

# Moral Decision Making in School Management

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**Abstract:** The term ethics is a trendy term and it can be seen in almost every profession. Schools are educational institutions and school leaders have the vital role in managing schools. Ethical issues are a central part of schools' routine life. They regularly arise in value judgements about doing the right thing, or saying the good or best thing in a specific circumstance. School principals have certain duties and they have to behave ethically while making decisions. The most significant responsibility of a school leader is to have an ethical perception of school administration. School leaders have certain responsibilities and they have to act ethically while taking decisions. The paper highlights about some of the ethical dilemmas that the school principals face and emphasizes the need of establishing codes of ethics and behaving according to these codes for school leaders. Related literature in the study specifies that most principals need professional grooming in ethical decision-making.

**Keywords:** Ethics, code of ethics, school principals, school administration, moral leadership, ethical dilemmas.

## 1. Introduction

In this distrustful, unbalanced, and ethically polarized era, there is a need to prepare school administrators to resolve a countless moral difficult situation. Ethical issues such as obliging high-stakes challenges, protecting free expression while restraining hate speech and religious solicitation, and discouraging unprincipled acts and violence of every sort are examples of common morally laden assignments for school administrators. Service-oriented moral leadership meets a number of ethical dilemmas. Although doing the right thing seems easy enough most times when an ethically difficult situation arises, it may cause individuals to examine their ethics in practice (Campbell, 2004).

The success of a school and the extent of reaching educational aims mainly depend on the leader and his/her effective governance. To be able to create an effective school and manage it fairly is possible by following a strict code of ethics. The word ethics came to be used for the rules, regulations, principles, and sometimes shared moral commitments common to a distinct group of professionals is now shunted aside, said to refer only to personal moral commitments and principles. As directors of school administration, how can we make sure that our future leaders have the ability to take considerate, ethical decisions? How do we prepare these leaders to advance, foster and lead tolerant and democratic schools?

An educational administrator's professional behaviour must conform to an ethical code. The code must be idealistic and at the same time practical, so that it can apply reasonably to all educational administrators. (NAESP, 1976). An educational leader promotes the success of every student by acting with integrity, fairness in an ethical manner

An educational leader:

- Ensures the welfare of students as the fundamental value in all decision making and actions.
- Attains professional responsibilities with morality and integrity.
- Supports the principle of due process and guards the civil and human rights of all individuals.
- Abides by local, state and national laws and does not knowingly join or support organizations that advocate, directly or indirectly, the overthrow of the government.
- Implements the governing board of education's policies and administrative rules and regulations.
- Pursues appropriate measures to correct those laws, policies and regulations that are not consistent with sound educational goals.
- Avoids using positions for personal gain through political, social, religious, economic or other influence.
- Maintains the standards and seeks to improve the effectiveness of the profession through research and continuing professional development.

## 2. Codes of ethics for leaders and principals

Showing favoritism in appointing a staff member who is related to the leader, we can say that it is clearly wrongheaded. An ethical leader not only endeavors to do the right things but also to do things right. If the school administrator is unreliable and behaves arbitrarily, would cause him to lose the confidence of the school staff and as a natural outcome of this the decisions taken by the administrators become controversial. Administrators who are seen as unfair, unjust or unpredictable in their decisions usually get into a great deal of trouble in their jobs. The administrator who is unfair will soon be confronted with an unfriendly faculty and an unsatisfied community. Ethics is indeed an essential part of the job. Administrators should deal with equality, justice and democracy as much as they deal with

test scores, staff salaries, parents, and budgets (Strike et al., 2005). For a good reputation of the schools they should have an ethical culture. When viewed from the perspective of staff, their satisfaction and motivation will unquestionably be enhanced when they feel that the school, they are working in is run with an ethical approach. Therefore, principals should mind their ethical responsibilities for their teachers; should respect their individual rights and should be just (Karaköse, 2007). It is clear that principals' ethical behaviours help create a trustful school climate. In such a school climate not only the school staff but also the students will have a great benefit from educational process.

### 3. Moral dilemmas faced by school leaders

Educational leaders are often confronted with choices that require them to make decisions. All these decisions may not have any clear-cut resolution and may likely to be highly problematic. That's why; principals may frequently face with ethical dilemmas. In short, an ethical dilemma comes out from a situation that requires a choice among competing sets of principles, values, beliefs, perspectives (Cranston et al., 2003). An ethical dilemma is not a choice between wrong and right. It is a choice between two rights as it was stated by Rushworth Kidder (1995). Deciding whether limited resources should go to a gifted curriculum or a dropout-prevention program would constitute a dilemma and this is very challenging for the principals (Lashway, 1996). The principal faces some ethical issues mostly about students, staff, public relation and financial matters. Established codes of ethics will guide principals and lead them to behave ethically.

#### A. Is moral decision making imaginary or a reality for principals?

Human beings are responsible for their choices, and they have an obligation to make choices in a morally responsible way. Thus, it is crucial that people reflect their ethics in their choices and in their actions especially when an individual has a power to influence the lives of other. Decision making is a crucial process for school administration. In the context of a school, the principal is the chief decision maker. Therefore, an ethical or unethical decision directly affects school climate positively or negatively. It can be said that the causes of poor ethical decisions are often the same as the causes of poor decisions. Generally, decisions may be based on inaccurate theories about the world, other people or about us. Ethical decision making may be improved in the same way that general

decision making is improved (Messick and Bazerman, 1996). It is an undeniable fact that school administrators have to consider all the consequences of the actions they planned. The ethical decision making process sensibly examines the results, consequences and benefits of the decisions to be made.

There are mainly four principles in making ethical decision

- a) Obligation not to harm others intentionally
- b) Being fair
- c) Profiting others
- d) Being faithful (Glanz, 2006).

For proper school governance it is necessary that we need qualified school principals who are trained to deal with ethical problems and decision making.

### 4. Conclusion

It was observed that 68% principals had no professional training or development related to moral decision making. The study concluded that a great number of principals needed professional training as regards to ethical decision making. It can be said that school leaders should be better prepared to meet the challenges of present-day school leadership through professional development approaches that take account of the ethical complexity of school-based management (Dempster et al., 1998). For ethical school governance it is necessary that we need qualified school principals who have special training related to ethical decision making. Schools and Universities should offer this necessary assistance and training for administrators in a cooperative way.

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