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ETHICS AND VALUES IN LEADERSHIP PREPARATION PROGRAMS: FINDING THE NORTH STAR IN THE DUST STORM

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Leadership in any endeavor is a moral task, but even more so for educational leaders whether at the school or the university level. Accordingly, one goal that should be incorporated as part of a leadership preparation program is the opportunity for aspiring leaders to examine beliefs, traditions, and experiences that have shaped their lives. This is critical activity because prospective and practicing educational leaders are not only responsible for the success of their particular institution, but their work can have an impact on various other institutions now and in the future. In a fundamental way those who are led will be the future leaders of tomorrow. As a result, educational leaders must be vigilant about the values implied by their actions, as those actions speak volumes about the values that the educational leader supports. It is impossible for an educational leader to take an action that does not also make some comment about how things *should* be done – which, by definition is a moral action.

It is commonly understood in the education arena that educational administrators should be catalysts of change who embody the essence of exemplary ethical behavior. Leadership preparation programs must therefore foster and support the development of a professional workforce capable of upholding the values and ideals of

the society being served. Accordingly, the developers of leadership preparation programs in universities have been demonstrating increased interest in the explicit consideration of ethical issues by educators and students (Beck & Murphy, 1997). Due to a decline in traditional social structures such as a stable family life, the rapid growth of cities, and increased social diversity, a shared value system can not be presumed, if indeed one ever could. One could also argue that other social forces are emerging including social movements, global governance structures, and global media as watchdog. Consequently, prudent examination of what society defines as good and how these definitions affect schooling merit critical discussion. Due to the breakdown in relevance of some values we can no longer count on these values to guide educational leaders. In a dynamic, globally-linked world, ethics and values cannot be approached as static. Rather, practices and policies must accomplish their dynamism into the work of educational leaders.

The purpose of this article is to offer a theoretical perspective on ethics and values as a component of professional preparation for school leaders through a review of existing literature. Three themes focus this inquiry: (a) integrating the study of ethics into leadership preparation programs, (b) incorporating ethics into administrative decision making, and (c) the use of ethical rules and ethics by individuals in leadership positions. Following this analysis, implications for the consideration of values in leadership development programs are presented.

Theoretical Perspective

Societal values have been closely and consciously linked to the actions of educational leaders since the beginning of the twentieth century (Beck & Murphy, 1997, p. 3). Morally "right" decisions, actions, and structures were defined as those which promoted 'efficiency…order and continuity' (Beck & Murphy, 1997, p. 3) in the workplace, in schools, and in society as a whole (Callahan, 1962; Culbertson, 1988; Murphy, 1992). These values were espoused in leadership preparation programs in an implicit manner if not explicitly. Leadership preparation programs, "…strove to equip leaders to run economical, productive, efficient institutions" (Beck & Murphy, p. 3).

Based on historical documents, Callahan (1962) and Murphy (1992), note that "capitalist-industrialist values" (cited in Murphy, 1992, p. 26) were both implicitly and explicitly central in efforts to prepare school leaders. University programs and courses trained individuals to manage schools "like a business enterprise…at minimum cost, and like factories…at maximum efficiency" (Callahan & Button, 1964, p. 25). The same programs encouraged school leaders to embrace ethical perspectives which would enable them to achieve these ends (Beck & Murphy, 1997).

The dominant view of leadership preparation in the first half of the century was that "training would and should mirror dominant social values" (Beck & Murphy, 1997, p. 6). By mid-century, a change in this pattern occurred as the field of educational administration began to consciously define itself. Educational administrators were driven by a desire to preserve a professional identity with the same status as medicine or law (Crowson & McPherson, 1987; Culbertson, 1988; Greenfield, 1988). Academics were engaged in the creation of a new science of educational administration. Simultaneously, and over time, the study of ethics was added to the preparation programs of educational administrators (Beck & Murphy, 1997).

For most of the century leadership development efforts were shaped by values in ways that were implicit and unexamined. Studies conducted in the 1970's and 1980's (e.g., Farquar, 1981; Norton & Levan, 1987; Silver & Spuck, 1978) confirmed little change in the amount of attention given specifically to ethics as a subject. The results of these studies confirm that universities promoted social values in administrator training programs rather than assisting students to critically think about their own ethics and about those of the institutions they lead (Beck & Murphy, 1997). In 1992, due to an increased interest in ethics in administration, Beck & Murphy conducted a study on administrative preparation programs at several institutions. The themes that emerged from their data focused on three issues. Ethics were viewed as: (a) a set of principles and reasoning strategies to be used in problem-solving, (b) the subject of a desirable knowledge base for administrators, and (c) a way of viewing the world that affects one's understanding of her or his

work as an educational leader (Beck & Murphy, 1997, p. 13-25). The results of the study confirmed that shifts had occurred in the placement of ethics and values in the field of educational administration. More recently, various scholars (e.g., Begley & Stefkovich, 2004; Fullan, 2003; Furman, 2004; Greenfield, 2004; Gutierrez & Green, 2004; Sergiovanni, 2001; Shapiro & Stefkovich, 2001) have conducted research and reconfirmed the importance of ethics, morals, and values in educational administration in a changing political, social and economic environment. Currently, many educational institutions across North America have courses addressing ethics and many of these courses are included as part of degree programs.

Integrating the Consideration of Ethics into Preparation Programs

Ethics and questions of ethics are inextricably woven into the fabric of what educational leadership is. Research indicates that leadership preparation programs have begun providing students with approaches to confronting questions and issues of values and ethics that transcend specific rights and wrongs (Duke & Grogan, 1997; Mertz, 1997; Shapiro & Stefkovich, 1997; Starratt, 1997). Brown (1990) asserts that "if you teach people what is right, you will have to tell them again tomorrow…if you teach them how to discover what is right, they will find the way themselves" (p. 2).

Mertz (1997) emphasizes the notion that "teaching about ethics without making students grapple with the possible uncomfortable realities of their own behavior or the complexities of the ethical questions with which they would be confronted is unacceptable" (p. 81) and hence leaves them unprepared and mostly unaffected. Mertz maintains that it is vital for students of educational administration to realize the ethical issues intrinsic to the work of school administrators and to nurture their abilities to identify them. Mertz asserts that it is critical that leadership preparation programs be tailored to develop and enhance the students' ability to examine and re-examine the values and motivations that determine their administrative behavior and the consequences of those behaviors. Students need to examine the relationship between what they espouse and what they practice. Starratt (1997) asserts that leadership preparation programs must deal explicitly with formal ethical concerns. He explores the ethic of justice, ethic of care, and ethic of critique and argues that they are mutually inseparable and complementary to each other. According to Starratt, the ethic of justice concerns the "universal application of principles of justice among individuals in society" (p. 98). The ethic of care "compels us to be proactively sensitive to another person, extending ourselves beyond duty and convenience to offer other persons our concern and attention" (p. 99) The ethic of critique calls upon us to "speak out against unjust rules and laws and social arrangements on behalf of those principles of human and civil rights, of brother and sisterhood as human beings, on behalf of a common humanity which is violated through discrimination, disenfranchisement, and an arbitrary denial of equal treatment" (p. 99).

Shapiro and Stefkovich (1997) maintain that "preparing children to live and work in the 21st century requires very special educational administrators who have grappled with their own personal and professional codes of ethics and have reflected upon diverse forms of ethics, taking into account the differing backgrounds of the students who are enrolled in American schools" (p.110). Greenfield (1993) asserts that public schools should be central sites "for preparing children to assume the role and responsibilities of citizenship in a democratic society" (p. 268). In some leadership preparation programs across the United States a component is designed to explore the moral and ethical dimensions of the work of school administrators and to assist them to resolve ethical dilemmas in more reflective, intelligent, and scrupulous ways. Duke and Grogan (1997) believe that an important step toward more ethical action by school administrators is "greater clarity concerning personal values and ideals…that an unfortunate consequence of the fast pace of contemporary life has been less reflection on what is truly important in life" (p. 151). O'Keefe (1997) emphasizes the importance of including a strong ethical foundation for practice in a leadership preparation program that "promotes philosophical, historical and sociological perspectives through which students can better understand the contexts in which schooling takes place…where students are encouraged to enter the political arena as

agents of educational and social change and prepare for equitable schools" (p. 171).

Ethical Decision Making

Traditionally, schools have been thought of as places where diverse values are respected and taught. If those who work in schools are expected to understand and embrace those values, it would seem appropriate that programs seeking to prepare and train educators should be promoting ethical literacy among aspiring school leaders. Beck and Murphy (1997) argue that a large group of thinkers (i.e., Crittenden, 1984; Hare, 1991; Mitchell, 1990; Strike, Haller & Soltis, 1988) have focused on ethics as tools to help guide decisions. Much of this work has been oriented to defining certain principles that can and should be applied in practice. For these individuals, ethics are embedded in rules and ideals that surpass individual preferences and can serve as direction for objective decision making and problem solving (p. 33). Much of the attention to ethics arises in response to a growing cognizance of the complex dilemmas that educational leaders face regularly. According to Beck and Murphy (1997) these leaders must "cultivate a shared vision, meaningful and coherent professional and personal experiences, and a sense of membership in a learning community with persons who may have profoundly different living conditions, values and beliefs" (p. 34).

In an effort to assist administrators in dealing with these challenges some scholars have emphasized the significance of identifying guidelines which can assist leaders in these situations. Beck and Murphy (1997) assert that "this way of thinking about ethics typically locates the basis for ethics outside of the individual experience" (p. 34). In essence this perspective tends to look at character and principles of morality that transcend particular situations and personal preferences in order for people to act morally. Kant, a philosopher from another century, emphasized that any set of principles that can be considered ethical must have universal appeal and applicability. Kant insists that abstract principles should be the guiding force for making moral decisions and that most people will accept rules that apply to most people under most circumstances as reasonable guiding principles (1948).

A number of scholars stress the legitimacy of identifying shared norms and values, and applying these to resolve or manage moral dilemmas (Fullan, 2003; Furman, 2004; O'Brien, 2004; Strike et al., 1988). Crittenden (1984) argues that general moral values can be upheld objectively and center around "respect for human life" and include such notions as "love, loyalty, justice, honesty, courage, generosity, telling the truth and keeping promises, as well as respect for political authority, property, and family" (p. 16). Strike et al., (1988), claim that "facts, moral principles, and preferences" (p. 36) can all function as sources of direction and guidance for educational leaders who search to manage morally complex situations. These authors focus on importance of understanding certain fundamental moral concepts such as "the principle of benefit maximization" and the "principle of equal respect" (p. 16-17).

Ethics serve as a compass for individuals as they confront and approach dilemmas. This is particularly difficult when values compete with one another. A systematic and rational approach to ethical behavior relies heavily on elements that direct and guide the thinking of decision makers. As noted by Beck and Murphy (1997) this view presumes that "a function of ethics is to help individuals avoid being swayed by their emotions and personal interests, concerns, and beliefs as they seek to choose morally sound strategies and activities from a range of viable alternatives" (p. 40).

Using Rules and Ethics in Leadership Positions

While ethics can guide decisions where reason is the focus for applying moral principles, "ethics when used as guidelines and rules emphasize the ability to see 'morally salient features' of a situation and the development of dispositions or attitudes or virtues that enable one to live and work and interact with others in an ethical fashion" (Beck & Murphy, 1997, p. 41). This particular understanding of ethics is concerned with not just reason and action, but also with the development of character and as a way of living rightly in specific contexts. Several scholars (Blum, 1991, 1994; Greenfield, 2004; Hauerwas & Burrell, 1977; Sergiovanni, 2001) have written about the ethics of educational leadership in ways which indicate that ethical action must be concerned with how people

perceive themselves, others, and their shared experiences. In recent years, others have echoed their conceptions. Greenfield (1991, 2004) exemplifies the idea that ethics is rightly concerned with the ways individuals think about themselves, others, and the organizations and experiences they share. Hodgkinson (1991) suggests that administrators must be aware that, because education has "relevance to all aspects of human condition, it is also invested from the outset with a moral character" and decision making (p. 27). Sergiovanni (1992, 2001) notes that moral decision-making has expanded through the years to now encompass three important dimensions: (a) the *heart* (beliefs, values, dreams, personal vision), (b) the *head* (theories of practice developed over time, reflection on situations we face in light of these theories) and, (c) the *hand* (actions we take, decisions made, leadership and management behaviors we use as strategies become institutionalized in the form of school programs, policies and procedures). These elements must be an integral component of leadership preparation programs so prospective school leaders can engage in ethical decision making scenarios (Sergiovanni, 2001, pp. 343-344).

The leader (i.e., school principal, college administrator and/or professor) as moral role model must work to create a climate, culture and community ethic that exemplify the very values that s/he espouses (Fullan, 2003; Furman, 2004). As s/he acts, so s/he instructs, guides, and leads. According to various scholars (e.g., Gutierrez & Green, 2004; Shapiro & Stefkovich, 2001) other important ethical issues have recently taken center stage for universities that are using race as a consideration in their admissions decisions that encompass an ethical framework of various perspectives including ethic of critique, ethic of justice, ethic of care, ethic of community, and ethic of profession. An ethic of the profession perspective requires educational leaders to make decisions "that consider moral standards unique to their profession as well as their own personal and professional codes of conduct…this ethic also factors into decision making what is the best interests of the student…when applied to admission decisions, the ethic of profession warrants leaders in academe to heed anti-discriminatory policies and practices" (Shapiro & Stefkovich, 2001, pp. 23-23).

Sergiovanni (2001), suggests that administering schools effectively involves a moral imperative. The moral imperative enables the school administrator to develop successful practices and a "craft know-how", knowing leadership techniques and skills to employ them effectively, knowing what to do and when to do it (making decisions and understanding implications of what's "right" and "wrong") and having a sense of "process" (being able to diagnose and interpret the meaning of what is occurring as people interact in problematic situations (pp. 344-346). He argues that organizations and institutions, while having overlapping elements, are in fact different. Organizations "do things right" with a technical image whose sole purpose is valuing knowledge efficiency, orderliness, productivity and social usefulness. While these factors are vital in schools there is also a moral image that is upheld with the technical image whereby institutions "do the right things" by molding character, shaping attitudes and producing virtuous and thoughtful people (p. 345). Sergiovanni explores several competencies that are vital for school administrators when leading a school. They include: (a) management of attention whereby the principalship is focused on values, ideas, goals and purposes, (b) management of meaning whereby the principalship is focused on connecting teachers, parents, students to emphasize the usefulness, sensibility, and value of their lives, (c) management of trust whereby the principal's role should be regarded as credible, legitimate, and honest, and (d) management of self that emphasizes the ability of principals to know who they are, what they believe, and why they do the things they do…when a principal's behavior can be defended by that principal in a way that others at least understand and respect, self-knowledge has been achieved (pp. 349-350).

Reflective Practice

The "keeping" of the school rests with the institution's leadership. True leaders understand that their "actions speak louder than words," and that they must "practice what they preach" for inevitably they "shall reap what they sow." Although all of these adages are cliché they serve as a map for the educational leader because of the powerful evidence of experience. Educational leaders will testify that the climate, culture, and community are a direct reflection of the leader's leadership. The relationships the leader creates, the structures that s/he supports, and the decisions that s/he makes will have an impact on the entire school. Therefore, the leader must consciously and intentionally take the actions that s/he believes are in the best interests of the students, while modeling the importance of caring and just relationships and understanding that his/her decisions have consequences across the entire system. Doing this will afford the leader the opportunity to cooperate with all the stakeholders in the community, assuring that the school will reflect the communities intended goals - to assist young people in fully realizing their potential, with the understanding that they are connected to others through a web of interrelationships of which they may not even be conscious, but one that exists nonetheless. To do this should be the goal of every educational leader, especially those who understand that they are role models for ethical and moral action. When engaging in such endeavors educational leaders may indeed find their "North Star in the dust storm". As put forth by Begley and Stefkovich (2004):

> Attempting to catalogue the correct values which school administrators ought to adopt without reference to context is not possible…although something is known about the problems currently confronting schools, nobody can predict with any degree of certainty the nature of future school leadership beyond the certainty that there will be more problems to solve and new dilemmas to confront. As a result, it is not enough for school leaders to merely emulate the values of other principals viewed as experts. Leaders of future schools must become both reflective practitioners and life-long learners that understand the importance of the intellectual aspects of leadership, and authentic in their leadership practices in the sense that many scholars have advocated for some time. The first step towards achieving this state is, predictably enough, to engage in personal reflection. (p. 134)

Pressing Challenges for Value-Driven Leadership Programs

Developing morally competent leaders to lead schools will require continued efforts in revisiting and revamping educational leadership preparation programs. In addition to the three processes described above, two challenges are emerging and will require further innovation and attention. First, the need to design or redesign ethics courses for leadership preparation is critical. As educators and their constituents engage in discussions about the nature of ethics in leadership courses, decisions will need to be made concerning the personal and professional qualifications of potential individuals who are assigned to facilitate and lead these courses. It seems appropriate to include an integral component of content in these courses that focus on the five dimensional framework for understanding ethics: care, justice, critique, community and profession. Some of the questions that need to be addressed might include: How will an ethics course be developed and implemented to ensure that content is applicable to the daily realities of schools and society? Should the development and implementation of ethics courses include a partnership between local school districts and colleges of education? Should the ethics course be made available only to those who aspire and/or practice in educational leadership roles or should it be a mandatory course for all educators including those in pre-service programs? Does the ethics course reflect the objectives, goals, and moral standards of the institution in which it is offered (i.e., college, university)? Do these standards and objectives align with those of local schools, school districts, and State standards? Should the ethics course(s) be reflective of the whole leadership preparation program? Should school district personnel play a role in determining success rates of students enrolled in ethics courses? Universities and colleges of education will need to address these

questions as they map out the design of leadership preparation courses in support of ethics, values, and moral education.

Secondly, admission standards need to move beyond grade point averages (GPA) and graduate record examination results (GRE). As more institutions of higher education find themselves grappling with issues of admission standards they need to begin expanding their process when determining eligibility for leadership preparation, training, and certification programs. Inclusion and diversity of applicants need to be addressed and consistently practiced to ensure equity and equal opportunity are highlighted and upheld. Interviews are more common now than in the past. In addition to the interview process, the educational administration program in many universities now requires letters of recommendation that are structured so that individuals can provide indices and clues into both the competency and character of applicants. By using the multi-dimensional ethical framework suggested in the research previously discussed in this article, university officials can identify individuals for whom educational administration may be the wrong choice of fields. If leadership preparation programs seem inappropriate or a "wrong choice" for certain students who lack fundamental qualities essential for leadership, it is the moral responsibility of individuals (i.e., professors, students) to share this information. Appropriate action will need to be taken by offering alternatives in other directions to the extent that cultural and moral views or dispositions are not imposed on students. Valuing and reflecting on the ethic of care, critique, justice, community and profession as an ethical base for guiding these decisions is crucial. After all, as reiterated by Willower (cited in Greenfield, 2004, p. 194), "the practice of school administration is an ethical undertaking…valuing is critical in the doing of school administration".

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