

Servant Leadership and Organisational Climate in South African Private Schools: A Qualitative Study

Authors : Christo Swart, Lidia Pottas, David Maree

Abstract : Background: It is a sine qua non that the South African educational system finds itself in a profound crisis and that traditional school leadership styles are outdated and hinder quality education. New thinking is mandatory to improve the status quo and school leadership has an immense role to play to improve the current situation. It is believed that the servant leadership paradigm, when practiced by school leadership, may have a significant influence on the school environment in totality. This study investigates the private school segment in search of constructive answers to assist with the educational crises in South Africa. It is assumed that where school leadership can augment a supportive and empowering environment for teachers to constructively engage in their teaching and learning activities - then many challenges facing by school system may be subjugated in a productive manner. Aim: The aim of this study is fourfold. To outline the constructs of servant leadership which are perceived by teachers of private schools as priorities to enhance a successful school environment. To describe the constructs of organizational climate which are observed by teachers of private schools as priorities to enhance a successful school environment. To investigate whether the participants perceived a link between the constructs of servant leadership and organizational climate. To consider the process to be followed to introduce the constructs of SL and OC the school system in general as perceived by participants. Method: This study utilized a qualitative approach to explore the mediation between school leadership and the organizational climate in private schools in the search for amicable answers. The participants were purposefully selected for the study. Focus group interviews were held with participants from primary and secondary schools and a focus group discussion was conducted with principals of both primary and secondary schools. The interview data were transcribed and analyzed and identical patterns of coded data were grouped together under emerging themes. Findings: It was found that the practice of servant leadership by school leadership indeed mediates a constructive and positive school climate. It was found that the constructs of empowerment, accountability, humility and courage - interlinking with one other - are prominent of servant leadership concepts that are perceived by teachers of private schools as priorities for school leadership to enhance a successful school environment. It was confirmed that the groupings of training and development, communication, trust and work environment are perceived by teachers of private schools as prominent features of organizational climate as practiced by school leadership to augment a successful school environment. It can be concluded that the participants perceived several links between the constructs of servant leadership and organizational climate that encourage a constructive school environment and that there is a definite positive consideration and motivation that the two concepts be introduced to the school system in general. It is recommended that school leadership mentors and guides teachers to take ownership of the constructs of servant leadership as well as organizational climate and that public schools be researched and consider to implement the two paradigms. The study suggests that aspirant teachers be exposed to leadership as well as organizational paradigms during their studies at university.

Keywords : empowering environment for teachers and learners, new thinking required, organizational climate, school leadership, servant leadership

Conference Title : ICODL 2021 : International Conference on Organizational Development and Leadership

Conference Location : Cape Town, South Africa

Conference Dates : November 04-05, 2021