A Qualitative Study Of Trust And The Superintendency

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ABSTRACT

Most people realize trust is essential to functioning effectively in society, organizations, and individual relationships. This qualitative study examines how superintendents engender trust in order to make their vision a reality in individual schools within a school district. A review of the literature demonstrates that trust is integral to leadership effectiveness. But what can superintendents do to engender trust at the organizational level? Is trust based on relationship-building behaviors or competency at the organizational level? What aspects of the multi-faceted definition of trust are antecedents of trust in the superintendency? In-depth interviews with superintendents serving in differing schools districts were conducted to explore these questions. Findings suggest that the facets of trust: benevolence, reliability, competence, honesty and openness are antecedents of trust in the superintendency, and that both the perceived competency of the superintendent and the superintendent’s relationship-building behaviors are integral to engendering trust. There is also some evidence to suggest the trust facets of openness and competency, in particular, engender trust in leadership at the organizational level. This study adds to the current literature by providing qualitative analysis of the concept of trust and affirming the existence of the aforementioned five antecedents of trust at the organizational level.