

INSTILLING LEADERSHIP SKILLS IN CHILDREN FOR A BETTER SOCIETY

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Abstract

The purpose of leadership is to secure the unit from destruction. This paper examine leader and leadership and how they are found in the family and the society. It also capture what the leaders need in other to succeed physically, economically, emotionally and variables. The society needs leadership skills to make them succeed in life at the personal levels. The skill of perseverance is an essential skill in leadership. The best leaders learn to handle failures as carefully as they handle success, the paper is gear toward help them to know and live into the standard of the expectation of the future.

Key words: Raising, Community, Leader

Introduction

In everyday language, a leader is a person who leads others (followers) for a particular purpose or reason. Hence, leadership is inevitable where two or three people are gathered to undertake a particular task. Leader and leadership can be found in the family, Church, school, community and a society at large (organizations and groups inclusive) As we live in challenging times, children need to learn and grow by overcoming the challenges and creating a win-to-win environment for their careers and life. A famous quote by Nelson Mandela – “Children of today are the leaders of tomorrow,” is inspiring. Self-discipline,

teamwork, and problem-solving skills can be taught to the children, positively impacting them in their lives to become great leaders. There are many programs globally, such as training on leadership skills, which can be enrolled at any point in our respective careers. The best and foremost time to help to impart the leadership skills is at the school level age

What is Leadership

Mary K pratt (2014) Leadership is the ability of an individual or a group of individuals to influence and guide followers or other members of an organization. Leadership involves making sound -- and sometimes difficult -- decisions, creating and articulating a clear vision, establishing achievable goals and providing followers with the knowledge and tools necessary to achieve those goals. Leaders are found and required in most aspects of society, from business to politics to region to community-based organizations. An effective leader possess the following characteristics: self-confidence, strong communication and management skills, creative and innovative thinking, perseverance in the face of failure, willingness to take risks, openness to change, and levelheadedness and reactivity in times of crisis.

The Importance of Leadership

The philosophy of leadership is to secure the unit from chaos and destruction. Therefore, leadership deals with the state of giving a sense of direction and harmonious living. It is concerned with the act of administration, controlling, managing and coordination of series of tasks. Leadership is also supposed to execute equity among members where the need arises (Haralambos & Heald, 1980). The pilot of leadership is a leader; and leadership can be good or bad inferring that the leader is either good or bad.

Goodness in leadership connotes happiness and satisfaction of the followers, while bad leadership connotes followers' unhappiness and dissatisfaction. The former is the expectation of the followers in a leadership, while the latter is a detestable leadership. No wonder, the word of God declares that "when the wicked rule, the people mourn" (Prov. 29:2).

Who are the Future Leaders?

The future leaders are unknown, but known individuals who have not formally assumed a position of leadership yet. However, they are leaders in their own right. These can be children from kindergarten class to primary six, secondary school students; students of higher institutions of learning; and even those who are

out of school or are denied opportunity to be in formal school. All of them are potential leaders and the saying: “Children are leaders of tomorrow” is true.

What the Future Leaders Need

First and foremost, they need to be identified and to be believed that they can be leaders tomorrow, regardless of their socio-economic background, physical disposition, emotional posture and other variables. Therefore they need to be respected not to treat them with disdain.

Helping “Leaders” to Develop Leadership Skills

It is not an easy thing to make children and adults to learn and develop leadership skills, but it is not impossible to do so. It is actually rewarding and of great importance for the young people to learn and develop the skills of leadership in their early age. By this, they will develop valuable qualities such as resilience, positive attitude and willingness to admit mistakes and learn from them (Walters, 2013).

Why Help them Develop Leadership Skills?

The “why” is simple. They need leadership skills to make them succeed in life at the personal and public levels. Such skills also make their followers feel satisfied with the sense of leadership that is meant for them. In his view, Krenz (2013) argues that there are five valuable qualities of leadership which can make a basis for a vital life skill. These qualities are; overcoming adversity, commitment, perseverance, excellence and positive attitude.

The Need to Instill Quality Leadership in Children for a Better Society

Though there are some debates whether some children are ‘born-leaders’ or they are ‘trained-leaders’, it is proved that all children have the potential to build their leadership skills, but here the elders should play the vital role by teaching the children necessary skills to take on their leadership roles. So, as a parent, it is your duty to help your child to build their leadership skills so that they move forward in their life and career with the benefits of leadership touch in all the phases of their life. You may ask why leadership skill is necessary for a child. As a grown-up, you must feel the need for leadership quality in your life whether in your professional life or personal life. Though there is no age limitation to develop leadership quality in a person, still it is good to instill leadership skills in your child from the very beginning. Now look at the reasons why developing and upgrading leadership skill in your child is beneficial:

1. **Improve Negotiation Skills:** The leadership skills include negotiating with others. Thus it can help your child to achieve goals that are mutually beneficial for everyone. In addition, having the ability to negotiate with other can help your child to play the every role of their life more efficiently.
2. **Develop Self-Confidence:** One of the most prominent qualities that every person should have is no doubt self-confidence. As a parent, you surely that how it is important to be confident in every single area of your life. You must feel how your life could be better if you had more self-confidence. But, now it is time for you not to do the same mistake with your child, rather try to improve the leadership qualities of your child from the very beginning.
3. **Sharpen problem-Solving Skills:** if you child possesses the leadership skill, they are often charged with guiding a group. It will help them to capable in several ways including dealing with personal obligations, problem-solving skills, enhancing multi-tasking skills and many more.
4. **Build Personality:** The most important benefits of developing leadership skills in your child is that it can build the personality of your child. It is because while developing leadership skills, your child will learn some basic disciplines of life including honesty, integrity, humility, love, patience and perseverance. Most importantly leadership qualities will help your child to become a better person.
5. **Increase Communication Skills:** If you instill leadership skill in your child, it will help them to develop communication skills whether in public speaking, group meetings, one-to-one conversation, written communications as well. As a parent, you must know that how good communication skill is important for everyone as it is good for professional, personal and social life.

There is no doubt that leadership qualities can benefit every aspect your child's life by giving them greater confidence, communication skills and overall developing character. Thus it can improve the every aspect of your child's life, and thus they will success in their life.

How to Help Children to Develop Leadership Skills

The top most importance is "how" to lead children to the knowledge of God, that He is the creator of ALL, and must be revered and served. They

should know that God is GOOD, and that good leadership skills are found in Him. So, the knowledge of God is instilled in children is the fundamental foundation of raising future leaders. The case of Joseph, Samuel, David, Solomon and many of such Bible characters are examples.

Parents and teachers should first introduce the knowledge and fear of God to the mind of the children. Let the children practice good skills of leadership at home and in school with some measures of corrections if necessary. The Church should also do the same; treat children with dignity, giving them the true teaching about the fear of God and true leadership.

Be One Another's Keeper

Parents, teachers and Church leaders should create opportunities for the young people or children to be one another's keeper. This is a skill that makes children to think ahead, solve problems, be resourceful and to consider life from another person's else's point of view. Such opportunities are; sports, indoor-games/plays, Bible studies, looking after the siblings etc. This skill erodes the egocentric tendency which is destroying our society today.

Let Children be Good Communicators

Communication skills are essential leadership qualities which children and young people need to develop. Parents, teachers and Church leaders should focus on how to develop the skills in children. It is observed that good leaders are good communicators. Therefore the act of good communication should be developed in children from an early age (Dray, 2013). Children are given opportunities to read books and speak; retell a story read, answer and ask questions from the book read (no matter how sill what they say). Sometimes the story books are read to the hearing of the children, the interaction comes after (Krenz, 2013).

Children should be allowed to speak directly to fathers, mothers and their siblings when the need arises. This develops in them a sense of confidence in communication.

The Need for Negotiation

Some parents, Church leaders and teachers demand absolute adherence to rules and instructions. We need to teach them the act of negotiation and compromise to achieve something good. They should know that compromise and negotiation is "give and take". Consider the following conversations (Walters, 2015).

Case 1

Daddy: I told you to come at 6pm, why are you late, coming at 7pm?
Child: There were many people asking questions and giving answers (dad)
Daddy: No, I wouldn't listen to that, you have violated my instruction, I will punish you for that (the child is punished).

Case 2

Daddy: I told you to come at 6pm, why are you late?
Child: There were many people asking questions and giving answers (dad)
Daddy: (He hesitates). Were the questions and the answers so important to you?
Child: Yes, dad.
Daddy: Tell me one thing you have learned from the interaction.
Child: I learned to work hard at home and in school if I want to succeed in life.
Daddy: Ok, you can go.
Child: Thank you dad.

Not just to exercise authority, but understanding. Know that man makes rules for man, not that man is meant for rules. Remember the case of Jesus and the Pharisees in Luke 14:1-6 (Healing on Sabbath day) and the case of a woman caught in adultery (John 8:3-11)

Teach them the Skill of Teamwork

As we live together, no one is an Island of himself. We need one another to succeed in life. When children grow to adulthood, they will be highly sought-after if they have the ability to function as valuable team members. By teamwork, they learn the skills of cooperation, communication and collaboration. They grow to become leaders with the spirit of teamwork. To achieve this, children should be engaged in sports, Bible study groups, choir groups, drama and debate clubs, young farmers' club, night story clubs, youth fellowship etc. Parents, teachers and Church leaders have the responsibility of engaging them to participate in these activities (Swan, 2014).

The Skill of Prompt Decision Making

Best leaders make monumental decisions in a heartbeat. They cut through the drama and get right to the heart of the matter. Help children to develop this skill

at an early age. Therefore, do not always make decisions for your children. Let them figure things out for themselves at most times. You can come in as a parent or a teacher or a Church leader to suggest or modify some decisions.

The following questions can help children to develop the skill of decision making:

- What dress/shirt do you want to wear today?
- Which book do you want to read?
- What time of the night do you think is best for drama practice?
- When you are meeting with parents, who should lead the discussion?

Kristy (as cited in Walters, 2015) states “Teach your children to weigh the pros and cons of each option in order to make the most informed decision possible. This will help them to make correction decision in everyday life”. (p.11).

The Skill of Planning

This is another important skill that a leader should possess. A leader should not do things haphazardly. To help children develop the skill of planning, the following can be done.

To plan for the day and for the week.

Plan for an outing or event.

Brainstorming on how to plan for a debate.

Devise goals to be achieved.

Planning for a dinner party etc.

Setting the table.

Arrangement of things in the house, school etc.

The Skill of Setting Goals

There is no doubt that goal oriented people are goal oriented leaders. These leaders accomplish more than those who flounder aimlessly. Set a goal for them and see how they can achieve it. For example, passing of examination, become a lawyer, or a teacher, or a doctor, possessing a house etc.

They are expected to think of the strategies, the objectives and tactic.

Recognize and Encourage Optimism

Optimism is a most valuable skill, especially when it is connected to a goal. When it is identified and encouraged, it produces a good leader. Find out if it is possible to achieve a set goal, and agree with them. Sometimes reward children for the attitude of optimism (Swan, 2014).

The Skill of Management

Poor management of resources has been so much associated with our leaders. To have better future leaders, our children have to be given opportunities to manage resources. In her opinion marquit (2015) states:

... to teach your children money management you need to allow them to make mistakes. Have them make a list of what they want, then help them to prioritize what is on the list is more important and have them save for it (p.10).

Therefore, teachers, parents and Church leaders have to teach children how to manage use of textbooks, managing small amount of money, managing seats or sharing food, managing rice/salt/palm oil etc.

Allow them to lead even after Failure

When children fail in leadership role, that should not be the end of it. Give them another chance to lead for possible correction. For examples: Jesus called Peter “Satan”. Jesus predicted Peter would deny him, he did. However, Jesus commissioned Peter to lead again; to feed and tend his sheep. Peter became a great preacher at Pentecost. Do not write young people off at the instance of early failure.

Focus on Young People’s Potential

Always assign leadership role to young people, not because they can do it, but because of the potential of doing it. Consider the selection of the 12 disciples by Jesus Christ (Peter being the leader). It was also a risk when Barnabas chose Paul, a former persecutor of the Church. Hence, give children opportunities to lead in the Church, in the school and at home.

Encourage Young Peoples’ Innovation and Risk taking

Some young people, when giving leadership, they try to bring in innovations. This is risk taking because they are bring in some new things. They are not sure if they will succeed. They need to be encouraged to do it. Not to

prevent them from doing it. Adults may only modify or advise them (Grose as cited in Dray, 2013).

Assign Challenging Tasks to Children

It is obvious that stretch assignments are growth-oriented activities with some inherent tasks or difficulties. Such assignments are designed to push the participants to work harder. Even if they fail, they learn some valuable lessons that add new skills and improve confidence in carrying out similar assignments in the future.

Provide Role-play Jobs for Young People

If we want to give young people first hand experiences in different jobs, we need to create role-play job opportunities. This makes them to gain exposure to different divisions of tasks and gain new expertise.

There is Need for Mentoring Programmes

Parents, teachers and Church leaders should provide mentoring programmes for young people. Make children to work in pairs or groups with experienced youths and adults. Give them tasks such as planning for meeting and tackling of other problems. Create guidelines for relationship, to determine when to meet, to know each other before tackling an issue, to observe how the experienced people do things and to ask questions.

Learning the Skill of Perseverance

The skill of perseverance is an essential skill in leadership. The best leaders learn to handle failures as gracefully as they handle success. To make future leaders to possess this skill, they have to be exposed to disappointments rather than protecting them from disappointments. Therefore, children need to be led to learn how to handle the loss and to be able to move forward when the other team overcomes, or else is given the leadership role.

Encourage Children to Work

Sometimes, young people are eager to set up work status. Encourage them and advise them on what to do. Never you rebuke or prevent them. By this, they can build a sense of leadership skills. Such small works are shops, farming of different kinds, painting, washing etc.

Be Good Role Model

Teachers, Church leaders and parents are supposed to be good role models to children. Show them the skills of optimism, perseverance, patience, tolerance and all other skills. Certainly, they will learn so much from you.

Nurture Children's Inner Mind

Train children as future leaders so employ tried-and-true methods to achieve the objectives of long-standing committees. They also need authentic and deep conviction to sustain them through the journey in a rapidly changing society. This can come by loving and positive attitude towards them. For example, Paul addressed Timothy as beloved child (2 Timothy 1:2; 2:2). We have to adopt the same caring attitude towards the leaders we train, equipping our (spiritual) children with parental love for the (spiritual) well-being. It is unreasonable to struggle with young people over an issue. Adults can come down to children's level, but children cannot go up to adults' level.

Conclusion

Children and youths are surrounded by parents, teachers, Church leaders and adult friends. When and if we have the conviction that these young people will be leaders tomorrow, we should treat them with dignity. Their weaknesses should not be considered as grave failure, and that they cannot be changed for better.

If we want to raise them to be good future leaders, we need to make them to instill skills of leadership in themselves. We have to direct them with love not with authority, for if they fail, we also fail, if they succeed, we also succeed. Our future society can only be better if we are able to raise a community of good future leaders.

Recommendation

From the above paper the following recommendation is drawn

1. How you treat them matters a lot.
2. Teaching them the way to lead is by following
3. Build of that potential you see them do the most
4. Never let them believe that because the fail in one aspect that is all.
5. They can get better as they work harder

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