ETHICS FOR SCHOOL PRINCIPALS IN THE 21ST CENTURY

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ABSTRACT

Examples of corruption in education sector are numerous. Ghost schools that do not actually exist but have expenses that find their way into the pockets of politicians, teachers not showing up for work but collecting salaries, schools showing high student enrolments on paper than actual for procuring grant in aid from the government, exams being sold to students.

Corruption in educational institutions is more disturbing, because it undermines the trust and foundation upon which societies are built. It affects the moral fabric of societies, undermines incentives of children to work hard and teaches easier means to get ahead.

Today’s educational leaders, Principals of the school are tugged and pulled in a whole host. This tug of war challenges these educational leaders and requires them to hold steadfast to their values and beliefs. In the current climate of ethical misdeeds, it is imperative that attention must be paid to the knowledge and skills necessary to lead schools in the 21st century, preparation of educational leaders, as whole persons equipped to uphold ethical practices in high stress positions. In this paper focus is on ethics and ethical leadership of educational leaders and developing this ethical leadership through preparation programmes for the educational leaders to help them combat the unethical practices which have permeated in recent years.

Keywords: Corruption; Ethics; Ethical Leadership; Preparation Programmes for Educational Leaders

INTRODUCTION

Corruption is defined as the misuse of public office for personal gain and it continues to plague both developed as well as developing countries world wide. Corruption flourishes when an organization or official has monopoly control over certain goods or services, has discretionary powers without any accountability.

It is not a surprise that the education sector is a target for corrupt officials, because education is the second largest budget items in most countries and opportunities for corrupt practices are numerous and school Principal cannot lag behind.

Corruption in education sector can occur at several levels, at the policy level, the Ministry or department level and at the school or administrative level. Insufficient resources may be allocated for education as a result of corrupt practices or resources may be diverted en route to schools. Examples of corruption in education sector are numerous. Ghost schools that do not actually exist but have expenses that find their way into the pockets of politicians,
teachers not showing up for work but collecting salaries, schools showing high student enrolments on paper than actual for procuring grant in aid from the government, exams being sold to students and also wide spread corruption in text book procurement and school construction that result in classrooms costing more than they should. In addition, new opportunities for corruption have been introduced with decentralization, privatization and even out-sourcing-example of mid-day meals for students which is presently is making headlines in the local newspapers.

Corrupt educational institutions weaken rather than strengthen a nation’s social cohesion. Corruption in educational institutions is more disturbing, because it undermines the trust and foundation upon which societies are built. It affects the moral fabric of societies, undermines incentives of children to work hard and teaches easier means to get ahead.

Today’s educational leaders— Principals of the school are tugged and pulled in a whole host of ways by the politicians, legislators, union, peers and society’s expectations each with their own agenda. This tug of war challenges these educational leaders and requires them to hold steadfast to their values and beliefs. In the current climate of ethical misdeeds, it is imperative that attention must be paid to the knowledge and skills necessary to lead schools in the 21st century, preparation of educational leaders, as whole persons equipped to uphold ethical practices in high stress positions.

**Developing Ethical Leadership in Educational Leaders**

Ethical leadership is leaders who are aware of their core values and have courage to live them in all parts of their lives. It is a leader who demonstrates ethical behaviour in all actions, public and private, and embeds these behaviours in their decisions and knows and recognizes how these actions affect the common good.

Ethical leadership, as professed by Lashway(1997) is one that is built on characteristics of trust, respect honesty, integrity, caring and grace. This definition of ethical leadership is based on three constructs (a) it includes moral leadership which refers to the development of one’s ethics and ethical standards. It also means making continuous efforts of studying one’s own moral beliefs and moral conduct and striving hard to live up to those moral standards. (b) it is evident in the outcomes in the leader’s behaviour. This behaviour is manifested in how the leader’s behaviour will respond to the dilemmas and how their behaviour will reflect their ethical conscious and psychology of the leader. Freeman and Stewart(2006) state that ethical leaders should articulate the purpose and values of the organization. They should focus on the original success rather than one’s personal ego. Ethical leaders create a living conversation about ethics and values, and frame their actions in ethical terms.(c) and leader must act ethically. They will model such attributes as trust, respect and integrity. By acting ethically their acts will result in the good of the whole.

It is believed that nurturing ethical leadership aspects of a leader can raise organizational cultures and employee values to high levels of ethical concern. If the leaders are ethical, they can ensure that ethical practices are carried out throughout the organization. Ethical leaders decisions will be founded on data and facts that are relevant to the situation. Shapiro and Gross (2008) argue that situational ethics may arise out of (a) a clash between individual personal ethics and professional code of ethics. (b) Conflict within professional code of ethics (c) a clash among professional peers or (d) a clash between a professional code of ethics and what the organization expects. It will than be leaders responsibility to sort out what is best possible solution to the situation.
Ethics in Educational Leaders Preparation Programme

This attention to ethics for educational leaders has prompted researchers to how preparation programmes for education leaders prepare them for the ethical dilemmas that they may face in practice. The educational leaders preparation programmes along with the other relevant contents should also include content on ethics and ethical behaviour. Establishing a code of ethics and ethical behaviours for educational leaders will be a step towards creating an ethical environment. These focussed ethics will give guidance to the educational leaders for making difficult judgements. Case studies intended to build problem solving skills and knowledge of ethical theories to be included. And use of journaling, discussions of assigned readings and development of educational platforms may be used to incorporate ethics into their preparation course.

CONCLUSION

Education is seen as a means of combating corruption. Finding ways to improve education are critical. Although corruption is an unpleasant and difficult topic to address, turning an blind eye to it does not make it go away but actually encourages it. Eliminating corruption involves a culture change and a shift in mind set along with implementation of accountability systems and processes. If educational leaders –school principals keep this in forefront of their leadership and decision making, it is likely we will see a rise in ethical leadership. It will not be necessary to define ethical leadership in words. Instead it will be demonstrated by our educational leaders.

REFERENCES