



Ethical Educational Leadership, Conceptual Framework and Implications in the Digital Era: An Analysis

MOHMAD ALTAF DAR
(JRF Education)

HANIEF MOHMAD DAR
(M. Ed student, CUK, Kashmir)

Abstract:

Ron Heifetz defines leadership as “the ability to mobilize people to tackle tough problems”. And one among the tough problems faced by educational institutions in the modern technological and materialistic world is “Ethical crisis”. Neither the bureaucratic policies nor the technological advancements are enough for the educational institutions to survive. Ethical code matters! The scientific advancement and achievements devoid of ethical character leads to human disasters. But this ethical character can be inculcated only if there are ethical educational leaders. Therefore, the educational leaders themselves should be moral. In this connection, the present research paper highlights the conceptual framework, importance and implications of ethical leadership in educational settings in the modern era. The researcher reviewed numerous national and international research papers related the ethics of educational leadership.

Keywords: *Ethics, Ethical leaders, Ethical educational leadership*

1. Introduction

From the last few years there is increasing rate of Ethical scandals in educational sector as explored by social media, researchers and welfare NGOs. This is directly a question mark on educational leadership. Education as an institution has always been considered as the most pious institution of the society. Education is all about character education (Berreth et al., 1993). But, the ethical scandals have affected the reputation, culture and quality of educational institutions, which in turn affected their productivity. So, there is an urgent need to rethink and reshape educational leadership on Ethical lines.

Multiple ethical failures affect reputation, culture and production of an organization (Klann, 2007). Corruption has gained currency in human activities in all fields of life, and attention of the world is focused on actions and conduct of leaders in government, business, society and equally in religious associations (Marsh, 2013). Therefore, educational system needs ethical leaders.

The 21st century leaders should perform multiple roles. In a learning organization, leaders are designers, stewards, and teachers. They are responsible for building organizations where people continually expand their capabilities to understand complexity, clarify vision, and improve shared mental models-that is, they are responsible for learning (Senge, 1990, p.340). It is usually leaders who lay down standards for managerial goals and organizational behaviour at most workplaces and subsequently establish systems that impact employee outcomes (Yukl, 2013).

In the modern era, leaders in general and educational leaders in particular must be enough potent to establish such a culture and climate that fosters the ethical development among the masses.

2. Defining Ethics

Ethics is the code of values and moral principles that guides individual or group behaviour with respect to what is right or wrong. Ethical behaviour is both legally and morally acceptable to the larger community (L. K. Trevino, 1986).

Starratt (2004) defines ethics as “The underlying beliefs, assumptions, principles, and values that support a moral way of life”.

Ethics is concerned with the “Standards or principles of conduct that govern the behavior of an individual or a group of individuals” (Rue and Byars, 2010).

Ethics encompasses values and beliefs about what is right and what is wrong (Heather L., 2017).

3. Defining the term leader and leadership

Sorenson & Epps (1996) have proposed a broad definition of the term “leader” and define it as, “a forceful and dynamic personality who really leads from the front; an architect and implementer of strategy; a mediator in conflict situations; an integrator who assures the climate of the organization; a person able to motivate subordinates and who, by persuasion, compulsion or example to others; succeeds in getting others to follow the leader’s wishes”.

“The test of a leader lies in the reaction and response of his followers. He should not have to impose authority. Bossiness in itself never made a leader. He must make his influence felt by example and the instilling of confidence in his followers. The greatness of a leader is measured by the achievements of the led. This is the ultimate test of his effectiveness”, General Omar Bradley remarks.

Northouse’s (1997) suggests that leadership is “a process whereby individuals influence groups of individuals to achieve shared goals or commonly desired outcomes.”

Further, John Seaman Garns, opines that “leaders are just ordinary people with extraordinary determination.”

Harvard Professor, Rosabeth Ross Kanter, is of the opinion that leadership is “the art of mastering change . . . the ability to mobilize others’ efforts in new directions.”

According to Vance Packard, “leadership appears to be the art of getting others to want to do something you are convinced should be done.”

Blanchard (2010) defines leadership as “the capacity to influence others by unleashing their power and potential to impact the greater good”

Thus, each definition highlights one or the other characteristic feature to define leadership. Simply we will say that a leader is one who, by his virtues, values and action, leads a group; be it a larger or smaller group, be it a family, a religious organization, a political party or an educational institution.

Here, the term leadership signifies educational leadership including school heads and principals of educational institutions.

4. Defining ethical leader

Ethics is the heart of effective leadership (Ciulla, J. B., 1998). An ethical leader is a person living up to principles of conduct that are crucial for him. To be an ethical leader one needs to adhere to a more universal standard of moral behaviour (Thomas, 2001).

Ethical leadership is defined as “the demonstration of normatively appropriate conduct through personal actions and interpersonal relationships, and the promotion of such conduct to followers through two-way communication, reinforcement, and decision-making” (Brown, Treviño & Harrison, 2005, p. 120). Ethical leaders speak to us about our identity, what we are and what we can become, how we live and how we could live better. (Freeman & Stewart, 2006)

Ethical leadership can be viewed in terms of healing and energizing powers of love, recognizing that leadership is a reciprocal relation with followers. Leader's mission is to serve and support and his passion for leading comes from compassion (Kouzes & Posner, 1992).

Ethical leadership places more emphasis on ideas, ideals, values, and morality. It is about being transparent — just and fair in dealings while leading. It is to resolutely stand by values, sharing same with others with enthusiasm (Rao M.S., 2018).

Ethical leaders are perceived to be sincere, trustworthy and open (Treviño, Brown & Hartman, 2003). Further, ethical leaders tend to be fair and moral decision-makers and care for their employees and others in the society with compassion, kindness and respect (Caulfield, 2013). Moreover, Ethical leaders are justice-oriented when distributing benefits and rewards, frequently emphasizing the importance of values, making sacrifices for the benefit of others and communicating with others in an honest and open manner (Yukl et al., 2013).

Ethical leaders show ethical awareness, people oriented, motivating, empowering, shows integrity and are ethically accountable (Resick et al., 2006). Ethical leaders are fair enough, they avoid favouritism and can be trusted (Brown et al., 2005; De Hoogh & Den Hartog, 2008). Such leaders encourage open communication (Brown et al., 2005) with others, listen to their ideas and involve them in decision making. Ethical leaders communicate the importance of ethics in decision making to others and what organization expects from their role (Grojean et.al, 2004; Piccolo et al., 2010). Ethical leaders guide followers by acting as role model and guide them ethically (Bedi et al., 2015). Ethical principles like honesty, integrity, concern for others and fairness prevent ethical leaders to harm others (Toor & Ofori, 2009).

5. Why Ethical Educational Leadership

Neither the bureaucratic policies nor the technological advancements are enough for the survival of human civilization. Ethical code matters! The scientific advancement and achievements devoid of ethical character leads to human disasters as experienced by human civilizations. But this ethical character can be inculcated only if there are ethical leaders. The ethical leaders can be produced only by the educational institutions having ethical leadership. So, educational leaders have to play a key role to transform the society by producing ethical leaders out of their institutions. It is possible only if the educational leaders themselves are moral. Thus, educational institutions must have leaders who are themselves ethical and are enough competent to produce ethically responsible students citizens and future leaders.

Educationally speaking, lack of cooperation among different educational stakeholders, unhealthy attitude of employees, ethical scandals, student dissatisfaction, Ineffective leadership and low productivity, etc., are concerns which are directly or indirectly linked with ethical leadership crisis in the educational institutions.

If people opt to follow your leadership, they tend to follow that same conduct that you exhibit (Thomas, 2001). So, an educational leader must be ethical in every aspect and everywhere so that followers will acquire practical ethical training from him.

Institutional injustice and scandals like suicide of students, sexual harassment of teachers and students, and exploitation of employees clearly depict that educational system lack ethical leadership. So, educational leaders need to look deep into their character.

Educational leaders must conduct themselves ethically in order to create more equitable futures for students (Starratt, 1994). Ethical leaders set examples for followers (Begley & Wong, 2001, p. 293-294). Situations of conflict and ethical encounters in school environments necessitate that leaders require patience and perspective, must be able to work with diverse groups, and be sensitive to other

cultures (Begley & Wong, 2001, p. 293). Boggs (2003) claim that future educational leaders must be models of integrity, honesty, and high ethical standards.

Bowen (2006) and Furman (2003) emphasize the need for ethical practice by leaders in education. Considering the various issues that challenge educational leaders (such as building trust, working with codes of conduct and school values, finding ethical solutions to conflict and dilemmas, and envisioning the future direction of schools and their relations with connected communities), the emphasis on studying ethics in leadership education leads to enhanced awareness, understanding, and practice, Shapiro and Stefkovich (2007) placed school leadership at an ethical level, placing emphasis on the importance of ethical leadership training (in schools), and argued that school leaders have a special responsibility to all stakeholders to be ethical in leading schools .

Ethical leadership encourages ethical behaviour by consistently practicing and managing ethics as well as holding every person accountable (Brown, 2004). Ethical leaders integrate moral standards in their values, behaviours and belief system (Khuntia & Suar, 2004).

Lastly, to quote Heather L. Carr (2017), “Crucial to educational leadership is ethical behaviour”.

6. Ethical guidelines for an educational leader

Thomas and Davis (1998) have given some important ethical guidelines for educational leaders. The school heads must guide their actions and behaviors keeping these guidelines in mind. The guidelines are as follows:

- Contracts are not broken unilaterally.
- Anonymous information is not used to injure others.
- One does not personally profit from the position held.
- Confidential materials are kept confidential.
- One does not use school employees and school materials for personal matters.
- Expense accounts are not falsified.
- School leaders tell the truth, have integrity, and adhere to the ethics of the profession.
- * The ethics of leadership responsibility encompass all phases of a leader’s work.

7. Criterion for evaluating ethical leader

Leaders must be able to inspire people if they are to have followers, but this means that they have to have something worthy of inspiration to communicate. People will be inspired if they strongly desire and believe in what the leader stands for (David R. Kolzow,2014). The following table provides Criteria for evaluation of ethical leadership and also differentiates an ethical leader from an unethical one.

Criterion	Ethical Leadership	Unethical Leadership
Handling diverse interests of multiple stakeholders	Attempts to balance and integrate them	Favours coalition partners who offer the most benefits
Use of leader power and influence	Serves followers and the organization	Satisfies personal needs and career objectives
Development of a vision for the organization	Develops a vision based on follower input about their needs, values and ideas	Attempts to sell a personal vision as the only way for the organization to succeed
Integrity of leader behaviour	Acts consistent with espoused values	Does what is expedient to attain personal objectives
Risk taking in leader decisions and actions	Is willing to take personal risks and make necessary decisions	Avoids necessary decisions or actions that involve personal risk to the leader
Communication of relevant information operations	Makes a complete and timely disclosure of information	Uses deception and distortion to bias follower perceptions

	about events, problems and actions	about problems and progress
Response to criticism and dissent by followers	Encourages critical evaluation to find better solutions	Discourages and suppresses criticism or dissent
Development of follower skills and self confidence	Uses coaching, mentoring and training to develop followers	Deemphasizes development to keep followers weak and dependent on the leader

Source: (G. A. Yukl & Yukl, 2002, p. 422).

To find the core of a school, don't look at its rulebook or even its mission statement. Look at the way the people spend their time – how they relate to each other, how they tangle with ideas. Look for the contradictions between words and practice, with the fewer the better. Try to estimate the frequency and the honesty of its deliberations. Though it will always want to spruce up for visitors, its hour by hour functioning is what is important. Judge the school not on what it says but on how it keeps (Sizer & Sizer, 1999, p.18).

8. The 4-V Model of Ethical Leadership

On the basis of his personal experience as a leader for a pretty long period and also on the basis of the research studies, Dr. Bill Grace has given 4-V Model of Ethical Leadership. The four pillars of this model of Ethical leadership are:

1)Values: Values are learned and then practiced and demonstrated through actions, behaviours and beliefs. Truthfulness and honesty, integrity, fairness and justice, law, respect, freedom, compassion, caring and concern, loyalty, right and wrong, trustworthiness, and confidentiality are often things that many individuals and societies respect and value as ethical values (Heather L., 2017)

2)Vision: Effective school leaders know how to focus the work of the school on the essential. They have a clear mission or purpose for the school and identify goals that align with that mission. They communicate the purpose and goals in a meaningful way such that all stakeholders understand what they need to do. (McIver, Kearns, Lyons, & Sussman, 2009)

3)Voice: It's not enough to espouse high standards. To live up to them – and help others do the same – requires an ethical cast of mind that lets you practice your principles consistently (Kannair, 2007)

4)Virtue: Achieving success as a leader, by virtually any definition, requires 'doing right things right (Leithwood, 2005).The most important feature of ethical leader is that the decisions he makes are morally right and the decisions are based on truth, honesty, and loyalty with the organization (Turhan, 2007; Anil et al., 2017).Transparency, empowerment, and collectivism are important virtues of ethical leadership (Kalshoven, den Hartog, & De Hoogh, 2011).

Paul M. Quick, Florida International University, USA, in his work, "Moral Leadership: A Model for Educational Leaders in the 21st Century" states that, "For successful educational leadership, educational leaders need to:

- (a) articulate a vision and create the structure for that vision to come to fruition;
- (b) be symbols of the institutional values of the school that they lead;
- (c) be cognizant of the symbolic nature of their position when taking action;
- (d) be role models for students, staff and faculty;
- (e) teach lessons with what they support and how they act; and finally
- (f) be conscious of the possible implications of all of their decisions and actions".

Further, the author mentions that "Leading means articulating a vision and then creating the structure for that vision to come to fruition. As an educational leader, one must be willing to serve, serving those around one and subordinating oneself to the vision and best interests of the organization".

9. Principles to be followed by an ethical educational leader

Due to social responsibilities of schools, administrators have to interact with many people, including students, teachers, other staff members, parents and inspectors. In these formal and informal settings

various things may be expected from them. Thus, the question arises as to which demands should be met and to what extent is it possible? Administrators always face ethical problems because of these demands and expectations. In such a case, they are expected to act lawfully without conflicting with ethical principles (Taymaz, 2003 & Boydak Özkan, M., Yavuz Özdemir, T., & Yirci, R., 2017).

Ethical principles determine moral responsibilities of people who are employed in schools (Sergiovanni, 1992). There are some essential principles which are obligatory to be followed to be an ethical educational leader; be it the Director, Principal or Head teacher of an educational institution.

Shapiro, J.P. & Gross, S.J. (2008), Mackenzie, S. V. & Mackenzie, G. C. (2010), and National Education Association (2012) have mentioned the following principles to be necessarily followed by an ethical leader in business or educational settings;

1. Principle of Justice
2. Principle of Equality
3. Principle of Integrity
4. Principle of Establishing Positive human relations
5. Principle of Empathy
6. Principle of Tolerance
7. Principle of Open communication
8. Principle of Building and maintaining trust among followers
9. Principle of Guiding people on ethical lines
10. Principle of Inculcating ethical attitude and behaviour among subordinates and followers
11. Principle of preparing future ethical leaders.

So, the leaders of educational institutions must adhere to the above mentioned principles in order to become ethical, effective and productive. Ethical principles are the guide to make decisions at work. They enable the organization to develop an identity and be respectable in the society. As they show the right way in case of a dilemma, they enable decision makers to decide more confidently (Johnson, 2004; Boydak Ozan, M., Yavuz Ozdemir, T., & Yirci, R., 2017).

10. Key functions of leadership in general and ethical leadership in particular

Ethical leaders are understood as fair, sincere, upright and honest (Brown & Treviño, 2006). Ethical leaders demonstrate integrity and concern and care for others in their personal and professional lives (Brown & Treviño, 2006; Brown et al., 2005).

There are two important roles of an ethical leader – the ethical leader as a moral manager and the ethical leader as a role model. As a moral manager, the ethical leader is inclined more to use transactional approaches and tactics to discourage the penetration of unethical behaviors in organizations and encourage ethical behaviors. The transactional tactics may involve a transparent reward and punishment system. In other words, in this role, leaders use their normative power and authority to force ethical behavior in organizations. Importantly, ethical leaders endeavor to shape their followers' behavior by setting up and following ethical standards, communicating the standards to the followers and establishing fair accountability system (Brown & Treviño, 2006; Tuckey, Bakker & Dollard, 2012; Usman M., 2017).

Ethical administrators have three different responsibilities. First, they are responsible to themselves. They should stick to ethical principles more than anyone. Secondly, they are responsible to the organization because they have to enforce ethical rules. Finally, their social responsibility is to introduce these principles to the public (Celik, 2000).

The most important and key role of an ethical educational leader is to make ethical decisions in the light of ethical principles. Organizational decisions affect all the employees in the organization. Each administrative decision is so crucial that it may entirely change lives of people (Foster, 1986).

Therefore, administration usually faces ethical dilemmas and plays an important role in resolving these dilemmas (Stefkovic & Shapiro, 2003).

The Wallace Foundation (2011) identified five key functions of principal leadership, as:

1. Shaping a vision and mission of academic success for all students
2. Creating a cooperative spirit and a competitive culture on ethical lines
3. Cultivating leadership in others
4. Improving instruction to enable teachers to teach at their best and students to learn at
5. Managing people, data and processes to foster school improvement their utmost

11. Impact of ethical leadership in educational setting

“Successful modern leadership requires ethical thinking that brings transparency, impartiality and clarity of outcomes.” — Professor Robert Wood

Ethical leadership brings favourable consequences for followers and organization that are reflected in perceived leaders' effectiveness, followers' job satisfaction, increased dedication and problem reporting (Brown et al., 2005). Leaders serve as role models for their followers and demonstrate the behavioral boundaries set within an organization. The appropriate and desired behaviour is enhanced through culture and socialization process of the newcomers. Employees learn about values from watching leaders in action (Tekavčič et al., 2010). Thus, leaders should reflect the moral code in their behaviour. Ethical leadership impacts every process and activity of an institution. Some broader outcomes and impacts of ethical leadership are:

- 1. Maintenance of professional commitment of teachers:** Ethical leadership greatly influences the professional commitment of teachers. Actually the commitment of teachers towards their profession is maintained if the head teacher communicates and behaves ethically with them. If leaders act ethically, virtues like honesty and loyalty are enhanced and employees become more committed to the organization (Turhan, 2007).
- 2. Ethical leadership as an inspiration and motivation of teachers and students:** Leaders are the primary influence on ethical conduct in an organization (Hitt, 1990). Ethical leaders inspire the others through their virtues and actions. They motivate others to perform the roles through their ethical behaviour.
- 3. Ethical leadership governs the behaviour of teachers:** Ethical leadership modifies and governs the behaviour of teachers and students. It acts as a guiding force to behave ethically. Ethical behaviours include behaving in a manner which allows others to perceive or know that the actions or behaviours portrayed by a person are ethical or moral (Heather L., 2017).
- 4. Fostering culture of trust:** It has been found that trust level of employees over authority and vice versa, from the last few decades, is declining. So, to restore and foster it, ethical leadership has a good role to play.
- 5. Faculty satisfaction:** the mental satisfaction of employees is essential to perform well. Ethical leadership has a significant contribution to make employees feel satisfied.
- 6. Discipline of teachers and students:** The discipline of teachers and students is maintained if the leader himself is morally disciplined.
- 7. Educational productivity:** School leaders improve teaching and learning indirectly and most powerfully through their influence on staff motivation, commitment, and working conditions. (Leithwood, Sammon, Harris, & Hopkins, 2006,).

12. Conclusions

“Research has consistently acknowledged and emphasized the critical role played by educational leaders in improvements to the performance and quality of institutions and individuals” (Al-Omari, 2008; Dimmock, 2003; Simkins et al., 2003).

Principals shape the environment for teaching and learning. The most effective principals create vibrant learning communities where faculty and staff collaborate to help every student fulfill his or her potential. ----- NEA President Dennis Van Roekel

After overall analysis regarding the contribution of ethical educational leadership, it can be concluded that:

1. Ethical leadership impacts overall performance through ethical climate, procedural justice, and organizational citizenship behaviors (Shin et al. 2015).
2. If you want people to act ethically when dealing with you, you should act ethically when dealing with them (Bly, R. W. ,1999).
3. Certain ethical challenges or dilemmas are inherent in the leadership role. If you choose to become a leader, recognize that you accept ethical burdens along with new tasks, expectations and rewards (Craig Johnson, 2005).
4. If leaders act ethically, virtues like honesty and loyalty are enhanced and employees become more committed to the organization (Turhan, 2007).
5. In presence of ethical leadership, organizational justice would rule in the educational institutions that in turn will affect organizational performance positively.
6. Educational leaders should be enough ethical to make ethical decisions in the challenging circumstances.
7. Educational leaders should follow the principles of equity and justice while leading and dealing with followers.
8. Ethical leaders emphasize on guidance and mentoring of the employees so that they can turn out to be great resource and they themselves could become role models (Hoffman, 1988).
9. As role models, leaders have an obligation to align values of followers to the ethical values of leadership.
- 10.10) Leaders that practice ethical leadership, generate trust and ethical climates. (Christensen et al., 2014; Shin et al., 2015; Wang & Young, 2014).Mutual trust and ethical climate is very essential for better organizational performance and high educational productivity.
- 11.If leadership does not follow the accountability and fairness aspects of ethical leadership, organizations may learn destructive practices (Usman M. et al., 2017)
- 12.Ethics and effectiveness are inseparable. Ethical code must be adopted ,not only by school heads but also by teachers, to get effectiveness in educational outcomes.
- 13.The bottom line is that investments in good principals are a particularly cost-effective way to improve teaching and learning. (devita, 2010).

13. Recommendations

1. The principals or head teaches of educational institutions should treat all staff with dignity and respect.
2. The educational leadership should be accountable for their work.
3. Educational leaders should show a competitive spirit among teachers and students
4. Rule of law should prevail in educational institutions.
5. Staff members of the institution should be treated fairly and not by favoritism.
6. Empathy and honesty should be the hallmark of educational heads.
7. The principal should trust the staff and provide opportunities to make decisions and tackle problems.
8. The leaders should listen to and value other's perspectives.
9. The educational leaders should acknowledge and encourage the good performances of staff members
- 10.The staff should be guided, not discouraged and defamed, when they are low on their performance.

11. Ethical Leadership requires not only investing in small trees and experimental hybrids that won't yield a thing in this quarter or next, but also caring for the soil that allows us to produce such a harvest in the first place (Butcher, 1997).
12. Last but not least, to quote 'Ilham binti Ismail(2014)', school leaders should be given adequate exposure and training to improve their ethical leadership in order to implement more effective management toward organizational commitment in schools. To achieve the transformation agenda of education, aspects of ethical leadership and organizational commitment should be given due attention.

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