The Importance of Ethics of Caring in South African Higher Education[*]

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ABSTRACT This paper focused on the moral decline that is prevalent in South African society in general and higher education in particular. The study followed qualitative paradigm with documents analysis as data collection tool. The aim of the study was to explore the ethics of care have on School Leadership. Data was analysed through content analysis. Emerging themes were identified and discussed. The results of the study revealed that the curriculum does not cater for ethics of care whereby school safety and security and the issue of honesty and trustworthiness have been neglected. The study recommended that there should be licencing principalship and infusing principles and values of Ethics of Care. The study concluded that in order to deal with corruption and collapse facing the education system, Ethics of Care ought to be an integral part of the curriculum of the School Leadership Programme, in order to reskill and to retool principals to address corruption, immoral and violent acts in schools.

INTRODUCTION

The South African public schools' failure in management and leadership has resulted in a moral collapse of the education system due to a dereliction and marginalisation of ethics of care. Moloi (2007) reveals that in many of South Africa's public schools, especially those in historically black areas, there is evidence of ineffective leadership and poor management practices. A lack of training for school managers, especially school principals, is a great omission by the Department of Basic Education. In support, Van der Westhuizen and Mosoge (1998) state that South Africa lags behind in the formal management training and certification of school principals in comparison with countries like the USA and UK, and many others, especially in Africa. This moral decadence in schools led to education management development getting developed as possible intervention strategy. As a response to address the problem of ineffective management and leadership in schools, the Ministry of Education established a Task Team on Education Management Development (Department of Education 1996: 12) which was mandated to:

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- make practical strategic proposals for improving education management capacity;
- make proposals for establishing a national institute for education management development;
- consider resource mobilisation, coordination and management for a country-wide education management development programme; and
- provide an interim education management support service.

This was envisaged as a programme for empowering school leaders to lead and manage schools effectively at a time of great change, challenge and opportunity (Department of Education 2008; Wadesango and Machingambi 2015) that was to be rolled out by South African Universities. However, eleven years elapsed before the implementation of this intervention.

The Task Team was commissioned as a result of the collapse of Black education in South Africa, and even today such a downfall is still making the headlines of the media and educational reports. Morris and Hyslop (1998) revealed that in the urban areas of South Africa, the education system for African people was in a state of collapse. According to Spaull 75 percent of the schooling system is dysfunctional while only 25 percent is functional, (UNISA College of Education, 2012). At EMASA conference 2012,

Dr Maphela Ramphela (former governor of World Bank) confessed to poor levels of education in South Africa and proposed a state of emergency in the education system. School management and leadership programme is thus seen as a long-term solution to education in South Africa. Apart from addressing issues of the collapse in education, simultaneously, this programme should address moral decline in schools.

Moral degeneration has become enemy two after poor quality education in township and rural schools. Bayaga and Jaysveree (2011) argue that the moral code in South African society is on the decline. The problems were inherited from apartheid and the democratic government of 1994 did little to address them, and this has manifested itself in a decline in educational quality and morality. Learners lack any passion to study; instead they carry guns, drugs and alcohol to school and engage in gangsterism and violence. This unfortunate situation prevails in schools where teachers are also involved in immoral and unethical acts with learners, within and outside school premises. The study by Bayaga and Jaysveree (2011: 207) reveals the situation prevailing in many public schools in South Africa:

What emerged from the interviews with learners is the fact that some teachers are not positive role models for children. Children indicated during the interviews that some teachers socialize and use alcohol with them. They claim that teachers often supply them with alcohol, especially in nightclubs, parties and shebeens. Children do not seem to be getting the necessary guidance from teachers.

Therefore, a leader development programme should provide the participants with the necessary tools and skills to manage the situations similar or related to the one depicted above. Leadership responsibilities and expectations have moved from demands of management and control to demands for an educational leader who can motivate staff to becoming caring teachers, encourage parent involvement, and change learners' attitude (Mestry and Singh 2007; Gudyanga et al. 2015) and inculcate an ethics of care.

Statement of the Problem

Ethics of Care is not included in the curriculum of the School Management and Leadership programme, and this omission fails to reskill and to retool principals to address immoral and violent acts in schools. A failure to address moral issues and violence leads to ill- disciplined and ungovernable schools which further contributes to collapse in education.

Literature Review

South African School Leadership Model in a Nutshell

School management and leadership programme was rolled out in 2007 in South African Universities, with the aim to reskill school management, together with teachers who aspire to become principals (Department of Education 2008). This intervention programme was born out of the recommendations of the Task Team on School management development. The South African model of School Leadership Programme uses an innovative leadership model to prepare students to assume dynamic roles, leading transformative change in schools.

The key focus of the School Leadership programme was to facilitate real transformation in schools that is grounded in recognition of the challenges of particular contexts and the values underpinning the South African Constitution (Department of Education 2008). This intervention strategy was proposed by a Task Team which was constituted as a result of poor performance by many public schools. Waghid (2011) highlights the findings on problems facing teacher education in the country, as revealed by the Council on Higher Education (CHE) 2010 report on the National Review of Academic and Professional Programmes in Education, that the poor quality of teacher education programme, the fact that teacher education are cost effective, and the fact that policies for the supply, utilisation and development of teachers are driven by wrong incentives. Based on the above challenges facing teacher education in South Africa, there is a need of school leadership that is competent, ethical and dynamic to the ever-changing educational climate. The new type of school leader will practice deliberative democracy without compromising the virtues of caring. The best school leadership practice is what new folk of school leaders can learn from. McCarthy and Boron (2010) outlines ten big ideas, as lessons learnt from McCarthy's thirty years of wis-

dom and on school leadership, namely, that the school must be for all kids; aim to create a vision and implementing it; the learners matter and are at the centre of all schooling; try to do the best on daily basis; find time to think during the day; take responsibility for the good and the bad; you have the ultimate responsibility; have a bias for yes; consensus is overrated; large change needs to be done quickly.

Distinguishing Between School Management and School Leadership

The concept of school management refers to school principal, deputy principal and heads of departments, (Department of Education 1996). It was conceived when it was realised that for school principal to be effective, some skills in relating to other people are required (Everand et al. 2004; Wadesango and Bayaga 2015). Management is about bringing about order and consistency by drawing up plans, designing organizational structures and monitoring results (Department of Education 2008). Mestry and Singh (2007) add their voice and claim that "people in leadership positions have to think about what they should do to improve their schools."

School leadership involves the influence of groups of teachers and learners on guiding and directing learners towards goal attainment, (Department of Education 2008). These activities need a school leader who can cope with change, develop a vision, give direction, align staff, communicate the vision and inspire the followers to overcome the hurdles, (Department of Education 2008). School leadership is about having a vision and then, through listening and developing relationships, agitating others to modify that vision so that they make it their own, (Ferlazzo 2009). Branch et al. (2013) reveal that highly effective principals raise the achievement of a typical student in their schools by between two and seven months of learning in a single school year; ineffective principals lower achievement by the same amount. I therefore, deduce that, raising student achievement has to do with bringing the school to order and discipline, which eradicates learners' ill- behavior.

The Collapse of Education in South African Public Schools

South African basic education fails to deliver quality education. Learners are not adequately equipped with numeracy, literacy and life skills which enable them to participate in further and higher education (Spaull 2013). Modisaotsile argues that:

In South Africa there are many signs that show that there is a crisis in education. With high enrolment rates each year, and increasingly poor grade 12 output, it is clear that more concentration needs to be focused on the quality of education. Quantity should, however, also be considered when the majority of those learners who pass matric do not meet the minimum requirements for university entrance.

Modisaotsile (2012: 1) identified some of the challenges that cause a fall in standards of Basic Education in South Africa:

⬩ Of the number of learners enrolled in grade 1, only half make it to grade 12;
⬩ Whereas there are high enrolment rates each year, there is, increasingly poor grade 12 output;
⬩ South African education fails to convert financial resources into improved exam results and standards of teaching;
⬩ The quality of education remains poor, and the output rate has not improved;
⬩ There is a high drop-out rate;
⬩ There are low levels of literacy and numeracy;
⬩ Unskilled teachers hamper quality teaching;
⬩ There is negligible commitment to teach by teachers;
⬩ Learners do not get adequate support at home;
⬩ There is a shortage of resources in public education.

Based on this list of challenges, Jonathan Jansen concludes that, "corruption is not going to kill this country; crime is not going to kill this country; [but] a poor schooling system is going to kill this country" (Jansen 2011a).

Morality Issues in Schools

In Thaba (2013), it was revealed that South African society and schools in particular, face moral decline. The issue of moral decline has been crucial for many decades. Based on their stand on moral decline, Intellectual Detox (2013) argues that moral decline is when people stop valuing the traits that make civilization grow and prosper. Bullough and Bullough (2013) provide a general understanding as occurring when the general conduct is seen as threatening to tradi-

tion and the dilution of the "original" ways of doing things.

Moral development of children is the responsibility of all those involved in their up- bringing. According to Jansen 2011b, what children encounter inevitably in the social universe, for better or for worse, influences their moral growth. He further argues that a community needs to view itself as responsible for the moral growth of its members. In the schools, wherein learners should be practicing moral acts learnt from home, church, society or school itself, in their road to better future, they are exposed to mischievous acts. Instead of schools helping shape moral growth of learners, it perpetuates moral degeneration which will later be carried over to the society at large.

An unfortunate situation prevails in schools where teachers are involved in immoral and unethical acts with learners, within and outside school premises. Bayaga and Jaysveree (2011: 207) reveal the situation prevailing in many public schools in South Africa:

What emerged from the interviews with learners is the fact that some teachers are not positive role models for children. Children indicated during the interviews that some teachers socialize and use alcohol with the children. They claim that teachers often supply them with alcohol, especially in nightclubs, parties and shebeens. Children do not seem to be getting the necessary guidance from teachers.

If the teachers are charged with a responsibility of the moral growth of its members and its children in particular, but, display immoral acts in schools, then the schools are turned into immoral sites. In addition, learners who see teachers as their role models, will imitate what teachers do, and bring and drink alcohol in the school premises.

Ethics of Care

Ethics is derived from Greek word, Ethos, which means character. Edwards (2008: 78) states that for ancient Greeks, ethos refers to morality. Paul and Elder (2006) define ethics as "a set of concepts and principles that guide us in determining what behaviour helps or harms sentient creatures". The ethics of care emanates from caring theory. It is a theory that is centred on the interdependence of all individuals, (The EIESL Project 2013). Caring is an overarching quality that gives action its moral character (Van Hooft 1999; Wadesango and Machingambi 2015). This is supported by Nodding (2002) who argues that "the ethics of care recognises the moral value and importance of relations of family and friendship and the need for moral guidance in these domains to understanding how existing relations should change and new ones developed". This quality needs to be developed within school leaders where caring should be the fundamental and integral part of SLP.

The ethics of care movement aims to instil in people a sense of responsibility to care for those in need. A caring person not only has the appropriate motivations in responding to others or in providing care, but also participates adeptly in effective practices of care" (Nodding 2002). In operationalizing ethics of care within the schools, it should be included as a starting point of a meaningful managerial career. South African Council of Educators (SACE) and teacher unions, have a Code of Conduct which governs members' actions and conduct. Ciulla (2003) suggests that ethics is part of the social scientist's description of qualities of leaders and leader behaviours. The placement of qualified school leaders based on a code of ethics ensures that recruitment and placement provide competent and strategic school leaders. However, debates and literature on school leadership, is silent about placement and development of ethical school leaders who should promote and contribute positively towards learners' moral regeneration.

In an attempt to respond to the question previously asked, "how can we engender in our students an ethics of care through the School leadership programme?", it is through material design to incorporate ethics of care, which should cut across all planning processes, lecturing activities, assessment activities including school-based projects, mentoring and monitoring. Incorporation of ethics of care helps school principals to become custodians of school caring and uphold caring activities beyond the classroom. An ethical school leader helps curb school pregnancies, deal with affected and infected HIV/AIDS learners, deals with learners with learning difficulties, helps learners from poverty stricken households, helps learners from broken families because of work, divorce, alcoholism, embraces street kids and refugees in their school, embraces homosexuality

and , embraces diversity. All the above are expected to be done by ethical school leader, who is able to operationalize policies set for caring in a school.

Ethical Leadership

Leaders teach other what is acceptable and desirable by what they say and do, Schoeman (2012). South Africa needs a new generation of World class leaders who understand ethics and appreciate the values of Ubuntu (Magubane 2013). It is imperative for universities to produce ethical school leaders who can motivate staff members and learners. Ethical leadership is value-driven and followers can strongly identify with the values the leader articulates and enacts (Brown and Trevino 2006: 117). It is when employees perceive their leaders as acting ethically in their workplaces that they are motivated to become dedicated, which in turn enhances their work engagement, (Den Hartog and Belschak 2012). Ethical leadership is a 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 et al. 2005).

School leaders ought to adopt different approaches to their leadership styles as they foster adaptation, help people develop acceptable practices that enable the organisation to thrive, and even as they continue with current challenges (Du Plessis 2010). Based on the need to change approach as argued by Du Plessis above, The researchers concur with Martin on developing an ethical community in our schools. Martin (2011) argues that "It seems clear that, the concept of the ethical community is supposed to help justify an obligation to undertake the education of the young". To fulfil the obligation ethics of care ought to be incorporated into the South African education system, and into university School Leadership Programmes in order to equip and re-skill principals on dealing with diverse contexts of schools. This serves as a foundation for building an ethics-sensitive society. Aristotle asserts that "moral virtues come as a result of habit, and no moral virtues arise by nature". The ethical character building ought to be made available in the curriculum, through constructive dialogue to raise awareness in all South African citizens."

METHODOLOGY

Document analysis is used because it provides a valuable knowledge base, a means of tracking change and development (Bowen 2009). The Task Team and research reports, as well as SLP programme documents, including student material, are examined and interpreted. In these documents, "features, relationships, objectives and contexts are examined and interpreted in order to gain understanding and develop empirical knowledge" (Corbin and Straus 2008). The major focus is on incorporating Ethics of Care and development of ethical leadership.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

South African School Leadership Model

The School Leadership Programme focus is on development of individual school managers to manage the various schools. The intention of SLP is to provide a theoretical framework to assist in the effective and practical management and leadership of schools. Twelve modules are documented; however, none of them was about development of Ethics of Care and ethical school leadership.

Morality Issues in Schools

The researchers agree with Jansen's sentiments of school principals and teachers because nowadays schools have been turned into boxing rings without an umpire, nor moral stations.

Have you ever been in a school where children threaten teachers with the instruments of violence? Have you ever tried to teach when you can see the drug-crazed eyes of a tortured boy? Have you ever seen the anxiety of a woman teacher with one eye on the open door as she fears what might happen if she dares to challenge a juvenile gangster in her classroom? Have you ever taught in places where you can literally hear the gunshot and sometimes on the school grounds? (Jansen 2013a).

It has become an everyday issue, to hear another report of school mishap, occurring between learners themselves, or a learner and teacher and outsider. In a recent media report learners are filmed cheering, laughing and egging the student on as he kicks and hits the teacher with a broom in South Africa (Sky News 2013).

Ethics of Care

President Jacob Zuma has displayed his ethics of care in his State of the Nation Address, when he said, "Education will be a key priority for the next five years. We want our teachers, learners and parents to work with government to turn our schools into thriving centres of excellence. We reiterate our non-negotiables. Teachers should be in school, in class, on time, teaching, with no neglect of duty and no abuse of pupils! The children should be in class, on time, learning, be respectful of their teachers and each other, and do their homework. Fellow South African, we will increase our efforts to encourage all pupils to complete their secondary education, (South African Government Information 2009).

The level of commitment and usage of time by those involved in provision of educational services needs much to be desired. Much of school time is lost by teachers doing their private things (including month-end banking/ chatting/ doing staffroom politics). This situation widens the gap in provision of quality education to all South African children. In schools where both teachers and learners are committed, there is no deliberate loss of time. Every minute is put for good use.

Ethical Leadership

South Africa has very few people who are ethical in their discharge of their duties, school teachers and school leaders in particular. A failure by any worker to execute job-appointed duty, but still get remuneration, it is corruption. Jansen (2013b) reveals a very compromising situation below, which occurs in our education system.

Imagine 26 teachers sitting on their backsides every period in the same school, day after day, because they are in excess. There are too few classrooms for them to teach in, and they cannot be moved. In well-functioning schools at most two or three teachers are "free" in a period. In our case this means 26 salaries are paid month after month, which they happily receive and spend, only to come back to school the next day to sit for months, even years, on end.

This questions ethics of work, ethical behavior and ethical leadership, along the bureaucratic hierarchy. The above insertion reveals that there is moral and ethical crisis in South Africa, (Naidoo 2012; Edwards 2007), and this situation calls for ethical leaders who are responsible for developing a strong and sustainable ethical climate in organizations, (Engelbrecht et al. 2004; Jansen 2011b; Wadesango and Bayaga 2015).

The Recommended Approach to Ethical Leadership

School leadership programme can learn from the world icon; a South African ethical leader, former president Nelson Mandela. Nelson Mandela provides life-long lessons of ethical leadership which he learnt from his own childhood. Mandela learnt good behaviour and conduct as he was emulating his own father, (Mandela 1994:3,15a; Vogel 2012; Gudyanga et al. 2015). Learning was experiential and through observation Mandela inherited expertise as a result he was valued as an adviser. He earned this special branding through training. Mandela's good lessons of leadership demonstrate strategy and tactic experience and training.

Be of Service to Others

This is the foundation of caring ethics, a willingness to serve others. It is possible to have a leader who is willing to listen, learn and accept criticism. A leader who leads by heart not by mind - is able to provide motivation to make others to participate and be involved in caring. Caring is derived from love, compassion and respect of God's creation (Ciulla 2003; Gudyanga et al. 2015).

A leader who is a visionary, strategist and takes calculated risk without checking if the calculation of risk is based on ethical foundations of care, which embrace justice and fairness, labours in futile exercise. A leader who is willing to read others' actions, behaviours, characters, and personalities, understands his clientele well, and provides necessary care. The ethical leaders who possess this virtue are trusted. Willingness to serve others is a trait to be developed, not inherited.

CONCLUSION

Good governance demands from a school leader greater emphasis on ethical conduct, accountability and professional skills and will further highlight the value of ethical leadership,

accountability, ethics education and training. In order to deal with corruption and collapse facing the education system, Ethics of Care ought to be an integral part of the curriculum of the School Leadership Programme, in order to reskill and to retool principals to address corruption, immoral and violent acts in schools. The screening of possible candidates during recruitment of school leadership positions and facilitating the placement of diligent persons with a track record of strong ethical leadership are aspects that need urgent attention.

RECOMMENDATIONS

* Licencing principalship position through a special programme at Masters level.
* Developing codes for teachers to abide by, and take responsibility of their action. Code of ethics ought to be used as a benchmark, for teachers to be promoted into school leadership
* Infusing principles and values of Ethics of Care, in initial teacher training programme, continuous development programmes and school leadership programme.
* Thorough screening processes are required before the placement of school principal, to verify if an incumbent qualifies based on set criteria. Interviews alone cannot provide adequate evidence. An incumbent with a history of ethical leadership and are clean from corruption, crime and violence should be recruited and placed.

NOTE

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