

Emotional Intelligence Optimizes Servant- Leaders' Implementation of DEI Initiatives

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Servant leadership is optimized through demonstrated emotional intelligence (EI), which increases the likelihood of implementing I-CORT to advance the learning for all mission. Absent of demonstrated EI and an I-CORT mindset, the efficacy of one's desire to present as a servant leader is adversely impacted. Therefore, institutes of higher education (IHE) should develop curriculum explicitly requiring educational leaders and teacher candidates to demonstrate emotional intelligence, promote professional learning communities, and consistently exhibit mindfulness based on intentionality, care, optimism, respect, and trust (I-CORT) to effectively implement diversity, equity, and inclusion initiatives.

INTRODUCTION

How does Servant Leadership make a difference? Researchers found transformational models, including Servant Leadership, have guided educational leaders for several decades, specifically encouraging leaders to support organizational members in empowering ways (Davis, 2003; Farling, Stone & Winston, 1999; Spears, 2010). While both leadership models exhibit common characteristics, differences exist between the two. "Transformational leadership involves strong personal identification of followers with the leader" (Rosenbach & Taylor, 1998, p. 3). The transformational leader motivates "followers to perform beyond expectations by creating an awareness of the importance of designated outcomes..." (p. 3) whereby "all

followers share values and beliefs and are able to transcend self-interest and tie the goal to the higher-order needs of self-esteem and self-actualization” (p. 3). As a result, followers create a mental image of the shared vision, converting shared goals into effective action. Transformational leadership calls for a transforming experience for the leader and for the follower.

By contrast, Servant Leaders are value-driven and character-driven. These qualities are typically exhibited through “increased service to others; a holistic approach to work; promoting a sense of community; and the sharing of power in decision-making” (Greenleaf, 1997, p. 4). Proponents of Servant Leadership emphasize collaboration and integrity, whereby communication and persuasion skills become extremely important (Smith, Montagno, & Kuzmenko, 2004). The Servant Leader aspires to see the follower move toward what Maslow described as self-actualization (1943). Therefore, what differentiates a Servant Leader from a transformational leader is the deep desire to pursue a preferred future from “the basis of humility, empathy, compassion, and commitment to ethical behavior” (Lad & Luechauer, 1998, p. 64). Effective leadership is less likely without the presence of high emotional intelligence and experiential components expressed within the tenets of Invitational Education (Anderson, 2016).

From the primary desire to serve, the Servant Leader wants to help his or her followers “grow healthier, wiser, freer, more autonomous, and more likely themselves to become servants” (Greenleaf, 1977, pp.13-14). While the desire to serve is the primary motivation of the Servant Leader, the conscious choice to meet other people’s highest priority needs ground any aspiration to lead (Greenleaf, 1977). Thus, Servant Leadership epitomizes a desire for social justice. Listening, empathy, healing, awareness, persuasion, conceptualization, foresight, stewardship, commitment to growth of people, and building community are essential attributes of the Servant Leader (Spear, 2002). People with high emotional intelligence are more likely to exhibit these attributes (Bradberry & Greaves, 2009).

DEMONSTRATED EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE

Research by Momeni (2009) found dimensions of emotional intelligence that explained 70% of employees’ perceptions of organizational climate were the direct result of the manager’s morale and behavior. The awareness and management of emotions, as well as perception of emotions by others, provide critical elements for success as a leader (Cherniss, 2010). Research by Ashkanasy and Dasborough (2003) found interest in, and knowledge of emotional intelligence predicted team performance while individual performance was related to emotional intelligence. As noted by Purkey and Novak (2016), invitations for personal and professional development must be conveyed and recognized as an explicit opportunity. Therefore, to be dependably inviting, Servant Leaders must demonstrate the skills to effectively convey and then check for receipt. Only then does acceptance become a possibility.

Definitions and theories seeking to describe emotional intelligence continue to evolve. Emotional intelligence entails the accurate appraisal, expression, and regulation of emotions in oneself and others in a way that enhances living (Mayer & Salovey, 1997). Cooper and Sawaf (1997), believed the following sub-skills comprise emotional intelligence: 1) emotional literacy, 2) emotional fitness, 3) emotional depth, and 4) emotional alchemy. Based on Bradberry and Greaves’ (2009), Figure 1 below graphically exemplifies the personal compared to social domains for their model’s four skill areas of emotional intelligence with sample skills that should be demonstrated within each area.

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