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Ethical Leadership a Key Ingredient to Secondary School Management in Kenya

Esther Wachinga Gikonyo

Ph.D. Student, Department of Education Management, Policy and Curriculum Studies,
Kenyatta University, Kenya

Abstract:

Ethical leadership is critical in ensuring that school managers are able to steer the organizations to competitive advantage. This is in the context that ethical leadership ensures that school managers practice value based leadership which has an implication on effective school management. However, school managers of the 21st century continue to face numerous challenges in sustaining school management despite them having reflective leadership skills in technical, conceptual and human relations. School leaders need to employ ethical leadership practices in order to achieve the school goals which are reflected in staff job satisfaction which leads to better performance for both staff and students. The purpose of this study is to determine how ethical leadership is a key ingredient in the secondary school management in Kenya. Ethical leadership being a value-based leadership style may serve as an alternative to many other modern leadership practices. The study will look at the principles of ethical leadership in practice and how they school managers steer their organization to productivity within a context of a society full of ethical impractices which have an implication on value based leadership.

Keywords: Ethical leadership, good management, value-based leadership

1. Introduction

The word, ethics, was once used for customs and practices to differentiate one society or a community from others. Its origin is a Greek word, Ethos. Later on, it began to mean mainly character and temper and people started to use the term, ethics, to describe decent behaviors. This raises two questions, namely to whom is something ethical or not and how can we determine the right and wrong? The implications in this context are that ethical practices work within a society expectations paradigm which members and organizations are expected to conform to. These questions also make sense when we consider them deeply in terms of a society (Boydak Özcan M, Yavuz Özdemir T, Yirci R 2017).

Leadership can be defined as the process of influencing others (Yukl, 2010). There are four common themes that describe leadership: (1) leadership is a process; (2) leadership involves influence; (3) leadership occurs in a group context; and (4) leadership involves goal attainment Yukl (2002, p. 8). Ethics is key in leadership because of the nature of the relationship between leaders and followers. Leaders influence followers this means they affect followers' lives either negatively or positively (Yukl, 2012). Ethical leaders emphasize on guidance and mentoring of the employees so that they can be a great resource to the organization in the achievement of the school goals. Leadership as a process it is associated learning (Brown & Posner, 2001), which is an ongoing and continuous process, the implementation of required ethical leadership changes lead to the continuity of the process. In the process of leaders within a school influencing the subordinates to goal attainment we have had cases where they are coerced and threatened which leads to more harm in the relationship among the leaders and the subordinates. This is especially in the performance of the final exams Kenya Certificate of Secondary Education (KCSE).

Ethical leadership brings acceptable influence for followers and organization that are reflected in teamwork, perceived leaders' effectiveness, followers' job satisfaction, increased dedication, problem reporting and goal attainment (Brown et al., 2005). This leads to productivity of the organization since the set goals by the leader are followed. However in the Kenyan setting this is not the case, as we have unethical leadership among the school leaders since we lack job satisfaction by most teachers, teachers not dedicated and goals in the school not attained which is reflected in the academic performance of the students.

On a social learning perspective, Brown et al, (2005) defines ethical leadership as 'the demonstration of normatively appropriate conduct through personal actions and interpersonal relationships, the promotion of such conduct to followers through two-way communication, reinforcement and decision making'. In this sense a school leader should create good relationships with the subordinates within the school which will mean taking staff opinions during decision making process. Hence this will lead to staff feeling that they are valued and part of the school organization which will eventually lead to high productivity since subordinates will embrace the changes made by the school manager. In other words Ethical Leadership is a practice of leading in terms of being character building focused, integrity, ethically aware, team interest orientated, being unselfish and truthful, civil minded and takes heavy responsibility of ones words working concurrently with actions made. However within the realm of school management these practices are not common

phenomena because school leaders do not practice ethical leadership, this is seen on staff not working as a team leading to low productivity in the school organization. Ethical Leadership is a situational leadership whereby leaders use their social power to be morally inclined managers and individuals. Consequently it is the ability of the leaders to analyze the situational context through the power accorded to them which determines how ethical they become at the end of the day. This is then translated into effective management. In this paper the focus is on an organization where the school principal are expected practice ethical leadership and intends to explain how ethical leadership is a key ingredient to management in secondary schools in Kenya.

2. Importance of Ethical Leadership

An ethical leadership culture is an environment that is governed by principles, rather than power, politics and personalities. The leadership style that a leader adopts determines how he will achieve the objectives of the organization. Ethical leadership is a practice that ensures that ethical practices are practiced throughout the organization. The school principal should 'walk the talk', i.e. he should be a role model to the staff in the school organization, employees feel more inspired towards ethical behavior if they see their seniors championing it (Ozan 2017). These practices must be embraced by everyone in the school environment and therefore the behavior of those in leadership should be consistent with the principles of ethical leadership. Boydak Özkan, M, et al 2017. When the teachers embrace the ethical practices in the school they will work as a team with the school principal and this will lead to effective management and achievement of the school goals.

According to Arslantaş & Dursun, (2008), ethical behaviors by a leader are perceived to be a source of motivation to the subordinates. Principle-based behavior is expected of everyone in the workforce not just when it is convenient, but more importantly when the going gets difficult. Compensation, feedback, performance reviews, mentoring, and coaching all reflect this set of principles, and that there are consequences for those who do not adhere to the set principles (Sharmini Siva Vikaraman, Azlin Norhaini Mansor, Mohd Izham MohdHamzah, Khadijah Abdul Razak, 2018). Motivated staff have a sense of belonging in the organization. In the school setting when the school principal motivates teachers, support staff and learners, they work towards the achievement of the school objectives. Consequently secondary school principals should embrace ethical leadership in order to improve on school management which will then have a direct impact on the performance of the school.

Ethical leaders are those that are in constant communication with those around, and exchange ideas with them. Ethical leaders should be able to call meetings and discuss ideas with the staff, listen to staff opinions during decision making and give instructions where applicable. Being in communication with ethical leader own environment ensures that his environment is also sensitive to ethical principles (Acar, 2011). It is not enough to just have an ethical code that is posted on the wall. It has to live in the conduct of everyone in the organization daily. This implies that for the school environment to achieve their objectives of performance in the curricular, extra curricula and co-curricular ethical leadership is key. This should be reflected in the school routine which should be followed to the latter by all the school stakeholders. The school principal will communicate the school vision, objectives and activities that will lead to high performance. This can be facilitated by the school principal giving clear instructions and having regular meetings with the school staff. Consequently the school staff will be aware of what the school principal intends to achieve and how to achieve the said goals.

On the principles of ethical leaders should respect themselves and they should also respect others that they are working with. This is done by treating their employees and subordinates fairly without discrimination (Aydın 2010). In this case in the school setting, when staff are treated fairly they will work effectively hence the school organization will get the desired results in the long run. This will be interpreted as good management in the school institution.

According to (Demirdağ & Ekmekçioğlu, 2015), a leader should be empathic and tolerant to the staff opposing his points of view, this is because the leader need to work as a team in the school organization in order to ensure that the learners excel in their studies and other activities in the school. The leader should listen to those opposing his point of view in that they can contribute something positive to the school performance which the leader could not be having. The leader should also respect the subordinates opinion and engage them in the decision making process, This will make the staff own the decisions that are made in the organization and thus they will work towards the achievement of the decisions made which will lead the school organization working towards the achievement of the stated goals. (Boydak Özkan, M, et al 2017).

Based on ethical principles in their conduct, ethical leaders respect their employees' rights by treating them fairly this will make the staff feel valued and lead to high productivity in the school setting which is translated into performance. Moreover, they make efforts to develop the sense of justice in the organization by including their subordinates in the decision-making process (Demirdağ & Ekmekçioğlu, 2015). Aydın (2010) emphasizes that ethical leader is someone who esteems ethical values, gives importance to assessment of employees' ethical behaviour as a key factor and can integrate leadership abilities with ethical behaviours. Management of an organization by an ethical leader is important to ensure that all employees work in a harmonious and disciplined manner in which this leads to high performance in the school setting when people staff work as a team.

Turhan (2007) observes that the most important feature of ethical leader is that the decisions he makes are morally right, and this decision also strengthens organizational commitment by contributing to the development of social values such as truth, honesty, and loyalty within the organization. To become an expert, it is a pre-condition principle for an individual to continue professional life in the same field where he has graduated. Therefore, the contribution of expert managers and teachers to the school performance cannot be underestimated. Strengthening organizational commitment

allows a strong structuring by protecting the organization from internal and external threats. The ethical leaders play a key role in creating a positive organizational climate. The effective management skills of the leaders may play an important role in shaping the organizations. A positive working environment where the leader will create increase the employees' job satisfaction levels hence enhance the productivity of staff will be high performance.

Schweperker (2001) posts that the leader takes an active role in creating a school culture with ethical principles, as well as in having the ability to balance individual and school values within the organization and providing positive guidance for individuals. Accordingly, a school principal who exhibits ethical leadership behaviours can ensure that ethical culture is developed within the framework of ethical values by reinforcing ethical behaviours without approving unethical behaviours within the school organization. The ethical leadership culture influences the morale, motivation, and organizational commitment of employees, ensuring that the interactions and relationships within the organization take place with confidence. In this way, the school organization may compete with other schools and have an outstanding performance (Halis & Uğurlu, 2008).

The best way to describe ethical leadership culture is how people perceive (see and feel about it) the culture existing in their organization. This is a relatively persistent set of perceptions held by organizational members regarding the quality and properties of the school culture. The school culture is generally regarded as values, beliefs, and basic assumptions, ethical leadership behavior consists particularly of shared perceptions, attitudes, and behavioral characteristics. Educational organizations are responsible for educating individuals who can turn onto human rights and responsibilities, this can create environments where participation is encouraged, and are influential in the fields of productivity and high performance among teachers and learners. (Ali & Patnaik, 2014).

Staff in the school organization will generally need a principal who is trustworthy, a man of integrity and a team leader consequently this will be seen as value-based leadership. He will influence the subordinates to emulate him which will lead the school organization following the vision and the mission set by the school leader. This will be translated to effective management since the school goals will be achieved. (Vikaraman S.S. et al 2018).

3. Conclusion

The school leader should incorporate the ethical principles in the management of the school if he is to succeed in the achievement of the school goals. This will come as a result of motivated staff, who feels appreciated by the boss, who feel as part of the school vision because their views are respected and considered. The school leader leading by example, the students are encouraged to work hard and give high performance by the motivated staff. Thus, the need for every leader to embrace the principles of ethical leadership as an ingredient to the success of the school organization.

4. Recommendations

Ethical leadership is a key ingredient in the secondary school management. School leaders should embrace ethical leadership in their management in the Kenyan secondary which will lead to motivated staff, good working relationship among the staff and the stakeholders. This will see the School leaders achieving their goals as stated in all aspects of the school curriculum.

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