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A3: Servant Leadership

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The concept of distance learning and teaching is one of great importance, advancing from an industrial

society of skilled workers – to a society of knowledge workers. In this course, students reviewed the

different types of online and distance leaders and selected one most appropriate to his/her ideals for the 20th

century. The servant leader was the most versatile for the mode of teaching and leadership in a virtual

learning environment. This mode of teaching (DL) was significant to the growth of many countries and

nations, and required leadership capable of framing decisions for change, among clients, or students, and the

ability to form communities, foremost.   Evidence in the literature shows that technology's influence in the

delivery of anytime; anywhere education requires leadership unlike other forms of management. Leadership

in distance education (DE) must also be capable of addressing diverse and cultural learner differences, being

versed in, and aware of the social challenges of universities, and able to engage students, and build

frameworks in which people can learn in the Internet age (Irlbeck, 2002).   There are many theories available,

today on how to approach leadership in an e-learning environment, along with appropriate leadership styles

to converge cultural and spatial divides. Beaudoin stated that DE leaders must create conditions for

innovative change through attitudes and behaviors that enable individuals and organizations to share a vision

and move forward (Satyanarayana & Meduri, 2007). According to the literature, DE leadership is variously

different from leadership in traditional education, and as we approach the twenty-first century, research

shows that traditional styles of leadership will no longer be appropriate to address the global and diverse

needs of society (Satyanarayana & Meduri, 2007). To realize competitiveness, organizations and institutions

of higher learning need a leadership style based on teamwork and building community (Spears, 1996).

Research shows that the views of leadership must be more complex, requiring new approaches that are more

fitting for the times and challenges of today. This environment or concept of anywhere teaching and learning

must consider or incorporate many aspects of humility, to do this leadership must focus on the follower.

Salient features of servant leadership style/quality

The leader is "the first among equals" says Crippen (2006), meaning the concept of servant leadership

is to serve and provide community and vision, and deemed appropriate in the online distance teaching

academy. Leadership's focus is more on the people (Stone, Russell & Patterson 2004), and based on the

characteristics of servant leadership. In DE servant leaders, inspire cooperation and community, placing

organizational goals and objectives secondary [to the followers' or student needs] (Stone, Russell & Patterson

2004).   According to Spears (1996), the servant leader values and appreciates people or a humanist. Most

importantly, the servant leader:

1. displays empathy,

2. promotes ethical and caring behaviors

3. instills strong moral authority, and

4. "ethic of care and service" (Crippen, 2006),

5. has foresight,

6. builds community, while at the same time,

7. persuader

8. enhancer of student and faculty growth,

9. promoter of institutional goals, and mission

10. caring in a quality way, to create change, focusing on attitudes and behaviors, "creating a state of

    mind, to conceive and articulate goals that lift people out of petty preoccupations…" unity, and

    "pursuit of objectives worthy of [ones] best efforts" (Satyanarayana & Meduri, 2007, p. 4).

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According to Irlbeck (2002), institutional leadership exercise change in new ways in order to accomplish continuous and relevant training and support for educators and administrators, as well as the student—a servant to followers. The servant leaders bridge cultural gaps in academe, as witnessed in research where servant leadership is permeating cultures in China, India and Greece, addressing cross-cultural and ethical values in education or learners (van de Bunt Kokhuis, 2012). The servant leader display many qualities of a servant and evident in many organizational settings, especially online distant teaching where instructor and student are in separate places. The servant is:

- empathetic to student needs, yet strong,

- caring, yet, efficient, and

- guiding, yet serving,

- reflective and effective,

- supporting, and,

- a visionary,

- a listener,

- a healer,

- a persuader, and

- empowers followers, helping them to strive and flourish,

- building trust, and

- credibility.

Servant leadership in action

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The practice of servant leadership originated in religious institutions and vestiges, which evolved from the concept "service to others," and provided today in "various contexts" (Waterman, 2011). The most noticeable practice is in organizations and industries that perform services for others such as educational institutions, health care—nursing professions, and various public agencies. The goal of the servant leader is to develop persons to meet the needs of others in order to create a healthier and more caring society (Waterman, 2011). Servant leadership today is essential and prevalent in educational and organizational settings, defined as or focused on change, clinical decision-making, project management, teamwork and collaboration, each is important to the concept of leadership, albeit not inclusive of servant leadership. The principles of servant leader in organizations focus on meeting the needs of followers, enabling followers to reach full potential, not just as followers but also as prospective leaders. The servant gains and promotes respect from followers, instilling value. Servant leaders' are motivators, empathetic, and shows stewardship and commitment to followers or students. In the online teaching and learning environment, the servant establishes community. The most practiced form of servant leadership in academe is experiential education, known today as service learning, and practiced in high schools and many colleges (Spears, 1996). This concept, known as "learning by doing," is also applicable in online distance learning, promoting cooperation and knowledge sharing.

Assets of the Servant leadership approach

Research shows servant leadership in DE is essential to meeting the needs of a diverse community of learners, establishing and collaborating shared goals. The servant leader understands the needs and requirements for meeting a diverse student base, and institutes best practices. In addition, the servant leadership is aware of and sensitive to student needs, displays commitment to student growth, and makes serving the needs of others foremost for the good of society and the institution. Leadership projects clear

vision, and promotes community to enhance and allow faculty and students positive experiences in the online and distance learning environment.

Liabilities of the servant leader approach

Research shows with any style of leadership the tendency to act unethical or improper is possible, with the servant leader the laws of reciprocity seems to allow for corruption. While other leaders may become self-serving—transformational leaders—by putting personal interests first and above individuals and the organization, servant leaders may influence followers' psychologically. Followers may want to oblige the leader for service provided, or the leader may use this position to influence the follower to feel endeared to the leader for providing services and/or helping with personal growth or success. This could result in self-centered, manipulative, and exploitive behaviors and treatment from the servant leader to followers. In other instances, research has proven that leaders become so attuned to personal power and influence that they reduce or misrepresent institutional problems to appear successful, carrying out one's personal vision, misrepresenting the realism of the organization's vision (Stone, Russell, & Patterson, 2004), however there are many more positive studies and outcomes of servant leadership.

Situation servant leadership applied and outcome

The evidence provided in the literature highlight several situations of "the leader of the people …" as servant in practice, in a positive light. In e-learning, Internet-based courses, the servant leader promoted team and collaborative learning, engaging students in more interactive communication. With the integration of mobile devices, the servant leader integrates, and transforms the educational infrastructure to engage students in the learning process with a nurturing, empathic, and caring characteristic. The servant leader enhanced human, ethical and talent factors in the e-learning environment, by motivating, and empowering students to work collaboratively, creating an environment conducive to learning and one of mutual trust ((van de Bunt-

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Kokhuis & Sultan, 2012). In another situation, servant leadership attributes were successful in dispelling or changing cultural mistrust of those in authority in Bolivia, Latin America.

A study of the leadership style of Scheflen proved to have long-term effects in several Evangelical education

    institutions, 50 years after the university's founding.   Interviews conducted with Scheflen's followers

    show a culture of trust and belief in leadership that remains viable, today. Many interviewees stated, "Dr.

    Scheflen empowered others through altruistic love and transparency, and integrity," which was not

    common among Latin American cultures (van de Bunt-Kokhuis & Sultan, 2012). Scheflen's servant

    leadership behaviors contributed to unusual cross-cultural success by apparently counteracting the threats

    of common Latin American cultural characteristics of low trust of a male dominated leadership practice

    (van de Bunt-Kokhuis & Sultan (2012). **Impact on individuals and organization involved**

    The literature supports the servant leader as a servant of the people—followers, or students, and one that empowers, and motivates, building community and teams to develop strong affiliations through interaction, promoting a sense of belonging that grows and instill value to others. Students become autonomous learners through servant leadership, developing a sense of responsibility to others, and self.

Conclusion

    In conclusion, the literature states that leaders in distance teaching are more complex than other forms of leadership. The servant leader proves to be distinctive from other forms of leadership displaying humility and being a humanist. To show this significance, the servant instinctively is a motivator, persuader, and influencer of student learning, and is more adept at bridging the cultural gap in online distance teaching and learning. This accomplishment is through the many humanistic attributes of the servant leadership as servant of the people or students, although research on servant leadership continues to evolve it is characteristic of many leadership styles and shown to be effective in engaging students in community and interactive learning.

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The servant leader support e-learners by motivating, and enforcing competences, and instilling trust and honesty among faculty and administrators.

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