Exploring Kouzes and Posner’s Exemplary Leadership Practices of Presidential Assistants in Higher Education

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Date of Award
12-2018

Document Type
Dissertation

Degree Name
Doctor of Education (EdD)

Department
Executive Leadership

First Supervisor
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Abstract
The purpose of this quantitative study was to examine the frequency in which presidential assistants in higher education institutions engaged in Kouzes and Posner’s five practices of exemplary leadership and in the managerial functions performed daily to meet the needs of the strategic goals and objectives of their institutions. There is limited research on the position of presidential assistants, which has existed for more than 40 years, and it is important to learn about this critical role and its impact at colleges and universities. Due to the complex challenges facing higher education institutions, presidents of colleges and universities need to rely more than ever on the talents of presidential assistants to assist them in implementing institutional strategic goals and objectives, and to help them manage daily operations. The participants for this study consisted of presidential assistants who reported directly to public college and university presidents within a large state higher education system in the Northeastern United States. In this study, an online survey instrument, including Kouzes and Posner’s Leadership Practices Inventory (LPI) Self-Assessment was utilized. The results of this study revealed that the managerial functions of presidential assistants varied based on demographic and professional characteristics. A vast amount of their time is expended daily on solving problems and collaborating with others to meet rapidly changing demands. The LPI assessment revealed that presidential assistants effectively use leadership practices daily when interacting with internal constituents. As a result of this study, recommendations for practice are provided including professional development to enhance the leadership skills of presidential assistants.

Recommended Citation

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Kouzes and Posner tell the leadership story from the inside and move outward, describing it first as a personal journey and then as mobilizing others to want to do things they have never
done before. The Five Practices of Exemplary Leadership is the operating system for this adventure. Leadership in Higher Education explains the fundamental principles that support these practices and provides case examples of people in higher education who demonstrate each one. A core theme that weaves its way through all the chapters is that, whether it's one to one or one to many, leadership is a relationship. Consider how Kouzes and Posner's leadership principle of inspire a shared vision links closely with the OA assumption of intrinsic motivation (Table 4-2). For example, the occupational therapist, in seeking to motivate the recalcitrant client, takes the lead by drawing upon the shared vision of the client participating in his favorite activity of cooking. Tapping into the client's intrinsic motivation to cook links directly to the shared vision of improving the client's health through occupation.

Table 4-1. Kouzes and Posner's Five Practices of Exemplary Leadership. Practice Model the way.

An overview of Kouzes and Posner's 'Five practices of exemplary leadership' model, showing the behaviors and detail for each practice. It is more prescriptive than Adair's model and aimed more at high-level leaders like CEOs, but it's a significant contribution to the thinking on effective leadership. Kouzes and Posner's earlier Trait-Theory leadership model, which led them to develop their Five Leadership Practices model, is explained earlier in the Trait-Theory sub-section of leadership models. Like some other leadership theorists, they developed a modular theory into a proprietary product, in this case, a program for leadership development. This model is also known as Kouzes and Posner's Leadership Challenge. Their research, which they conducted over almost 20 years, suggested that leadership is not a position, but a collection of practices and behaviors. These practices serve as guidance for leaders to accomplish their achievements or to get extraordinary things done (Kouzes and Posner in Kouzes' and Posner's research, they ask different people to identify their most important leader role models. Universally, individuals are most likely to select a member of their family. For those less than thirty years old, second place is typically a teacher or coach and third place is held by a community or religious leader. The authors also discover that leaders who used "The Five Practices of Exemplary Leadership" are perceived to be better leaders. These practices were developed by Kouzes and Posner and are discussed in more detail in their book, The Leadership Challenge. The five practices include: 1. Model the Way.