nowadays, lots of people want to be called "teachers" simply for teaching a subject or topic. However, being a teacher is not merely about teaching grammar or pronunciation; it is also about teaching them to keep strong when they have a problem. In the future, the passion we have for teaching will be reflected in the classroom, transmitting meaningful knowledge, that is, useful knowledge for the students, showing ourselves as good examples of citizens committed to our country and with a high sense of belonging. Humility teaches us that the true protagonists of learning are not us but our students. Humility feeds on listening, i.e., active and empathetic listening to the students, their feelings, emotions, and knowledge. All in all, ourselves as leaders for our students. Leaders that they love for accepting each other as they are. We will also guide them to understand that they are unique and valuable.

"The mediocre teacher tells. The good teacher explains. The superior teacher demonstrates. The great teacher inspires." -Willian Arthur Ward

- *Daniela Sánchez, Dora Sierra & Karen Villalba, personal Leadership statement*

UNIVERSIDAD DE CÓRDOBA
FACULTAD DE EDUCACIÓN Y CIENCIAS HUMANAS
DEPARTAMENTO DE IDIOMAS EXTRANJEROS

Introduction

Every day, human beings wonder how we can be successful people or what we need to do to be successful. These are questions that come to our minds and interrupt our thoughts. Many times, we do not have a concrete answer for them. Nonetheless, we need to think deeper about the aspects or factors that help us solve those questions. One of them is recognizing the definition of leadership because it is the main aspect to understand how we achieve success. According to Daft (2008), "leadership is an influence relationship among leaders and followers who intend real changes and outcomes that reflect their shared purposes". (p.4). In this sense, leadership is the reflection of a closer relationship between two parts, leaders and followers who have a common goal and share reciprocal feelings and ideas.

We need to find our role and place in the world and consider the skills, abilities, and competencies that we have developed throughout our lives. Being aware of our strengths and weaknesses is paramount because they help us recognize ourselves and determine our field of action. In our case, as English teachers, it is essential to comprehend the importance of teacher leadership to be able to guide educative processes and learning projects that provide support to the educational community as a society. Khan & Malik (2013, p.67) claimed that "teacher leaders engage in continuous action research projects that examine their effectiveness. Teacher-leaders mentor new teachers. They are risk-takers who participate in school

UNIVERSIDAD DE CÓRDOBA
FACULTAD DE EDUCACIÓN Y CIENCIAS HUMANAS
DEPARTAMENTO DE IDIOMAS EXTRANJEROS

decisions." Teacher leadership goes beyond leading the classroom since it has an influence that impacts students for lifelong learning. Leadership allows students to engage in diverse works that enrich their knowledge and leads them to enhance their skills by putting them at the service of society. Childs, Bowen, Moeller, and Scrivener. (2000) (as is cited in Wenner et al. 2017, p. 7) state, "We believe teachers are leaders when they function in professional learning communities to affect student learning; contribute to school improvement; inspire excellence in practice, and empower stakeholders to participate in educational improvement." Teacher leadership aims to design and implement new methods and approaches to solve the students' learning difficulties and possible problematic situations in the community.

Our Assumptions

From their training process, teachers begin to build their own identities. Grier and Johnston (2009) argue that "teacher identity is based upon the core beliefs one has about teaching and being a teacher that are constantly changing and evolving based upon personal and professional experiences" (p. 59). They generate a series of beliefs and assumptions that become the basis of their professional performance as leading teachers responsible for guiding various students during their academic training process. According to Paul and Elder (2012) (as cited in Kekana 2013, p. 22), assumptions refer to "what we take for granted without questioning or reflecting on them. The assumptions may form part of our beliefs system but

UNIVERSIDAD DE CÓRDOBA
FACULTAD DE EDUCACIÓN Y CIENCIAS HUMANAS
DEPARTAMENTO DE IDIOMAS EXTRANJEROS

are based on our experiences and learning." Therefore, there is a reciprocal relationship between our experience and our assumptions.

Being the foreign language classroom our field of action at the educational level, it is relevant to say how teacher leaders use their assumptions to lead educational or foreign language classroom processes. For instance, throughout our teacher training, we have built a series of assumptions or beliefs that have undoubtedly influenced our teaching practicum. We believe that as teacher leaders, we have to scrutinize the students' needs, backgrounds, and aptitudes, to lead from a position that takes into account the followers (students), to achieve the proposed objectives concerning learning a foreign language. Moreover, activities, material, and instruction should motivate and involve every student in the whole class. In this respect, everyone has the right and opportunity to learn and take part in the process, being aware of the importance of their role within the classroom and school. These assumptions will help in planning and directing instruction to ensure students' success because there is a teacher leader that guides and motivates them to do their best and take advantage of their potential.

In accordance with the above, being a leader also implies recognizing the importance of collaborative work. There is no leader if he/she is alone. There is no leader without followers. According to Daft (2008, p .5), leadership influences others "to come together around a common vision." and "leadership is shared among leaders and followers, with everyone fully engaged and accepting higher levels of responsibility." Therefore, collaborative work is paramount and it is something innate in leadership.

UNIVERSIDAD DE CÓRDOBA
FACULTAD DE EDUCACIÓN Y CIENCIAS HUMANAS
DEPARTAMENTO DE IDIOMAS EXTRANJEROS

Collaborative work has brought us right where we stand now. It has been essential and significant in completing each assignment. And it is in the completion where we ask ourselves some questions such as: How could we influence our students from our leadership role? How can we involve students so that they take responsibility for their learning to achieve a common goal? And how do we guide our students to become true leaders? These questions motivate us every day to move forward and improve to answer them and thus, be able to become the leaders that this world needs.

Leadership Empowerment and Implications for the Future

The role of a teacher in the classroom goes beyond teaching an area of knowledge. Teachers must be leaders that empower students to take action and be active participants in their learning processes. According to Daft (2008, p. 243), empowerment refers to "power-sharing, the delegation of power or authority to subordinates in the organization." Therefore, a teacher-leader shifts from control to empowerment and delegates power and responsibility to students so that they can be aware of their role and focus on achieving the goals. It is worth mentioning that empowering is not about leaving students to their fate but providing them with the required resources and direction that might guide them through the process. Lightfoot (1986, p. 9) claimed that "empowerment is defined as the opportunities an individual has for autonomy, choice, responsibility, and participation, in decision making in organizations." The author suggests that when we empower students, we involve them in decision-making

UNIVERSIDAD DE CÓRDOBA
FACULTAD DE EDUCACIÓN Y CIENCIAS HUMANAS
DEPARTAMENTO DE IDIOMAS EXTRANJEROS

processes at school, such as electing their representatives, choosing how they will be assessed, the materials to be used for instruction, and so on. Teachers can also empower their students by letting them know the importance of their role in society because it is not all about the school, but their future and professional lives as well as their role as citizens that must engage with their civic rights and responsibilities. All in all, when teacher-leaders empower their students, they foster students' development of self-efficacy to thrive in their learning process, lives, and society. Broom (2015, p. 80) declared that "active behavior comes from individuals who are empowered, that is, individuals who feel they have the ability to enact social, political, economic, or other change; to manage or to influence others; and/or to engage in actions that influence others."

Considering the above, as teachers – leaders we will empower our students bearing in mind the following steps:

- Tell students about their role in their learning process.

- Delegate their responsibilities and authority.

- Provide them with the information related to the goals and action plans.

- Trust them and praise them for their achievements.

- Provide feedback on performance for improvement.

Through these steps, we intend to empower our students from our leadership role to expand their potential despite their way of thinking. This will be one of our challenges because sometimes, they limit themselves when thinking that they are too young to take authority and

achieve something that might impact not only their learning processes but education and society as well.

Conclusion

Leadership plans are based on a set of processes, human talent, decisions, and skills that allow carrying out projects to achieve a social goal in favor of a community. It is imperative to recognize that the success of leadership plans depends on the role developed by a leader as a mentor who identifies himself as part of a society who works to build something special. Additionally, leaders do not work individually. They need an exceptional group of work with a broad sense of collaboration, teamwork, and innovative ideas to help to generate transformation in communities believing in change as an agent of opportunities and improvement.

In the education area, leadership plans must focus on continuous improvement of the pedagogical practicum and teaching processes in which, teachers as leaders, can guide projects that ensure quality education in the foreign language. Quality of foreign language education is achievable by employing curricular guidelines designed to improve the abilities and foreign language skills of students and teachers. Additionally, quality can be achieved by implementing workshops for training teachers, and promoting government guidelines to support the development and implementation of foreign languages in public and private schools with equity.

UNIVERSIDAD DE CÓRDOBA
FACULTAD DE EDUCACIÓN Y CIENCIAS HUMANAS
DEPARTAMENTO DE IDIOMAS EXTRANJEROS

References

Broom, C. (2015). Empowering students: Pedagogy that benefits educators and learners. *Citizenship, Social and Economics Education, 14*(2), 79-86.

Daft, R. (2008). The Leadership Experience (4th). Thomson South-Western.

Grier, J. M., & Johnston, C. C. (2009). An inquiry into the development of teacher identities in STEM career changers. *Journal of Science Teacher Education, 20*, 57–75.

Khan & Malik, S. (2013). Is teacher leadership a fantasy or reality? A review. *Journal of educational and instructional studies in the world, 3*(3), 66-72.

Kekana, M. D. The assumptions, values and beliefs of principals regarding school leadership and management, 2013, (Doctoral dissertation, University of Pretoria).

Lightfoot, S. L. (1986). On Goodness of schools: Themes of empowerment. *Peabody Journal of Education, 63*(3), 9 - 28.

Wenner, J. A., & Campbell, T. (2017). The theoretical and empirical basis of teacher leadership: A Review of the Literature. *Review of Educational Research*, *87*(1), 134–171. https://doi.org/10.3102/0034654316653478

UNIVERSIDAD DE CÓRDOBA

FACULTAD DE EDUCACIÓN Y CIENCIAS HUMANAS

DEPARTAMENTO DE IDIOMAS EXTRANJEROS