Utilizing Mentoring to Examine Esteem, Efficacy, and Connectedness in New Employees

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Introduction

Purpose of Study: Gauge Faculty Belongingness
- investigate new faculty’s sense of belongingness to an educational institution within the first two years of teaching.

Primary Motivation: Build Faculty Retention
- building a committed community of instructors may ultimately impact student success and retention.

Theoretical Framework

Research Design

Quantitative surveys and qualitative phenomenological inquiry were combined to investigate how participants defined mentoring, and how much they felt they were part of their teaching peer group.

Study Overview

Researchers paired experienced faculty mentors with new faculty protégés. All participants completed quantitative intake assessments to establish baseline information, including:
- Levett-Jones Belongingness Scale Workplace Experience (BSWE) tool, which tests for efficacy, esteem, and connectedness
- A qualitative mentor/protégé paired trust exercise.
- Throughout study, mentor/protégé completed additional qualitative exercises to deepen relationships and further define mentoring.

Quantitative Results

Results from the quantitative study indicate a significant difference in the variables of esteem and connectedness, as new faculty do not feel they are supported in their new role in the Pre-BSWE belongingness tool.

Per the Pre-BSWE belongingness tool question related to esteem:
- Protégés do not feel they fit in, do not perceive a sense of belonging, do not get support from colleagues, are not understood, are not accepted, do not feel part of things, do not like where they work, and feel like outsiders.

Per the Post-BSWE belongingness tool question related to connectedness:
- Protégés perceive that their ideas and opinions do not matter, colleagues do not notice when they are absent, and their colleagues do not confide in them.

Qualitative Results

Results from the qualitative component reveal a desire for belonging among the individual participants and identify a need for the institution to foster a sense of community to which employees can belong.

Participants were initially enthusiastic about becoming part of the mentoring community, but focus group data gathered from participants highlighted a lack of institutional support and prioritization as a strong deterrent to participation, even among those with positive intent.

Findings also indicated that belongingness and sustained participation were dependent on individual definitions of mentoring.

Definitions of mentoring evolved, over the course of the project, into distinct, internally- and externally-focused concepts:
- Internally-focused concepts highlighted relationship building
- Participants with this focus were more likely to maintain relationships within the project community
- Externally-focused concepts stressed leadership and coaching
- Participants dissociated with the project because they were unable to see themselves as a part of it.

Conclusions

Using a structured mentoring program to build a sense of community can instill feelings of value among participants, which, in turn, could heighten their sense of belonging.

Limitations

Though this study is limited by a small sample size of new and seasoned faculty within a single higher education institution, the program built here has the potential for broader application.

References


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