

Building Future for Education Through Ethical Leadership: The Educational Administrators' and Planners' Lens

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Abstract: In order for school leaders to reconcile their duties as leaders and managers under one roof, they must integrate values into school management. This study depicts the practice of ethical leadership based on seven characteristics as espoused by Vikaraman et al., 2018: “honesty, fairness, people orientation, power sharing, ethical guidance, role clarity, and concern for sustainability (a subset of value-based leadership)”. Ethics in leadership refers to the ability of a given leader to distinguish the good from bad, and right from the wrong for the purpose of achieving pre-determined goals of the organisation and also impact on subordinates. That is, ethical leaders set norms, follow them, and work to enforce them. It is important to stress that ethical leadership is essential for the future of education at all levels. It is important therefore that ethical codes should be in a written form for the school leaders at all levels so that decisions can be made with objectivity, honesty and ethics, particularly regarding personnel issues, and that ethical leadership should be integrated into current school leadership practices to better understand its significance.

Keywords: Ethical leadership, educational leadership, school principal, teachers

1. Introduction

It is past time for school leaders to embrace value-based leadership styles that highlight ethical behaviours in the twenty-first century; when technology has taken the central place in individuals' engagements, there is no gainsaying that work ethics may be gradually eroded. Based on current global needs, all leadership styles, approaches, and theories have the same notion of effectiveness.

The needs of the school, teacher, enhancing creativity, the academic performance of students, legislation on matters concerning education, efforts of the government, advancements in education, and various challenges of schools can all have a significant influence on the appointment and selection of leadership (Qaralleh, 2021; Amanchukwu, Stanley, & Ololube, 2015; Park, 2012). In the twenty-first century, experienced and inexperienced principals adopt different pathways, behavioural orientations, and models in managing a corporation (Mukhtar & Chan, 2020; Bush, 2007). As a result of this, globalisation of knowledge content, advancement in technology, and unabated changes in our society and educational systems all of which help and advice leaders in determining their preferred leadership style.

As a result, it is critical to recognise that globalisation and the advancement of communication technology have resulted in ethical issues in school administration. As a result, ethics has become more prevalent in many aspects of life, including politics, education, media, and health. Discrimination, tax evasion, bribery, and prejudice are ethical issues. These difficulties reflect on school administration, whereby triggers the society as well as the students to be in dilemmas on ethical questions (Çelik, Dedeoğlu, & Inanir, 2015). Parents, students, and educators want school leaders to judge ethically and resolve issues ethically. This raises the importance of ethics and increases administrators' liability. Ethics is important because it establishes the standards and conventions a particular profession must follow. School leaders at all levels of education must always judge ethically and have sound behaviour which revolves around the ethical rules of the school. As a result, subjective practices are reduced. In a school setting, teachers are expected by

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society to perform their various duties responsibly and respectfully. In a situation where both leaders and subordinates behave according to the organisation's rules, the organisation's interests are prioritised before personal interests.

Society in recent times envisages a lot from the leaders of schools, which means more tasks and obligations. These obligations are, in fact, so onerous that they are difficult to bear. School administrators and managers depend on students' academic performance and engender an effective learning environment (Coplan, 2001). Teachers and administrators must take ethics more seriously in schools since they are not only presented with ethical dilemmas but with the moral uprightness of generations to come to live with them (Mette & Scribner, 2014).

2. Ethics and Ethical Leadership

Ethics has defined the norms and practices that separate one civilisation or culture from another. Ethos is a Greek term that inspired it. Consequently, it essentially represented character and temper, while the term ethics developed to denote proper behaviour.

According to Naimah & Utaminingsih (2021), ethics is "the rules, beliefs, assumptions, and ideals that establish the bounds of a moral existence." Ethical practices in the classroom dictate that educators must stick with values, norms, and beliefs. Ethics can be described as a conduct process that determines whether people's acts are good or bad (Schiltz, 1992). Not only does ethics assess the end, but it also considers the process, suggesting the right and the wrong. Therefore, ethics centrally aim at suitability or otherwise (Arar & Saiti, 2022).

However, it is pertinent to interrogate closely leadership and ethical leadership while addressing ethics. Maxwell (2007) defines ethics as the ability to affect others. This authority is achieved through interpersonal relationships, intimidation, and the use of force.

Bolat & Seymen (2003) opine that looking at ethics on the side of leadership is described as the ability to form opinions or weigh between right or wrong, good or evil, to attain the pre-determined organisational objectives' appropriate impact on people. According to Brown & Trevino (2006), "ethical leadership is a leader who abides by moral values, principles, and moral conducts in their speech, behaviour, action, and decision-making, and as such can motivate his or her followers to be as ethical in their desire to reach a goal." Brown, Trevino, & Harrison's (2005) ethical leadership definition explains the workplace responsibility given to the leader which is described as a "moral manager" as well as "moral person," capable of balancing the duties of an effective leader of which leader himself or herself must follow to the latter the ethics of the work. Ethical leadership, according to Barnes and Doty (2010), is described as "...the demonstration of proper behaviour through individual actions and connections and the advancement of such conduct to subordinates through two-way communication along with decision-making."

Ethical leaders are defined as leaders who value honesty, reliability, and equality with people and avoid favouritism. They also fulfil their promises, appreciate the idea and contributions of the followers, and deliver each person's responsibilities and expectations (Solinger, Jansen, & Cornelissen, 2020).

Ethical leadership is a management concept that signifies the leaders who integrate ethics in their personal lives and their roles as organisational managers (Páez Gabriunas, 2017, p.1)". Because successful and ethical leadership are inextricably linked (Sotirova, 2018), schools' leadership must combine and showcase the nuances of ethics and ideal things in their dealings and engagements to better management of the organisation.

Also, Vikaraman, Mansor, & Hamzah (2018) and Treviño & Brown (2007) explain that "ethical leaders. have the capabilities of playing the role of a moral person – someone who practices good moral conduct and a moral manager – someone who can lead with ethical or moral conduct to achieve goals and develop the follower into a better person". It is important to note that there is "Ethical Leadership at Workplace (ELW) dimensions, namely – people orientation, fairness, power sharing, concern for sustainability, ethical guidance, role clarification, and integrity (Kalshoven, Den Hartog, & De Hoog, 2011) for leaders and their subordinates". In this discourse, the seven aspects of the ELW were adopted to be applied to the school setting for principals and teachers.

According to Kanungo & Mendonca (2001), the behaviour of ethical leaders revolves around racing in doing good things that the other persons will gain from and move away from what will be detrimental to them. Ethical leaders, particularly in school organisations, are like mirrors reflecting good things, good thoughts, attitudes, responsible and responsive followers, empowering others and showcasing ways for prosperous school organisation.

The following seven aspects were adopted from Vikaraman et al. (2018) as reference discourse for this work to achieve a better and more effective school environment as it would shape future education:

- a) Integrity: The principals agreed in the educational context on the importance of spirituality, financial management, and decision-making and integrity. As integrity practices, they decided to trustworthy and dependable people in their engagements. They conducted lawful financial management by following the Ministry of Education's rules and regulations and distributed cash equitably across their institution. The principals promised to stick to choices reached in meetings or with all teachers when making decisions. They stuck to their guns and stood firm in their choice.
- b) Fairness: The principals know that they must practice fairness to all instructors. To describe right is a way of distributing the same chance and opportunity to all concerned, particularly the teachers via-a-viz, in making decisions and judging issues without bias. All teachers should be allowed to change in voicing out what they

think, talents they possess, and expertise, as well as the freedom to pursue their objectives. Before concluding, the administrators carefully considered every concept, thinking, and recommendation and did not always accept everything offered by the instructors.

- c) **People Orientation:** People orientation was crucial in the principals' management and administrative approaches to motivate instructors to follow their directions or choices without trouble. The principals stressed active listening, role modelling, and collaboration. They devoted close attention to understanding instructors' concerns and their demands. Ethical leaders in a school organisation put into practice what they teach to build faith in their ability to lead.
- d) **Power Sharing:** Power and obligation within the school organisation can be shared with teachers, particularly deputy vice-chancellors, deputy provost, deputy rector, vice principals, department heads, and other levels of management as a delegation of authority. Teachers in the school setting should be encouraged to make a decision, accepts spontaneous suggestions and support, fairly allocate challenging duties, and allows instructors to plan their objectives and progress.
- e) **Ethical Guidance:** The primary focus of guidance was the planning of lessons and school programmes. Teachers were provided with insufficient ethical advice. This also teaches job ethics and the school's anticipated code of behaviour.
- f) **Role Clarification:** Clarifying the roles and responsibilities of each educator in a school organisation is also an ethical practice. The principals convey clearly what is expected of teachers. Through the interview, two school administrators stated that they communicate what they expect from their teachers and employees during meetings and observations in classroom engagements.
- g) **Concern for Sustainability:** Concern for sustainability at school focuses on providing a pleasant and safe working environment for teachers and workers. Also, promoting environmental stewardship is seen as ethical behaviour.

3. Importance of Ethical Leadership in Schools – Building the Future for Education

The majority of teacher effectiveness research indicates that a variety of factors influence teachers' work performance (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2014; Holzberger, Philipp, & Kunter, 2013; Güven & Çakir, 2012; Putman, 2012). The school administrators are one of the most significant components since they are the primary actors in building a calm, comfortable, and desired environment (Yirci et al., 2014). Because of their social obligations, school administrators must engage with a wide range of individuals, including teachers, parents, supervisors, and non-academic staff. Various things may be required of them in these official and casual contexts. As a result, the question of which requests should be satisfied and to what degree this is practicable emerges. Because of these duties and expectations, administrators are continually confronted with ethical quandaries. In such a circumstance, they must behave legally while adhering to moral ideals (Taymaz, 2003).

Because schools are inherently open institutions, school management ethics are significantly more crucial. As a school is a social institution, schools must try to meet internal and external standards that necessitate ethical behaviour on the part of administrators. As an ideal setting, school is for students to practice and internalise moral values which will serve them throughout their lives. Teachers and administrators shape society's future generations (Langlois & Lapointe, 2009). According to Mendes (2003), more periods are spent by students/pupils in school compared to that at home as these spent hours are used to build their moral ways of life through emulating their teachers. Consequently, reason schools are essential in instilling moral values in future generations and maintaining social harmony.

According to Quick & Normore (2004), ethical principles govern the moral obligations of persons who work in schools. Because of these ideals, they are seen as more acceptable by society. However, simply professional ethics serve no meaningful use unless the concepts are entirely internalised and followed.

As a result, an ethical leader inspires others and makes achieving a goal simpler. For school administrators/managers to serve as moral leaders, there are three unique responsibilities. Firstly, they should be accountable to themselves, that is, upholding the ethical norms. Secondly, they will be held responsible for all happenings in the school organisation. Finally, they educate the general public about ethical standards as this serves as a civic responsibility (Calik et al., 2012). "Ethical leadership begins with the leaders themselves and then spreads to many people of society".

For leaders to make ethical judgments entails selecting one of the possibilities offered to the decision-maker. The process of identifying a problem and selecting one of the potential solutions is known as decision-making. "It is often associated with problem-solving since most decisions are made to solve a problem (Yukl et al., 2013)". Priorities are established when making a decision. Therefore, the threat of getting things right to achieve goals is identified, the process of data gathering and reviewing, the discovery of alternative techniques, and ultimately, the best choice to achieve the goal is chosen. Organisational decisions have an impact on all personnel in that organisation. As a result, the administration frequently encounters ethical quandaries and plays a crucial role in resolving these quandaries (Stefkovic & Shapiro, 2003).

Making ethically correct judgments is one of the fundamental characteristics. In any organisation, including school, Leaders are trusted by their subordinates based on their ability to differentiate between what is right and wrong and how they can quickly impact their subsidiaries. When leaders act ethically, they strengthen characteristics such as

loyalty, accountability and honesty. As a result, subordinates will be more dedicated to discharging their duties (Turhan, 2007). Workplace decisions are guided by ethical ideals. They allow the organisation to establish an identity and gain respect in society. They assist decision-makers in making more confident decisions by demonstrating the correct path in the event of a quandary (Hirsch Adler & Navia Antezana, 2018).

Ethical principles encompass values such as honesty, fairness, respect, responsible citizenship, and loyalty, all of which contribute to the future of education. It may be challenging to consider ethical ideals abnitiio, benefit tremendously at last.

Administrators' ethical actions include tolerance, fairness, accountability, honesty, democracy, and respect. Tolerance necessitates tolerance for opposing viewpoints as well as empathy. Equal enforcement of norms is made possible by justice. Taking on responsibility entails carrying out tasks and internalising professional values. Because success is typically connected with the abilities and exhibition of dexterity by the manager with a central focus on accountability. Keeping commitments, avoiding image tarnishing acts, and not participating in corruption is the hallmark of honesty. Democracy safeguards religious freedom and demands respect for differing viewpoints. Consideration establishes the parameters within which administrators interact with other subordinate workers.

Berkowitz et al. (2020) assert that eleven principles should be considered while making ethical judgments. Tolerance, honesty, accountability, honouring commitments, striving for excellence, loyalty, fairness, consistency, respect for others, and responsible citizenship are examples. Apart from ethical principles, also exist in school management and administration is ethical standards. Existing literature reveals that moral norms for school teachers and administrators exist in nations such as Canada, the United States of America and Australia. Managers and administrators of schools should be honest, accountable, fair, unbiased, consistent, and democratic and abide by rules and regulations. Everyone operates following ethical ideals, and schools become peaceful workplaces (Campbell, 2003).

As a result, public officials should be principled, honest, responsible, law-abiding, respect human rights, and unbiased. Public servants, such as teachers, administrators, and managers, endeavour to increase public enjoyment and cannot misuse their positions.

Okcu (2014) imagines a school that may be transformed into a communal living space where ethical values, tolerance, fairness, respect, collaboration, democracy, and social responsibilities can be taught. This teaching atmosphere may be produced by ethical leaders who set a good example and listen to their colleagues' opinions. According to Sagnak (2017), ethical leadership is positively connected with teachers' voice behaviour in the sense that these leaders improve the autonomy of their followers to build a secure and moral culture. As a result, ethical educators are supposed to foster an environment in which educators may voice their concerns and opinions. This ethical endeavour may serve as an example for their non-teaching staff and students (Yildirim & Bastug, 2010).

For teachers to be content with their work and perform successfully, leaders must have an ethical conscience in their profession. This will improve teacher collaboration, respect, and trust, and having educational leaders aware of moral notions will allow their colleagues to function in line with those standards (Karakose, 2007). Otherwise, educators' creativity and love for their profession may be hampered if educational leaders stop telling the truth in all circumstances and are not courageous enough (Cemaloglu & Kilinc, 2012). Indeed, for ethically spirited organisations, ethical people must question policies that are damaging to a caring and inclusive learning environment (Ezzani, 2014), and reacting to unethical behaviours (e.g., via whistleblowing) should be enhanced in educational organisations (Aydin, Demirkasimoglu, & Alkin 2012).

4. Conclusion

The role of the school leaders at all levels in the global context is different than in the past when technology has taken the central place of human resources, which pave the way for the redirection of organisational endeavour for optimal attention. A well-skilled school leader should be skilled at putting together responsibilities as a leader and a manager to produce the best possible school performance outcomes while also influencing subordinates in gaining professional practices and administrative skills (Rizvi, 2008; Mansor & Baki, 2007).

Leaders with ethical orientation usually develop qualities expected of leaders through a balanced spectrum in performing roles as leader and manager so that the school leader can administer the school while also championing the welfare of the teachers to achieve the pre-determined objectives of the school. Recent leaders in schools must adopt ethical leadership as a style which will engender accountability, trust, and morally upright teachers who will discharge his/her duties optimally, recognise the decision of the school organisation on issues, and ensure that the pre-determined objectives of the school are collectively carried out. Therefore, ethical leadership approaches are found in assisting school managers in managing various tasks in carrying out day-to-day job endeavours, which benefits teachers as well. School leaders' ethical leadership style more often generates a trustworthy and honest work environment congenial to better work behavioural forms among instructors. This is supposed to increase teacher creativity and innovation (Yidong & Xinxin, 2013).

It is not a gainsaying that ethics in school administration places a stronger emphasis on educational acts and administrative decisions. School administrators must make ethical judgments since their actions affect many individuals in schools. As a result, ethics becomes even more crucial (Yaman, 2010).

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