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7TH MENTORSHIP CONVERSATIONS AT MOW CLUB

This being my first mentorship conversation, I didn't quite know what to expect. I was a bit nervous in fact since I had never been to any leadership talks before. The tense atmosphere was lightened by a few teamwork exercises that helped relax people's nerves and create a friendly environment.

A number of issues were discussed concerning academics, career and leadership, which are greatly applicable in our lives today. Being a student and a leader, personal leadership was one of the various concerns I found rather striking. This is taking responsibility for all aspects of your life and leading it in the direction that is best for you. Self leadership is important for a leader as he is to lead his subordinates efficiently and apply the suitable leadership methods.

Personal leadership can only be achieved through benchmarking; comparing yourself to a certain standard you want to meet and setting your goal thereafter. It requires one to come to terms with allowing someone else to lead them and be a role model to them, and strive to surpass their standard. It motivates a person and encourages them to keep pushing on, keeping in mind that he can achieve what he sets out to do. In order to lead yourself, one must know what their goal is; where they want to go and how they plan to get there.

My perception about leadership was fundamentally changed by the words of Eric Fairweather. I learnt that leadership cannot just be viewed as the act of executing command

but as an art. Using your skills to create something abstract that cannot be compared elsewhere. This would include applying the effective skills in leadership in order to get the best results from your followers/subordinates. Participative leadership, being a much more effective leadership style, involves instructing someone to execute a task rather than forcing them to do it. It is much more suitable since the follower does not see the need to defy the leader because he is being given an instruction and not being commanded to do something. This may also require the leader to participate in the activity such as: planting of trees or a clean-up.

This greatly changed my point of view on leadership. It made me realize that it is not just commanding a follower to do something but building a bond and allowing communication between me and the follower. Absence of communication in leadership may lead to resistance by the followers and bring about conflict. This occurs in the case of 'directive leadership' where the lead commands his subordinates to accomplish tasks and can be associated with dictatorial leadership.

I learnt that for one to be considered a leader, change must be seen. A leader must influence the mentality and behaviour of his followers based on what he wants to accomplish. However, in order for this to happen he must understand the people's perception towards him and his leadership. In today's world, change is constant. It occurs every minute, every day. Therefore to keep up with our developing world we must learn to change how we view life and how we view ourselves. We must constantly re-invent ourselves in order to maintain a certain relevance in our society.

This mentorship conversation has changed how I see myself in terms of my leadership and personal life. I've learnt that the way I perceive myself greatly influences who I am and the type of company I keep. It is better to have that one friend who offers me all the help and encouragement I need, than having so many who offer me nothing at all. As it is said, knowledge is only power if it is put into practice and utilized. Therefore, I plan to use my newfound skills to make a difference in my community and my school.

Every time I walk down the littered roads of my estate, I cannot help but imagine just how different the scene could be. If maybe I start by picking up that one piece of litter it may lead to a movement or initiative that works towards making our community cleaner and healthier. If I can get that one chronic noisemaker in class to concentrate more on his academics, it would greatly improve his performance and that of the class. All this would require me to step out of my comfort zone and inspire change in others. I plan to utilize the correct leadership skills to lead my followers towards a cleaner environment and better school performance.

