

704 Leader's Role in the 21st Century

Leader Interview Assignment

Dr. Anyngo Reggy
Beulah Heights University
Summer Semester 2019

Neva Franklin
Leadership Doctoral Program
6/4/19

Dr. Chinese Mazeli is a special needs teacher, as well as department chairperson, who works in the DeKalb County School System. Dr. Mazeli is originally from Nigeria, Africa but her family relocated to Louisiana. Dr. Mazeli stated how she relocated to Atlanta, Ga., with her family, as a escape route from the fierce trenches of Hurricane Katrina. Dr. Mazeli informed me that she was the youngest of 6, four boys and two girls and that she had always heard wonderful things about Atlanta, Ga. Even though she wished she would've been able to move under less devastating conditions, she was overly happy to set up residence in the magnificent Atlanta, Ga.

Dr. Mazeli migrated to the USA when she was just a teenager. Her parents always encouraged the girls to be either educators or healthcare workers. She stated how she had always dreamed of being a teacher for students who had special needs. She remembered how strict the teachers were in Nigeria yet those same teachers attended the same churches, attended some of the same social gatherings, and from time to time even came to her home for dinner and other social gatherings for the community in which she lived was a very close fitted community which believed It took a village to raise a child.

During the interview, Dr. Mazeli reflected on how relaxed the USA academic school system appeared. She elaborated on how in Nigeria, failure was not an option and education was treated as a golden ticket that would be the, escape to freedom. for all who applied themselves accordingly. She also discussed how many of her friends didn't have the same opportunities as she had been afforded. She also discussed her the lavorish life she had been afforded made her promise that

when she had the opportunity to educate the less fortunate, she was going to do it with dignity and style so her students may experience some of the amazing things that she had. She shared memories of a math teacher who caringly tutored her all summer so she would be well prepared when it was time to take her class. Dr. Mazeli said the teacher did this for her because she knew how important it was to Dr. Mazeli to be the best at whatever she set out to do. Dr. Mazeli stated her teachers dared her how to dream.

I have watched Dr. Mazeli lead her students as well as her colleagues. She is this amazingly strong African American Woman who gives voice to those who are afraid to use their own voice. She is kind and gentle yet she can be as fierce as a lion. She doesn't believe in the words no and can't. She also believes everyone should have a fighting chance. Even though she didn't have some of the horror stories as did some of her childhood students, she still understood poverty the struggle it often faces.

Dr. Mazeli believes her values and beliefs and her faith keep her humble and grounded. She elaborated on how she believes great leaders are great followers and they only ask their employees to do that which they are willing to do. She continued the interview by discussing how no matter what

the economic background, women in Africa are still looked upon as being servants more so than leaders. She stated how she wanted the opportunity to be the best leader ever by making sure she never looked down on her employees or followers and by making sure her cohort understood they all mattered and they all had a vital part to play. She stated that even when she was acting manager or supervisor, she

also made sure that those whom she was responsible understood that without them, reaching specific goals would be challenging.

Over the years, I've watched Dr. Mazeli lead her team humbly. She always worked within an areas where she was fully vested. She would always turn down assignments she didn't believe in. She would always say "I Can't Do That, I'm no hypocrite". She would always go with her gut feeling and if it wasn't in her gut, she didn't participate. She would also inform her crew members how she was only as strong as the weakest link and how she would never be able to be great alone. She always stressed to others how much she needed them and that she could not successfully make a difference in the lives of the children by herself. She always listened to what the others had to say before making life changing decisions. She always wanted the input of her fellow colleagues so she could be more objective instead of leaning solely on her own understanding.

This amazing person seemingly does everything she says she's going to do. If there's a goal to be met, she's always going to make sure everyone involved understands the vision, process and predicted outcomes of any and every project she leads. She inspires her team to be great and take in to account how many of the students being served come with so much baggage and disappointments, that those leading them must do so with an extra thick skin, taking nothing they do personal.

As awesome as Dr. Mazeli has proven herself to be over the years, I think one of her few flaws is she depends a tad bit more on her team that she should. As a leader, I agree with the text which informs us the importance of making the team feel strong, however I don't think a leader should solely depending on the decisions

of others to fully persuade their decisions. often times leaders seem to exalt such behaviors possibly so they can be excepted yet the text clearly explains how leaders should say yes but this shouldn't be the case when you really believe the answer should be no.

Dr. Mazeli is also good at choosing leaders within her school building rather than always going to other schools and other counties yet there are times when I feel as if she may sometimes be somewhat hesitant of going outside of her comfort zone. If I could point out a weakness in the leadership style of this amazing leader it would be the fact that if she thinks it may cause conflict, she may not fight as hard for those things she really believes in fear that the team she has worked so hard to put into place may decide to leave the nest. The Text discusses how it's not just about your values and beliefs and how leaders must be careful they don't become dictators however no one wants to follow a leader who is afraid to take a stand even if no one else agrees (Kouzes & Posner 2010).

As we began to end the interview, Dr. Mazeli informed me how she was so elated that I had interviewed her for she never saw herself as being a great leader. She stated how everything she did came from her soul and that she always wanted to be the leader everyone wanted on their team. she also stated how her past experiences made her into the person she is today. She stated how she had managers and supervisors who made her feel as though she was part of the team. The feelings that she felt made her want to be that to her own crew of people.

Dr. Mazeli also elaborated on how she was taught to always treat others as she wanted to be treated. Before I ended the interview I asked Dr. Mazeli to tell me about her leadership strengths and weaknesses . Surprisingly she only discussed

her weaknesses. She stated how she thought she was too passive and that she wasn't aggressive enough. She believed herself to be a great person but an okay leader. She had no idea that the reason why I chose to write about her was because I felt as though she was one of the best leaders I've ever met. She did agree that she was a fair and kind leader who really believed in her teammates and her students, and that she made a difference in the lives of both her students and teammates, yet she never considered herself to be a great leader. I then asked Dr. Mazeli why was she so kind and fair to people if she didn't think she was a good leader. She responded to my question by saying she did what she did so she could feel accomplished, not so others would say good things about her. She continued by saying she did to others what her leaders did for her. She stated how her leaders and teachers encouraged her to be the best by leading in the best possible way ever.

Dr. Mazeli stated her Christian beliefs also outlined the blueprint for what leadership should look like. She continued by saying how she believes a team should resemble that of a close knit family who thrives off one another for survival. No one can do it all by themselves. Everyone needs someone especially when attempting to make a difference or create something that has never been done. Dr. Mazeli closed with her famous words, "There Is No I in Team!!!!!"

Interviewing Dr. Mazeli made reading *The Truth about Leadership*, come to life. When she stated how she wanted to become a great leader because of the roles the educators and supervisors, in her life, influenced her life. The text discussed this issue as well when it discussed how data showed most people believed their most important leaders to be those that they shared some sort of bond (pg. 9).

The text also discussed some of the same topics as Dr. Mazeli such as you can't do it alone, values drive commitment, and what the foundation of leadership should look like however you make the difference appeared to be the foundation of Dr. Mazeli's interview. The text elaborated on how leaders must first realize they matter before they can persuade their followers the same thing. The example given regarding the fourth grade student who was passionate about making the world a safer place with the absence of air pollution (Kouzes & Posner 2010), reminded me of Dr. Mazeli's journey for she was inspired as a teenager to encourage young people to take advantage of their educational opportunities because there are so many children who don't get these opportunities and because women were often looked down upon when aspiring to be more than just followers. She came to America to make sure she inspired children, especially African American Women, that they can be as strong and effective as they choose, in spite of their gender, age, nationality and economical background.