

Final Narrative  
EAD 801  
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Through the course of this class I never imagined how detailed the ideas of leadership actually were. I found myself being surprised with each reading and assignment to see how in depth one can actually go into the ideas of what it truly means to be a leader. I found myself becoming enthralled in the readings each week, especially with the ideas of Kouzes and Posner. Never before could I have imagined being able to take a course that is solely centered on the ideas of leadership. Within the duration of this course I found myself being opened up to new ideas of the qualities it takes to become a leader, while also seeing my own ideas and thoughts about what leadership is change. I feel strongly that my time in this class has definitely helped me to discover the true nature and qualities a leader should possess, while also keeping my mind open to new ideas.

In order to discuss the ideas that I find profound about this course, I feel that it is best for me to start to discuss some of the “truths” that Kouzes and Posner discussed in *The Truth About Leadership*. Within this book, they discuss the ideas that need to be realized by each person in order to discover the true leader within them. The book is so full of information and ideas that are important, that if I try to discuss their ideas in a broad sense, I do not think I can do them justice. So I have decided to discuss a few of their truths, that I find the most important, and how they have made an impact on my ideas of leadership.

The first and obvious truth they discuss is what they title “Truth One: You Can Make A Difference”. I found this chapter of the book quite inspirational because it touches upon the importance of how we all must look inward first to discover our own true potential. In order to be an effective leader we must realize that we are capable of making a difference. It is the first step in realizing the type of leader we all can become. I feel that it also challenges the idea that some people are born leaders. I disagree with that because if we are all capable of realizing our

true potential, then why do people believe that only some people are born leaders? Kouzes and Posner discuss how we all have the ability to be a leader, we just need to find our ability within ourselves first, and then act upon that ability. They share a story about a girl who was only a kid and saw her own potential to be a leader, and she turned small community organization into one of the largest youth run environmental organizations in the country. Kouzes and Posner show proof how once we are able to realize we can make the difference, how effective each one of us can be. It all comes down to whether or not we are willing to go that extra mile to show our leadership potential, or just stick to the age-old idea that some people are just born to be leaders.

The second truth I found to be profound within the Kouzes and Posner book was, “Truth Five: You Can’t Do It Alone”. Even though leaders are seen as a single entity leading a group, one must realize that the only reason they have been put in that position is that people they are leading have placed them there. What Kouzes and Posner are trying to discuss in this chapter is that even though leaders are being put on a pedestal to lead, it does not mean they are not allowed to look for help in some matters. There will always be times where we will need help, and I think the toughest part of the society we live in today is being able to ask for that help. Some people can be seen as too prideful, and by the time they realize they need to go to other people for help, then it is ultimately too late. Even though people are put into a leadership position it is alright to realize that they are not able to handle everything that is going to be thrown at them, and help is necessary. It is up to the leader to surround themselves with the people they can trust and know will help them if they need it. These ideas of surrounding yourself with the right people is not only an idea for people in leadership roles, but for everyone because at some point we will all need help and we need the right people around us to help see us through our toughest times.

The next profound truth I find to be a major insight of leadership actually connect back to truth five, “Truth Seven: Challenge Is The Crucible For Greatness”. It connects back to truth five because leaders will at some point face a challenge and may not be able to overcome it alone, so their connections and network of friends is what they will need to rely upon to get them through. Kouzes and Posner try to emphasize how leaders need to realize that being a leader is not always sunshine and rainbows, there will be countless challenges in the future, and the greatness of the leader will be determined by how they handle these challenges. If you’re the leader of an organization and all of a sudden you have to cut spending, that is a huge challenge for a leader to face because they will be left with the decision of what to cut. Challenges are what define who we are. There are countless examples of leaders overcoming challenges to reveal their true colours as a leader. Look at George Washington for example, a simple farmer from Virginia with some military experience in the British Army during the French and Indian War, being tasked to lead a military made up of farmers and tradesman against the most powerful military the world has seen. That is a huge challenge to face because if Washington failed, there would be no United States of America, we would still be living under the British Crown. Leaders are like that show their greatness when faced with challenges, and it is up to each person to be able to decide whether or not they are willing overcome those challenges to show their greatness.

The final truth I want to discuss is, “Truth Eight: You Either Lead By Example Or You Don’t Lead At All”. I feel this truth made the largest impact on my learning for this course because it is an idea that must be followed through by each leader. If I was ever a member of a group that had a leader who did not follow the rules or mandates that they put forward, then I would have no problems breaking the rules or showing disrespect to that person. It is important for leaders to know that in order to gain the respect of the people you lead, you have to give

respect to them first. The first form of respect is to lead the group in a way that shows you deserve their respect. If you make some crazy rule that you expect your followers to live by, then you also have to live by that rule and you cannot break it because you are the leader. Our society is based on a set of laws and rules that must be followed in order to keep society in order. If the President of the United States one day decided that since he is the “Head of Government” he no longer had to follow the laws of the nation, there would complete chaos and disorder because no one is above the law. In order to be a successful leader one has to be able to serve their followers and lead by the same rules everyone else is being held to.

The next major insight I would like to discuss about this course has some roots in the Kouzes and Posner text because the idea of this type of leader meets all the truths that Kouzes and Posner discuss. I want to discuss the idea of a servant-leader. I found this type of leadership very interesting because it is not a form of leadership that is seen very often because its ideas of leadership have to do with being a servant to the people being lead. It is not very often that a servant-leader arises because when the term leadership is used some words that come to mind are, “power” “authority” and “influence”. It is true that a servant leader will possess the abilities to exercise all those descriptive words, but the idea of the servant leader is to use those abilities to benefit the group. The servant leader is selfless in the acts they perform for their group because their leadership is based on the common respect they have for one another. The people being lead by a servant-leader have a trust that the leader will do what is in the best interest of the group because their leader has the respect to have their voices heard in the decision making, and the leader will not do anything the group is not willing to take part in. The servant-leader is a very rare type of leadership for higher-ranking officials, but is more common among smaller organizations and school settings.

The final major insight from the course I would like to touch upon is the concept of a transformational leader. I like to think of this leader as more of a democratic style leader. This type of leadership shares some qualities of a servant-leader, but the difference is ultimately how in the end the leader makes the final decision for the group. The transformational leader is the type of leader that would take into account the ideas of the members of the group and then follow through on an action. I feel that a transformational leader is one that is only a few steps away from being a servant-leader. If the transformational leader were to follow Kouzes and Posner's ideas of leading by example, having confidence in oneself and others, and having a vision of ideas and how to attain those ideas a transformational leader would be able to make the necessary steps to becoming a servant for their organization instead of just taking the power they have and listening to ideas. If a transformational leader has the capability to listen to their group of followers, then they also have the potential to serve them to the best of their ability.

Since I grew up playing sports my first real opportunity to be involved with any leadership roles had to do with team captains. Growing up all leadership was a player was voted to be the team captain and got to wear the "C" on their chest for the season. It never occurred to me, until this course, that in order to be a leader it means so much more than that. A leader is not someone who just gives a pep talk before a game or decides head-or-tails at the coin toss. A leader has such a deeper role of making sure the team morale is up, and that they are the representative of the team for any issues concerning the coach or referees. Leadership has completely changed over the course of my life to mean so much more than just getting to wear the "C". It has turned into a position of honour and respect among your peers.

The second shift in my beliefs on leadership is similar to the shift, but it has more to do with why certain people are voted into their positions. The most immediate form of leadership that has affected me has been within a school setting and within my sports teams. Growing up in school when it came down to voting for class officials, all I thought it was, was a popularity contest. The more popular kids would be put in those positions, so from a young age our society is lead to believe that in order to be a leader the key is to be popular and have the most friends. Luckily this class has given me the insight to see that it is not true that popularity is not all you need to be voted into a leadership role. It is the qualities that are buried deep within each and every one of us that gives us the opportunity and potential to be elected into leadership roles, the only challenge is getting people to see those qualities and make the right choice.

The final shift in my thoughts on leadership has to do with how there are so many different types of leaders in society. Before this class all it really thought about leadership was people elected into positions, and I never truly focused on what kind of leader they are, I just classified them all as effective or ineffective. Being able to see how there are several types of leaders and each one is so different from the other that we have each one represented in leadership roles throughout the country. It was truly amazing to be able to study each type of leader and gain a deeper sense of leadership and be able to classify the different roles each leader has and determine if their effectiveness has to do with they style of leadership they act upon.

I believe this course was extremely effective in being able to give the members a deeper learning of what it means to be a leader and what type of leader we can all become. I think the most important part of the course is the questions we have now developed on our own to look into in the future. For instance, why is it that some leaders, when they are placed in the position of power lose sight of what truly matters and become transfixed on gaining more for them, and

less for the people they are meant to serve? Also, what other qualities, other than the ones I have read about, can be found within a leader? And can they be more effective than the ones seen on the surface? And finally, if placed within a more powerful leadership role, what qualities would I see come to light? Would I shift more towards a Servant-Leader? Or would I shift in the other direction towards a leader wanting more power? These are the types of questions I look forward to being able find out in my journey to being a leader of a football program. These are the types of questions I think we all would benefit by asking ourselves because it allows us the opportunity to self evaluate ourselves and realize the leader we are becoming. I found this course very insightful and I plan on researching more into the ideas of Kouzes and Posner and their ideas of leadership and plan on using them in my journey through leadership roles.