ABSTRACT
          Teachers who leave the classroom to become principals often
have difficulty adjusting to the new job responsibilities. A caring attitude
may alleviate much of the stress associated with these administrative
obligations. However, caring on the job is viewed as a weakness. This finding
has led to the investigation of factors related to a caring administrator.
The present research examines whether being a caring administrator provides
growing opportunities outside of the classroom for teachers desiring a career
change. The paper begins by reviewing literature on the definition of caring
from various perspectives and on caring as it relates to school
administration. Next, it investigates documented experiences of schools where
caring exists. Finally, it concludes that effective schools nearly always
have caring principals who are not afraid to give up power. Caring presents
opportunities for administrators to grow as humans and for other people to
grow from administrators' relationships with others. New administrators could
feel more at ease with their new job responsibilities if they are perceived
as caring. Recommendations include offering future administrators a graduate
course on moral development; having professors of school leadership inform
students of the aspect of caring and its implications on development; and
informing current principals of the powers of caring. (Contains 23
references.) (SM)

To Care Or Not To Care: Can You Measure Care?

A Paper Presented By

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Abstract

Teachers who leave the classroom to become principals often find it difficult to adjust to new job responsibilities. A caring attitude may alleviate much of the stress associated with these administrative obligations. However, caring on the job is often viewed as a weakness. This finding has led to the investigation of factors related to a caring administrator. The present research examines whether being a caring administrator provides growing opportunities outside of the classroom for teachers desiring a career change. It was found that an effective school is operated by a caring principal who is not afraid to relinquish power and control. Recommendations of caring in school administration are discussed in terms of their implications for future research.

Introduction

Many teachers today have entered into the teaching profession not for the money but for the hope of making a difference in a child's life. Ellis, Mackey, Glenn (1998) reported research by Lortie who found that reaching students is one of the most important rewards that teachers mention. Money and power, however, are insignificant to most teachers. Nevertheless, these dedicated teachers often love the subject they teach, see direct results of working with children, and enjoy a nine-month work calendar. These outstanding teachers, however, often become bored with what they do in the classroom. Many look for a career change because they feel completely alone in the classroom. Ellis, et al. (1988) reported research by Kirst who found that teachers who leave the teaching profession are not those who are not prepared but those who are the most gifted. At least half of the most academically able teachers will leave after seven years of teaching even though there is a trend toward increased professionalism in teaching. If some of these unchallenged teachers do not completely leave the profession, then they are often attracted to and selected as school administrators.

Almost all school administrators start out as classroom teachers. When energetic teachers become school principals, they do find that it, indeed, is a career change. There, they find that less time is spent dealing and making a difference with children in a positive manner and more time is allotted to dealing with student discipline, teachers, parents, community leaders, and central office personnel (Black & English, 1986). Often these new leaders might feel overwhelmed, defeated, and upset with having so many non-instructional responsibilities that they become less caring. It is the principal who is ultimately responsible for budgeting, fiscal accounting, and building management. Moreover, principals are responsible for dismissing extremely inadequate or incompetent teachers in a manner that will prevent court

action. A principal may also be involved in hiring new teachers and, thus, be held accountable for the quality of instruction in his or her school. Even more, good principals know how to work in the system and get things done in an irregular manner. School principals, nonetheless, must also be available to interact with the members of the community so that the school will not become uncaring, static, and unresponsive to changing community and societal needs. In most situations, the day-to-day decisions regarding the control of children with disabilities, complicated federal and state regulations govern the administration of punishment to these students (Hughes & Ubben, 1997). With so many new and involved obligations assigned to a new administrator/former teacher, how does the aspect of caring play a role in dealing with these new responsibilities? Must a highly effective school contain a caring principal? Are not compassion and genuine caring both drawbacks in the profession of public school administration? Is a person who possesses these characteristics not likely to be taken advantage of by students, parents, other faculty and staff members, and superiors? What is caring? How important or unimportant is caring? Can caring be developed?

The structure of this research is as follows; first, a review of the literature has been done not only on the definition of caring from various perspectives but also on caring as it relates to school administration; next, an attempt has been made to find documented experiences of schools where caring exists; last, a brief conclusion along with recommendations has been offered.

Literature Review

According to a survey and interview done on caring, Bosworth (1995) found and reported that an individual is considered caring if that person helps, considers the feelings of others, provides for the needs of others, and shows acts of kindness and respect. According to Van Hooft (1996), caring was found as being fond of someone, feeling sympathy or empathy for others, being concerned for the well-being of others, or having a professional commitment to seeing to the needs of others. Oliner & Oliner (1995) explained that caring means assuming personal responsibility for others' welfare. Without care, hope and a sense of investment in school communities will vanish. Nobilt, Rodgers, & McCadden (1995) explained that caring is the glue which binds people together and makes life more meaningful. There are eight social processes of caring. The first four (4) social processes (also called attaching processes) focuses on promoting caring relationships with those in out immediate settings, and the last four (4) social processes (called including processes) focuses on promoting caring relationships with those outside our immediate settings and groups. The attaching processes are as follows: bonding, empathizing, learning caring norms, and practicing care and assuming personal responsibility. The including processes are as follows: diversifying, nurturing, networking, and resolving conflicts. Individuals who participate in settings that provide opportunities for all these processes to occur are more likely to feel cared for and are more likely to care for others (Oliner, 1995).

Learning to care is not easy. The expectations of concrete rewards, social approval or the desire to increase one's positive internal state are all pro-social behaviors that psychologists have considered as negative factors that motivate individuals to care. Positive factors, however, include sympathy for others or the desire to adhere to internalized moral principles (Van Hooft, 1996). Hence, change needs to come primarily from the "inside out" (Oliner, 1995). Furthermore, the two things most often associated with caring is spending time and talking with others. Caring, nevertheless, is most often defined in terms of one or more of the following: humanitarianism, the pursuit of happiness, reciprocity, and self-actualization (Wuthnow, 1995).

Even Kohlberg—who developed the theory of moral development—had underplayed the care perspective; that is, Kohlberg's theory did not adequately reflect relationships and concern for others. The care perspective is a moral perspective that views people in terms of their connectedness with others and emphasizes interpersonal communication, relationships with others, and concern for others (Santrock, 1993).

The most effective mechanism used to limit the ability to care according to Wuthnow (1991) is to create a distinction between our roles and our "selves". Often the distinction between roles and selves is used to limit our compassion. Wuthnow explained that this done by associating our caring activities with specific roles rather than identifying them with our entire selves.

According to Eaker-Rich & Van Galen (1996), caring school administrators viewed their work as the development and nurturance of relationships with teachers, students, parents, community members, and other administrators. They tended to pursue social reform; the traditional school administrator, however, sought to build alliances with powerful corporate, academic, and governmental organizations and to solidify a rigidly hierarchical bureaucratic

structure. Military and business organizational model as well as evolving notions of scientific-social efficacy.

Beck (1994) reported research by Milton Mayeroff who suggested that caring habits has its purpose the fostering of development. He contends that encouragement of personal growth is its defining characteristics: "to care for another person is to help him grow and actualize himself". Beck (1994) also reported research by Gaylin who concurred that caring is developmental. "There exists the potential to grow and the propensity to move toward that potential". True caring occurs when persons relate to others in ways that honor and encourage the healthy unfolding of all types of development. Feeling cared for, Wuthnow (1995) explained is not so much a matter of having to disclose everything as it is feeling accepted, trusted, and respected as a whole person.

Beck reported research by Mayeroff who eloquently stated:

> When I care...I do not relinquish myself...I allow my
>
> motive energy to be shared; put it at the service of others. It is
>
> clear that my vulnerability is potentially increased when I
>
> care, for I can be hurt through the other as well as through myself.
>
> But my strength and hope are also increased for if I am
>
> weakened, the other, which is a part of me, my remain strong and insistent (p. 8).

Van Hooft (1996) also stated that caring is not only being for others but also caring about oneself. Beck (1994) also reported more research by Buber who suggested that an individual can not enjoy the complete experience of "being" until one has entered into caring, respectful relationships. Still Beck (1994) reported more research by Noddings who indicated that caring interaction enhances rather than diminishes one's sense of self and security. Nonetheless, caring relationships create opportunities for all types of learning and growing experiences.

Van Hooft (1996) explained that deep caring is different from the familiar concept of caring. Deep caring is an engagement with the world; that is, it is to integrate it with our living and give it world-relational meaning. According to Noddings (1995), Aristotle even wrote on friendship and assessed it as central to moral life. Aristotle organized friendships into various categories: those motivated by common business or political purposes as well as those maintained by common recreational interests and then those created by mutual admiration. The last was, for Aristotle, the highest for of friendship and the one of the most likely to endure.

The main goal of education, according to Noddings (1995) and Teeter (1995), should be to produce competent, caring, loving, and lovable people. Education should be organized around themes of caring rather than around traditional disciplines. Schools should be built on the idea that different people have different strengths, and that these strengths should be cultivated in an environment of caring, not competition. Liberal traditional education does not provide the best education for everyone because it overemphasizes rationality and abstract reasoning, fosters the belief that academic excellence is superior to other kinds of abilities, and undervalues the values and capacities associated with women (Noddings, 1992). According to Clement (1996) who reported work by Gilligan, there is a strong correlation between women and the ethic of care. However, Gilligan, herself--- at other times insisted that the ethic of care often is characterized by theme and not by gender.

However, there is an unanswered question regarding how well do schools with caring principals function?

Documented Experiences

One study showed how school administrators operating from an ethic of care differs from that of administrators operating solely from traditional leadership roles. The results showed that certain assistant principals did not fit traditional administrative theories and that professional and

organizational demands often interfere with a caring orientation (Marshall, 1996). Another study described a typical day in the life of a dynamic principal who was formerly a teacher and knows each student by name. This principal viewed her job as a sacred trust performed in a caring, child-centered environment (Keller, 1988).

In 1991, the U.S. Congress commissioned the Department of Education's Office of Educational Research and Improvement to investigate the various aspects of educational reform. This investigation found that one broad condition which is typically present in schools that successfully serve at risk students. This condition is that the schools function as with caring administrators and teachers and cohesive communities (Irmsher, 1997). Another study revealed that 13 indicators of high school quality are planned and board-approved curriculum, strong graduation requirements, strong courses beyond the basis, positive school climate, good attendance, low drop-out rates, high per-pupil expenditure, low pupil-teacher ratio, superior library and media resources, good faculty, caring principals, and high student achievement (Stuart, 1983).

Yet another study investigated four effective schools in the rural Appalachian regions of Kentucky and Tennessee. Major findings on school climate include: orderly and pleasant; characterized by purposeful activity; caring; concerned about student and community involvement; celebrating achievements of students and faculty; and staffed with highly committed individuals (Bobbett, 1990). In another study, some urban school administrators were found to express caring, justice, and moral responsibility. The analysis demonstrated that democratic school communities were interpersonal and situational. Interactions must involve truthful, honest communication, and fair treatment of adults and children. School leaders must consider all values and voices to develop more dynamic and moral strategies of school

leadership. The findings demonstrated the many values of the urban schools studied. Administrators expressed caring, justice, and moral responsibility (Murry, 1995).

Still, another study explored how staff and parents experienced one school's environment---- that is, the relationship between the principal's caring leadership and the school's environment. Data were obtained through observations, interviews with 61 staff members and 40 parents, and a survey of staff members. The words most frequently used by staff and parents to describe the school environment included "caring", "like a family", "warm", and "nurturing". The principal treated every person equally and with respect; did not limit himself or anyone to a role; prioritized his time for sustaining relationships; supported and encouraged others as persons and professionals; listened and solved problems; and kept the mission focused and central (Lyman, 1996).

An additional study examined factors that promote and diminish teachers trust in the supervision process. Supervisors who stress authority and identification of weakness build less trust than those who emphasize collegiality, productive diversity, and strengths. A study of 150 teachers in seven Kansas school districts identified supervisors practices that either enhanced or diminished trust; these practices include orientation, tone, feedback, listening skills, and support. Supervisors develop a caring interpersonal relationship with teachers through showing consideration, appreciation, and respect, and by giving appropriate positive feedback (Lyman, 1987).

In a last study, a Georgia principal described how she integrated students with AIDS into her school community. Coomer's plan succeeded because few people knew the boy's identity, teachers were willing to accept the child as any other, and an educational program effectively briefed staff and parents. Three years later the child is articulate, hard working, but sick, and school has received national recognition for its caring approach (Coomer, 1993).

Conclusion

This research examined how the aspect of caring has the potential of giving a school administrator a way of alleviating much of the stress associated with new job responsibilities. It was found that a caring attitude is an important characteristic of a school principal. Although it was found that this trait could be developed, it was also found that caring should primarily come from within. An effective school almost always contains a caring principal who is not afraid to give up his power according to these findings. Moreover, caring was found to present administrators with opportunities to grow as humans. From the perspective of caring, effective principals should become well-connected with students, teachers, parents, and the communities they serve. It was also found that principals also provide chances for others to grow from these relationships with others. Hence, the compassion that a principal has for faculty and staff members as well as parents and students was found not to be a handicap, but could potentially be an asset to the administrator.

The results of the research suggest that a new administrator could feel more at ease with these new job responsibilities if the principals were perceived as caring. Some specific recommendations can be made on the basis of these results obtained. One recommendation is that future administrators should be offered a graduate course called moral development. While preparing for the principalship and taking this course, it is hoped that a deeper understanding of caring is gained by these prospective administrators. Another recommendation is that professors in school leadership also should be involved in informing students of the aspect of caring and its implications on development. A last recommendation is that current principals should be informed of the powers of caring; it has the power to change the way schools are operated.

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