

**Enhancing Educational Outcomes through Servant and Authentic
Leadership: Addressing Low Teacher Morale and High Turnover Rates**

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Introduction

Educational leadership is a complicated, multifaceted subject that plays a crucial role in a school's success. It is with no question that the quality of a school is determined by the quality of its leaders who have to navigate the ever-changing, complex, and stressful nature of teaching. Leadership theory is a vehicle that leaders can use to navigate the ever-changing, complex, and stressful nature of leadership roles. This paper will focus on two leadership theories: servant leadership and authentic leadership and explore their application to the problem of low teacher job satisfaction and poor school performance.

Servant Leadership

Servant leadership is a theory that has been around since 1970 and emerged from the work of Robert K. Greenleaf, a former AT&T executive. In his book, *The servant as leader*, Greenleaf challenged the traditional leader model centered around power and control (Greenleaf, 2008). He spent the majority of his time challenging authoritarian leadership methods and creating a more robust leadership style. He offered a paradigm shift that transferred the focus from the leader's needs and turned the focus to the follower's needs (Greenleaf, 2008).

Servant leadership is a practical tool that can be advantageous in a variety of educational settings that prompts the leader to serve first (Gultekin, 2021; Haga, 2022; Kanyike, 2023). Its purpose is to create a relational environment between leaders and followers to enhance organizational performance (Kanyike, 2023). It is also important to note that different generations have preferences for how they want to be led (Day, 2023). The relevance of when leadership research began can reveal several components of generational bias.

For example, different generations have different emphases and values on subjects like respect, success, and a myriad of other topics. This could lead one to conclude that different generations have preferences for how they are led because of their values. Day (2023) included in his research that leadership is about relationships and communication. Which would have interesting implications given the different values of generations.

Servant leadership has been relatively successful in giving schools a positive climate (Murphy, 2020). Servant leadership is necessary because of the need for more retention to keep quality teachers at schools. The statistics are staggering at how many new teachers leave the profession after the first five years and how many would recommend teaching as a profession. One article sampled research from a report made in Georgia which states that 44% of teachers leave within the first five years, and only 2.7% of teachers would recommend teaching as a career (Daniels, 2021; Murphy, 2020).

The need for adequate leadership styles is apparent and there needs to be adequate leadership training to retain quality teachers. It is important to note that servant leadership is not only applicable to administrators to teachers. It is also applicable from teachers to students. It seems as if servant leadership has to penetrate every aspect of an organization, top to bottom, in order for it to be effective. One could also argue that there are different aspects of servant leadership which could include a Rogerian principle called unconditional positive regard (Swarra, 2017). Teachers could have a better relationship with students if they lead by applying unconditional positive regard to their educational practice (Swarra, 2017).

Authentic Leadership

In the early 2000s, authentic leadership emerged from the works of Bill George, Peter Northouse, and Bruce Avolio (Northouse, 2021). These scholars tried to redefine leadership to incorporate authenticity into leadership styles. There is a fundamental aspect of authenticity that the writers of Northouse (2019) tried to define. The foundation of this theory must be authenticity, but, how authenticity manifests itself can be tricky.

In the ever-changing climate of leadership, scholars have tried to select the most effective leadership style to manage teachers. The reason that authentic leadership became so popular was because of the growing demand for leaders who had integrity, self-awareness, and moral character (Aria, 2019). There was an inherent need for authentic leadership to emerge. There is a tremendous amount of psychology within the theory and its philosophy is derived from humanistic psychology (Aust, 2022). Authentic leadership's success is completely dependent on the leader's ability to embody authentic values in their actions and relationships (Aust, 2022).

One of the biggest purposes of authentic leadership is to have genuine relationships and moral integrity in leaders. This will allow followers to trust their leaders and followers can be more engaged and effective in an organization. Another element of authentic leadership is the leader's ability to match words and actions (Aria, 2019). If a leader says they are going to do something, they need to do it. If they are not, they need to be transparent and communicate that they are not.

There has been a tremendous amount of refinement to authentic leadership since its inception. In its beginning stages, authentic leadership focused on building a foundation of the core element of authenticity (Salip, 2023). Authentic leadership involves a certain level of

morality, and a sincere connection with followers who value the leader's opinions in order for it to be effective (Ogunyemi, 2020; Salip, 2023).

Application of Theories

High teacher turnover rate, low teacher job satisfaction, and low student academic achievement have been issues that have plagued Bolton High School since the district merger in 2014. These issues are concerning and have led to a cycle of instability and underperformance at every level. To address some of these issues, this essay will explore the application of two leadership theories: servant leadership and authentic leadership. We will look at the problem of low teacher morale using data to highlight the severity of this issue and its consequences. Then we will look at these two educational theories to address these issues to encourage a solution.

The Problem

It is no secret that teachers are leaving the classroom in droves. Based on statistics mentioned in academic literature, one-third of teachers will leave the profession within the first five years (Wong, 2019). This statistic becomes even greater when researchers look at lower-income schools (Wong, 2019). In addition, this statistic has only gotten worse in recent years (Sabrina, 2023). Low teacher morale can be attributed to a variety of underlying factors that feed into this significant issue (Sabrina, 2023). Some factors that contribute to this problem can be a lack of support from administration, heavy workloads, and feelings of isolation (Reitman, 2019). There is a clear correlation between servant leadership and teacher satisfaction, suggesting that leadership style plays a crucial role in teacher well-being (Wong, 2019).

The consequences of having an education system full of disgruntled teachers are immeasurable. Lower student performance is a negative side effect of low teacher satisfaction

and morale (Herndon, 2007). When a teacher feels isolated, unsupported, or alienated it negatively affects teacher pedagogy in the classroom (Crabtree, 2014). Crabtree (2014) also highlights the similarities between servant leadership and transformational leadership which is important to note as we move on.

High teacher turnover rates and low teacher morale undoubtedly disrupt classroom learning environments and obstruct one of the most important parts of education, strong student-teacher relationships (Farmer, 2018; Ronfeldt, 2013). Low teacher motivation also plays a crucial role in low student achievement because student achievement is linked to teacher motivation (Farmer, 2010). Furthermore, high teacher turnover rates and low morale can create a sense of instability for students, negatively affecting achievement. Lastly, low teacher morale has a variety of vehicles in which it manifests itself and negatively influences organizational culture and climate (Kilag, 2023). The most significant that was seen in the literature are mentioned above.

Leadership Components

Servant leadership emphasizes a variety of components that can be advantageous to positive teacher morale. A theory first introduced by Robert Greenleaf emphasizes the importance of putting the needs of their followers above the leaders. Servant leaders are described by Northouse (2021) as empathetic, humble, service-oriented, and committed to the success of those they lead. Servant leadership is a great resource for school leaders to utilize to address the problem of low teacher morale (Abbas, 2020).

As noted by Northouse (2021), authentic leadership highlights self-awareness, genuineness, and leading by example. Authentic leaders possess transparency in their

communication, have strong moral values, and try their best to promote confidence and trust (Northouse, 2021). There is a clear significance in putting people first in the organization.

Leadership is a component of every educational organization, and the influence of a leader can determine the success of the organization (Sawan, 2020). Therefore, the leadership style that school faculty and staff choose to adopt into their practice is of utmost importance.

Application of Servant and Authentic Leadership

Servant leadership can enhance teacher morale and student performance within the education sector (Abbas, 2020). This leadership style can create a strong community where leaders actively value teachers' opinions and foster a sense of belonging (Polatcan, 2020). If administrators can apply servant leadership there are high positive implications for teacher performance and morale (Alshammari, 2019, Türkmen, 2017). Based on this literature, a school environment can drastically improve if servant leadership is implemented in every area. Servant leaders would be empowering an entire generation to think of others before they think of themselves. Imagine how great of a society we would live in if that were reality.

Authentic leadership is an important aspect of building trust in an educational setting (Bird, 2012). It is important for the administration to trust their teachers just as much as teachers need to trust their administrators (Bird, 2012). The component of trust should be reciprocal across both relationships. By emphasizing this aspect of authentic leadership, leaders can create a positive atmosphere of shared purpose (Karada, 2018). Furthermore, having a great atmosphere is important but also a great school culture in which students, teachers, staff, and administrators feel safe and valued is paramount (Soares, 2020). A culture of transparency, open

communication, and moral integrity would be great components that create a positive school culture (Soares, 2020).

Discussion and Implications

If school leaders are able to utilize servant and authentic leadership in an educational setting it has significant implications for improving teacher job satisfaction and school performance. Servant leadership has an emphasis on support, empathy, and empowerment. This can directly address the issues of teachers feeling isolated, or burnt out leading to more motivated teachers. On the contrary authentic leadership emphasizes trust, genuine relationships, and moral integrity, which can help create a positive and productive school environment. Authentic leadership can foster a culture of trust which is essential for creating a positive school environment.

The research in this paper supports the effectiveness of the leadership style in improving organizational outcomes. For instance, servant leadership positively impacts employee performance in education (Abbas, 2020). Servant leadership also demonstrates its effectiveness from student perspectives (Alshammari, 2019). Similarly, authentic leadership highlights the importance of building trust and promoting organizational effectiveness (Bird, 2012; Karada, 2018).

Implementing these leadership styles can lead to a more supportive and inclusive school culture. One of the most important parts of school culture is where teachers feel valued and heard. This can result in improved teacher morale, lower turnover rates, and better student performance. Fostering a school culture of trust and collaboration can improve the overall school climate making it a more conducive environment for teaching and learning.

Additionally, implementing servant and authentic leadership styles is not without challenges. School leaders may face difficulties delegating tasks, relinquishing control, and navigating conflicts. It is similar to adopting any new theoretical framework into schemas; there are going to be setbacks and tribulations in acquiring a new framework. Nonetheless, these leadership styles can efficiently create a better educational atmosphere that fosters a more conducive learning environment for all.

Conclusion

Low teacher morale in addition to high employment turnover rates harms the educational climate. Servant leadership and authentic leadership seem to offer valuable solutions in addressing these problems which fixes a myriad of academic issues. If school leaders can apply some of these principles in their practice, schools can become more supportive and inclusive where teachers feel supported, valued, and responsible for excelling in their roles. All of this can render improvements to student achievement which would be advantageous to all.

Servant leadership and authentic leadership seem to carry a lot of weight in delivering effective leadership in the educational setting. While each theory is unique in its own way, they have a lot of common goals. Both servant leadership and authentic leadership have great effectiveness for organizations, especially ones that hold strong core values (Ortiz-Gómez, 2022). From the synthesis of these sources, there seems to be an apparent need for adequate teachers to return to the educational profession. This also demonstrates the necessity for quality leadership training. This leaves us to ask the question, who is to blame for a lack of quality leadership?

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