Mentoring and servant leadership in a K--12 public school system

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Abstract

Currently, there are real and challenging demands on public education with teachers as the number one influence on student achievement at the crux. A situation compounding this crisis is 35 to 50% of new teachers leave the profession within the first 5 years, creating a deficit in the needed workforce. As an attempt to combat this dilemma, school districts have implemented induction programs with mentoring as a major facet. With the literature establishing the importance of mentoring in attracting and retaining teachers, one must question, is there a particular type of person that makes an effective mentor? In response to this inquiry and with the realization that the core essence of mentoring is relationship, a concept worthy of exploration is servant leadership, which also has at its core "relationship." This study explored the relationship between mentoring and servant leadership and examined the effect of these variables on mentoring effectiveness in a K-12 public education school setting. Cohen's (1993) Principles of Adult Mentoring Scale and Barbuto and Wheeler's (2006) Servant Leadership Questionnaire were combined creating the Mentoring Experience Questionnaire (MEQ), which measured both the mentors' mentoring functions and servant leadership factors as perceived by protégés. During a 3-week data collection period, 143 out of 157 teachers who were mentored during their first year of teaching completed the survey, yielding a near census with a 91% response. Results revealed moderate to strong positive correlations (r = .431 to r = .821) between mentoring functions, servant leadership factors, and mentoring effectiveness in this particular school district. The implications of this exploratory study revealed mentors who exhibited mentoring functions and servant leadership factors are more likely to have effective mentoring relationships as perceived by their protégés. This study furthered the research on the relationship between
mentoring and servant leadership and provided a basis for the discussion of servant mentoring as a concept for further exploration.