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Guatemala Volunteering

Week 3

Competency: Leadership ~ Values Level 3: Critiques leadership models/styles within group context.

In my third week at the orphanage, I believe I have met or observed most of the staff here in their respective roles. The house depends heavily on independent work and responsibility shared between the regular staff and girls living here. There are nurses and other government workers that visit to give guidance, but mostly the staff members have very specific role throughout the day and they know how to execute them independently. The director of the house walks through the nursery every two or three days to greet everyone and check in but mostly she works in her office collaborating with the businesses and organizations that keep the house running. Her leadership style is very much hands-off, but she still makes an effort to connect with the staff.

Benefits of this leadership style is that the followers or staff in this situation are independent and empowered in their positions because of such independence. The staff members are efficient because they do not need further guidance when they notice something that needs to be done. The director occasionally walks through the facility to let people know that she is present and she witnesses what the house is in need of. This cultivates a sense of trust and collaboration between the regular staff and herself. Staff members can speak to her as she visits their area about concerns to solve problems in their early stages that keeps communication open.

The area where I find the director’s leadership approach lacking is its ability to integrate new members to the same level of efficiency as the veteran group members. After 2 weeks, I finally feel the majority of my time spent in the nursery and kitchen is productive. There was no training in place when I arrived. I was simply welcomed by the director on my first day and shown to the nursery by the teacher. My training has consisted of observing the regular staff members and using my best judgement. The tasks to be done each day are very simple, but I don’t know if there are any legal considerations I should be aware of in my position or anything of the like.

Because I am volunteering in a new environment in government services and doing so in a foreign country there are considerations to be made in this critique. First is the language barrier. I have grown comfortable asking the four staff members I work with everyday questions, but details regarding my 2-month service or more complex tasks that the staff members handle each day are still a dark area for me as a new-comer. Since I am unfamiliar with Guatemalan governmental practices and the judicial system here, I also do not know of all the tasks that keeps the director’s attention every day in her office and how much is handled through her office and how much is arrange by the government. Her delegation may be more out of necessity than personal leadership style.

This experience has forced me to read the people in the environment and their actions more than their words since I understand more of their message they are trying to communicate with me that way. Watching the effects of different personalities and styles that coe and go throughout the nursery is a perspective I have not gotten in other experiences where I had a chance to lead. In this experience, I am able to observe and contemplate the approaches and styles I come across in a day and how I can incorporate the ones I like into my own style. So far I like the staff’s sense of investment and independence into their job that the director has brought to the house and hope to do this by providing enough structure and expectations in my own leadership roles where group members feel as though they can accomplish tasks without getting my approval first.