

IMPACT AND INFLUENCE, WHAT LEADERSHIP IS ALL ABOUT.



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“You’re Kiuk, right?” When this statement is confused with “You are cute, right?”, it can be very embarrassing, especially when it is a boy asking a girl this question. Such a scenario happened to me after the core event on leadership at MOW Sports Club. My response to this, thinking that I had been asked the second question was, “Aw! You are so sweet!” Had it only been Edwin Oyamo, the one who posed the question, and I speaking in private, it wouldn’t have been half as embarrassing as it was. Unfortunately, that wasn’t the case. There were three other people with us, all of them boys. Adolescent boys. Quite a task it was for me to explain my peculiar response to all of them.

What does this funny yet embarrassing situation have anything to do with the session of the day? Absolutely nothing! I just thought I should introduce my essay in a different manner. I forgot to add that after the boys finished laughing, nobody reassured me that I do not have the features of an ogre. What a nice way to end the session, huh?

This was a core event with a difference. For one, Dr Weche, the team leader of AKAD Education group seemed to be less than on top of his game on this particular day as he struggled with operating the DVD system. Luckily, Edwin Oyamo, a technology prodigy was there to help. Had it been just me there to help, no videos would have been watched. Another reason is the videos. It was the first time in the gap year program that we did this in



The 2017 Gap Year youth watch a clip.

“class”. It was of course not just any videos but inspiring ones by successful motivational speakers such as Dr. Vimal Shah, the CEO of Bidco, about leadership. The third reason is that we were learning in a Socratic fashion. Our output determined the input we were to receive from Dr. Weche. In my opinion, this is quite an effective method of learning. Giving the students what they are ready to handle. After all, if one cannot walk with the men to battle, how can he or she cope with riding the horses?

So, what is leadership? This is the question that was posed to us, for those who arrived on time, at the beginning of the session. My response came confidently. Leadership is service to the people. A leader to me, before being informed later on, was somebody who chooses to stand up and stand out and carry out activities that change his life and that of those surrounding him for the better. I based this on people such as Fred Swaniker, the founder of ALU who dedicates his life to raising the social, economic and political status of Africa through education, cultivating young leaders who are the future. Nelson Mandela, who spoke out against apartheid rule and fought for independence in his country against the powerful colonialists.

How wrong I was about the concept of leadership! This I learned as the conversation continued. We watched different videos but the one that stood out was that of the AKAD peers taking a visit to Bidco company where they had a session with Dr Vimal Shah. There was a short clip, taking part in India where one toddler took up the initiative to move a log from the road when all the grown up chose to sit in their cars and wait for officials to clear up the mess. Meanwhile a politician, caught in the traffic and having no wish to be part of it, walked across the log to the other side where another car was waiting for him. Back in the conference room where the AKAD peers were sitting, different views were shared about what each person got from the clip. The message was the same: I should be the change that I want to see.

This brought us to the first point about leadership. One has to lead themselves before they can move on to lead others. It is the same concept as of how one cannot teach that which he does not know. I did not get the opportunity to point this out but I saw that in Dr Weche. A man who dedicates himself to guide the youth and with his team of adult mentors, directs them. He has earned the title of team leader of AKAD Education Group for he is able to lead himself. A leader, whether he likes it or not, will have followers. Due to the outstanding work done by him, there will be people who look up to him and wish to follow in his footsteps. He must reach out to them and guide them. This is the reason that each of the participants in the room were requested to mention at least two people behind him or her who they were helping to progress. I found, to my shame, that I could only mention two such people.

Personal growth is something that everyone ought to experience every day of their lives. This makes life thrilling, takes out the monotony of simply existing but living, not surviving but thriving. To do so, one also needs to have mentors. These are the people who are older and more experienced, who will help pave the way as one progresses in life. Here, we were also asked to mention three other people. To my delight, I found that there were plenty of them that I could identify. From Michael Mutie, Eric Kimonyi and Rosemary Wambui.

Finally, a leader is judged on what he or she does. What solution has been brought forth by him or her and how has it been implemented? For one to come up with such an idea, there must be a vision. This has to have an impact on and influence those in the surroundings. We live in a generation where leaders are not born but are instead nurtured and grow to become the best of themselves. The era of monarchy such as that which existed in



Listening to a word from the Bible about leadership. Russia is far gone and with the dawn of a new era, leaders are identified everyday by their characteristics. So what are you doing that makes you to be identified as a leader? What leadership position are you currently holding?

The African Leadership University is offering scholarships based on merit. The task for the applicants is to write two essays or make two videos revolving around two prompts. Both are based on leadership: identify a leader in your community, explaining how they have impacted your life and explain your own style of leadership. This challenge also applies to me for I wish to win this scholarship, having been accepted to join the class of 2017. Upon finishing my drafts, I will of course be sending them to Dr Weche and my older sister, Elizabeth Mwangi for accountability purposes as well as constructive feedback. With the information I received during this session, I look forward to writing a scholarship winning essay.

