

Ethical Issues in School Management in Somolu Local Government Area of Lagos State

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Abstract

Ethical issues in education contain basic principles, procedures and behavior pattern based on commitment to core value that are deeply rooted in evaluation. The paper discussed ethical issues in classroom management, ethical responsibilities of the school administrator, possible ethical dilemmas, in Somolu local government area of Lagos state. Some possible ethical dilemmas were also highlighted. The relevance of ethics to the school administration were discussed.

1. Introduction

Education is being considered as the ladder to national development, it is against this backdrop that scholars insist that no nation can develop above their educational level. A good and well managed educational system reforms the people who in-turn reforms the entire society. Indeed, a good educational process emancipates the people from the shackles of primitivism and takes them into the golden land of modernity.

The educational sector of any country can be described as the goose that lays the golden egg. What will that mean? The educational sector breeds all the man-powers that occupy the other sectors of the economy; be it political, sports, commerce, and industry, religious and so on. Education equips the personnel to uphold these essential sectors in the economy transmitting in them the required knowledge needed to make them stand in the area of their chosen career. From the foregoing, it follows that education is very essential to any society. So, a good and quality educational management should be the desire of any society that aimed at attaining development through this ladder. In Nigeria, the present status of education is not promising as it should. Nigeria is in great need of quality education so as to move the economy forward and this is not possible without the effective management of schools. It is only quality education that can make the education sector live to its functions. Anything short of this will be counter-productive. And to this fact everything possible must be put in place to bring it to the same footing step with her western counterparts, so as to achieve its desired goal.

A good school administrator, school management ethics and educational process brings out the moral worth of the individual as a moral and rational agent. So when school management processes of a society negates its set goal, the morality of the citizens are negatively affected. Hence, we have cases of insurgence, robbery, kidnapping and other social and political crises from-different quarters of the country. Against this background it then becomes obvious that a good ethical attitude and cultural solution will be the remedy for effective educational standard in Nigeria.

2. The Concept of Ethics

Ethics as a concept has not been easy to conceptualise because many have described it based on their opinion and view. While some scholars view it as the determination of an action whether good or bad, right or wrong, standard or substandard, respect or disrespect, others sum these to say that it deals with the evaluation of human conduct. Ethics are the set of moral principles that guide a person's behavior. These morals are shaped by social norms, cultural practices, and religious influences. Ethics reflect beliefs about what is right, what is wrong, what is just, what is unjust, what is good, and what is bad in terms of human behavior. They serve as a compass to direct how people should behave toward each other, understand and fulfill their obligations to their organisation, society, and live their lives. While ethical beliefs are held by individuals, organisations, and the society, they can also be reflected in the values, practices, and policies that shape the choices made by decision makers on behalf of their organisations. The phrases educational ethics, business ethics and corporate ethics are often used to describe the application of ethical values to smooth running of activities. Ethics applies to all aspects of conduct and is relevant to the actions of individuals, groups, and organisations.

In addition to individual ethics and corporate ethics there are professional ethics. Professionals such as education administrators (vice-chancellors, provosts, principal, headmasters etc.), lawyers, and accountants are individuals who exercise specialized knowledge and skills when providing services to the

public. By virtue of their profession, they have obligations to those they serve. For example, lawyers must hold client conversations confidential and accountants must display the highest levels of honesty and integrity in their record keeping and financial analysis. Professional organisations, such as the American Medical Association, and licensing authorities, such as state governments, set and enforce ethical standards. This also applies to educationists by ensuring that program objectives are met towards achieving set academic goals.

The word ethics may further be seen as the science of right and wrong, the science of moral principles, the science of moral judgement and conduct. It does not only analyzes, classifies, describes and explains human actions as good or bad but also helps us to know why and on what bases our judgement of human action is justified [1]. Ethical issues are part of everyday life in schools. They frequently arise from decisions which require value judgement about doing the right thing or saying the good or best thing in a particular situation. Although doing the right seems easy enough most times when an ethically difficult situation arises, it may cause individuals to examine their ethics in practice [2].

According to Elechi [3], an ethic is an ideal or moral belief that influences the behavior and attitude of the people. Ethics are also seen as code of behaviors considered correct especially that of a particular group of profession or individual. It is up to individual institutions to determine what is and is not appropriate behavior for the organisation. What is acceptable for one organisation may not be unacceptable to another and both for entirely logical and legitimate reasons. Ethics give expression the norms and values that are prescriptive for an acceptable behavior, action and function within a specific school. Ethics could also be said to be a set of principles of right conduct. They are rules or standards governing the conduct of a person or the methods of a profession.

3. Ethical Issues in Nigerian Education

Ethics as a systematic study is concerned with the nature of good and bad, right and wrong, justice and injustice, duty and obligation. These ethical issues surfacing in the education process verifies the kind of education that can be regarded as good or bad education, right or wrong method of teaching or imparting knowledge to the learners. It also seek to know how the students, teachers and parents are being managed and their level of relationship so as to enhance or achieve optimum result in the educational process.

Ethics deals with such universal issues as justice, human right, human equity, human dignity, and human freedom”, this is because of what we have been able to establish in our early discussion of the

concept of education, that educational process must be embedded with ethical ingredients, such ethical issues must be analyzed in our educational system to achieve a better process in raising a useful individual in our society. For when we question the moral desirability of what is to be imparted to the children in the way it should, the principles of fairness, freedom and respect for persons comes into play.

Ethical issues in education contain basic principles, procedures and behavior patterns based on commitment to core values that are deeply rooted in education. Ethical standard enables educators, students and administrators to maintain and promote quality education. They (ethical issues) should be aimed at establishing a disciplined and purposeful school environment (all activities within the school environment are in accord with the vision of the school), dedicated to the improvement and maintenance of the quality of the learning process.

Schools have an important task to teach children to differentiate between acceptable and unacceptable behavior. Opportunity must also be given for the development of insight and learning. In a positive school situation, a breaking of school rules is therefore viewed as not only a negative action towards the school, but also a negative action towards fellow learners and teachers and the disruption of mutual relationship. In a positive school climate, school rules are instrumental to the whole development of a learner. Any ethical policy must therefore evolve out of the school’s mission and values. It must also be consistent with and work alongside existing ethics related documents.

Ethical principles and practice are major undertakings and require time, resources, commitment and leadership. It is also vital that administrators set examples by demonstrating ethical behavior and living by the school’s ethical principles. Let us critically view some ethical issues in Nigerian education system as they relate to school management in Lagos State, fairness and equity, power and authority, justice and injustice, freedom, responsibility, reward, punishment discipline, equality and inequality.

3.1. Fairness and Equity

The issue of fairness and equity is vital and surface in all aspect of our educational process. Fairness in administration and management of both material and human resources allocated to the school by the government or the parent owner of the school. In the admission process of the students, the authorities are expected to be fair in the selection and placement of the individuals. In the school, the leadership is by code of ethics expected evenly assign tasks and needed resources to both academic and non-academic staffs. In the classroom, the teacher is expected to be fair in his dealings with the

students. For instance, in the teaching process, questions should be asked randomly. Examination or test when given and marked should be able to reflect the teacher's good sense of fairness and equity. Even in the teacher's relationship with the pupils, good sense of fairness should be demonstrated the teacher should not consider some of his students to be more admirable and acceptable than others. Any act of unfairness by the teacher will be counterproductive to the educational process.

To be fair in education, simply connotes that every individual be giving such treatment that he or she deserves in the educational process. There should be fair treatment to every staff of the school in the course of daily management of the school activities; there should be no discrimination of any kind. The question is, can the administrators be really fair to all the staffs and still meet the special needs of some staffs who may be having some challenges in one way or the other? It is against this backdrop that we should not see fairness and equity as treating everyone equally, but each person or learner according to his needs. That is, demonstrating fairness base on their individual needs. An attempt to treat everyone the same will amount to not being fair to those who may be having one challenge or the other. When fairness and equity are adequately demonstrated by school administrators in our (Nigeria) educational system, the stem develops are everyone tends to give their best towards achieving laid own goals. The teacher should be fair in discipline and punishment, fair in judgment and relating with the learners, and among the staff. And like Amaele and Damie [4] will have it; "fairness and equity are not just things that are nice to have if we can afford them. They are the foundation of prosperity in a society, the element that helps society learn and keep a society healthy". And to him, if we abandon fairness and equity, we abandon society itself, and the benefits we draw from it in turn. For the fact that education, being a vital sector of the economy, and a pillar by which other sectors rest upon, is expected to be in the forefront to demonstrate fairness and equity in its process.

3.2. Power and Authority

Power and Authority are basic concepts that are prevalent in our modern society and also reflect as ethical issues in school management. Indeed, Power and Authority are separate though related concepts in any organisation. We shall treat them one at a time.

3.2.1. Power. Is viewed in terms of human relationships. It can be seen as one's ability to influence others in their opinion, behaviour or attitudes in some issues. Power manifest in every group or organisation because there are those that will influence and those that will be influenced. It is

of this understanding that Grace Umoren in Uduigwomen and Ogbinaka [5] revealed that, "Power symbolizes ways in which an individual subjects' others to his own will by means of brute force (physical) or psychological force (withholding certain basic needs or access to material reward and resources)". To her, power "seeks to control the action of others in a particular setting. While to Peters (1966), power" has to do with the ways in which a person subjects others to abide by his will by means of physical coercion. Such physical coercion can be; infliction of pain, restriction of movement or by psychological coercion (withholding of salaries, promotion or means to attaining them). From the analyses so far, it become obvious that the exercise of power presuppose that the victim has little or no resistance to the control upon him; even when it's not to his/her favour. What this means is that the recipients' right is often infringed in the exercise of power. What then can we say of power in school management? It will not be worthy to conclude that the exercise of power is totally bad. In some situation power is enforced to achieve a desirable end, correction or even to sustain justice in the society. In the school environment the administrator exercises power to make staff (teaching or non-teaching) carryout a particular task or assignment given to them so as to induce learning and meet up laid down goals. When power is viewed from this angle, it become something good or ethical/moral concept, but when it is exercised for personal gains it becomes evil. In all, caution should be applied in the use of power in school management so as to achieve the set objectives.

3.2.2. Authority. As mentioned earlier, Authority is different from power; however, both are related in their usage. 'Authority' from the "original Latin word, auctoritas means originating, producing and inventing in the sphere of command, course and opinion". Authority comes when rights are mandated to one to carry out a particular function for the good of the entire organisation, group or society. Its establishment is for the well-being of the society or group. In the school environment, authority is backed by legal establishment from the government (mostly when it has to do with the public schools). Consequent to this, any challenge of such (teachers") authority will be met by reference to the law- [5]. It is on this note that authority is described as legitimized „power“. Be it as it may, authority is granted to someone with the understanding that he or she will satisfy the expected role to carry out as one entrusted with authority. The effectiveness of the individual or groups in authority depends on their ability to continuously stand by the trust reposed on them. It is in line with this that Peters in Amaele and Damie [4] revealed that, "there are established expectations of the behaviours of office holders and

if an individual satisfies these expectations with reasonable competence there is a presumption in favour of his being effective". From the foregoing argument, it will also mean that authority will continue to take its rightful place to guarantee satisfaction to the ruled only when it continues to carry out its established roles. On the contrary, if its competence is in doubt or its expected roles are not effectively carried out, its power and confidence are reduced. Thus, power involves the appeal to an impersonal value system which regulates behaviour basically to the acceptance of the adherers.

To the Educational system and in the school, the Principal/Headmaster is seen as the authority just as the teacher is seen as an authority in the class and among his students. He stands as an authority figure in both the senses of knowledge and of the students. He is seen as an authority to carry out certain duty for the community as well as maintaining social control in the school. Alongside with this, the teacher according to Peters [6] must also stand as authority on some aspect of the people's culture, which is employed to transmit knowledge (education). Standing as an authority before the students the teacher exercises discipline. The body of knowledge and the mastery of his/her subject, places him/her as an authority of that area. This invariably must require discipline of mind and application. Again, the teacher as an authority may be based on tradition as well as legal backing [5].

3.3. Justice and Injustice

A society is an association of persons having their innate different character but recognizing certain rules of conduct as binding and act in accordance to such rules of conduct. The existing rules of conduct that exist among them are for the good and growth of the society. A society exist as a cooperative venture for mutual advantage, and often marked by a conflict as well by an identity of interests. Again, such conflicts of interest arise as a result of the distribution of the general wealth. To this effect, there has to be a set of principles in which such general goods and even assignments are to be shared in the society. This is applicable in the management of schools in Somolu Local Government as a case study. In our modern society, these principles are known as the principles of "Social justice". They "provide a way of assigning rights and duties in the basic institutions of society and they define the appropriate distribution of the benefits and burdens of social cooperation". The fact that different individual self-interest often calls for conflict, the general sense of justice guarantee their security. Hence, justice in this context stands to mean the basic charter of the well-ordered human association. Social Justice mainly lies on how the fundamental rights and duties of the people's

economic opportunities and social conditions are apportioned in the entire society. Looking at the notion of justice, Omoregbe [7] insist that it is based on the fundamental equality of all men. That since all men are fundamentally equal, they should be treated as such. And that any attempt of individuals not being treated in the same measure will amount to injustice. Justice to Plato means harmony - the harmony in the soul (society). Aristotle on his part sees Justice as the greatest of all virtues. And going further in Omoregbe [8], he insists that "Justice is what is lawful and what is fair and equal". From the foregoing illustration of the concept of justice, it becomes obvious that the basic thing we have to understand is fairness in human transaction or in his relationship with the other. Again, the inability of school administrator to stand firm and fair to school staffs and students will amount to injustice.

3.4. Freedom as an Ethical Issue in School Management

Freedom as a concept etymologically means absence from restraint. And to the Webster's dictionary of the English Language, freedom is "the state of not being subjected to determining forces". An adequate understanding of the concept will mean that freedom guarantees an individual to do things, move to anywhere or even discuss or express himself without infringement. It may also mean, going to the kind of school he likes and choosing the course he wants to study. However, a critical study of the concept and the possibility of its realization becomes a mirage.

In the education process, freedom of education is very relevant to move the society forward. Such freedom guarantees all or many the access to educational potentials. Infact, when the individuals are not restraints by huddle of any kind, the gap between the "haves" and the "have not" will be drastically reduced. Again, the school staffs must express their freedom or zeal to perform, and not under threat or fore so that adequate performance can take place.

3.5. Responsibility

In his attempt to discuss the concept of responsibility Omoregbe [8] viewed it from four different angles. Firstly, responsibility as duty or action, that is, one's responsibility or duty to carry out a particular task. Secondly, he sees responsibility as being accountable to that which he has done. That is an individual being accountable to what he has done or for his actions, one owning up the consequences of his actions. On the third understanding of responsibility, he sees it as taking one's duties, promises or obligation seriously and to fulfill them to the best of his ability. This

understanding of the concept makes us address some people as being responsible while some others are irresponsible. That is a school administrator taking his duties, obligation, or promises seriously. And to that school administrator who doesn't take his duties, obligation or promises seriously, we term him as an irresponsible school administrator because he cannot be relied upon for the effective management of the school. Finally, Omoregbe view responsibility also as being answerable to a higher authority; especially when entrusted with an assignment to carry out. This occurs when we say a worker is responsible to his boss.

It will be worthy to note that in as much as we expect the teacher in the educational institution to be responsible/accountable for every action taking and also to live up to his duty, the government/employer should as well live up to their expectation. The government should as a matter of importance pay, promote and remunerate the teacher as at when due so as to continue to earn the good services of the teacher. The school administrators must also act responsible in disseminating their duties towards effective management of the school resources.

3.6. Reward, Punishment and Discipline

The Oxford English Dictionary sees reward as a thing that you are given because you have done something good, worked hard, etc. A reward can be carried out for good behaviour. In the same vein, punishment comes as an opposite of reward. This means that punishment is given because you have done something bad, or not carried out an assignment in an effective manner. Just as the essence of reward is to encourage hard work; to motivate an individual to put more effort in doing a particular job so is punishment given to discourage you from doing that which you are punished for.

In schools' students and teachers should be rewarded to achieve maximum productivity. When a student is performing well, he/she should be rewarded. Here the essence will not only boost his hard work but will encourage the indolent ones to emulate hard work. The teacher from time to time should spot such students to reward them accordingly. Such rewards may not be really cash; it can come in kind as follows; clapping for them, exempting them from labour, etc. When a teacher or a student do what is wrong, such individual deserved to be punished according to the measure of the offence committed. And like the utilitarian, the purpose of the punishment is not to make him suffer for what he has done but should aim at producing good result in the future. To this effect, punishment should be done with the minimum pain possible. A performing teacher should as well be rewarded while the erring ones punished so as to make the education process an enterprising one. Promotion in the

teaching profession which is one of the strategies in rewarding the teachers should be consistent and prompt so as to enhance productivity. In the same vein, routine supervision should be conducted from time to time to check erring teacher and staff.

Discipline is a moral concept that also surfaced in the education venture. It means subduing the animal nature in us to uphold that rational part of us. As a "rational animal" which Aristotle says we are, we owe the duty to always control our passions, emotion, desire and appetites in living. Our ability to adequately do this makes us to be "self-discipline". From the foregoing, to be discipline as an individual simply means to have control over that animalistic nature in us. Our inability to do that makes people to tag us as an indisciplined man. Man, as a rational being ought to control his passion for food, pleasure, sex, money and other material things of life propelled by our five senses. These aforementioned items may not be bad on their own, but it should be subjected under our control.

4. Ethical Issues for Classroom Management in Somolu Local Government of Lagos State

Classroom management is the action preliminary to teacher – student class interaction, class grouping, curricular designing, time – tabling, formulation of school rules and regulations: The administrator must therefore take cognizance of the following [9]:

- **Appropriate Leadership Model:** In Somolu Local Government, appropriate leadership should be modelled. The learner must see the teacher's behavior as positive. To do this the teacher must develop a relationship of genuine care trust and respect with the learner and other administrators. The learner will then model his / her behavior after the teacher's behavior.
- **Self-Discipline In Somolu Local Government,** self: discipline should be the goal of management. Teachers should therefore encourage it in the classroom. By building respect and trust, the learner will begin to feel the need to control his / her own behavior. Thus, respect and trust can be fostered by positive interactions.
- **Match Experiences to the Learner:** As it is applicable in Somolu Local Government, learners should have positive experiences in school. An experience is usually positive if it is within developmental stage of the learner, and it is meaningful to him / her.
- **Show Empathy:** In Somolu Local Government,

the teacher should consider the learner's problems objectively to deal with them. Emotions inhibit objective thinking, while empathy allows viewing the problem from different perspectives.

- **High Expectations:** Teachers in Somolu Local Government must communicate to learners, their belief in each learner's abilities and demand the highest achievements from them.
- **Freedom and Independence to Function:** Learners in Somolu Local Government should be allowed as much independence to function as possible. If limits need to be established to avoid failure or injury, learners should be allowed to experience the logical consequences of their actions. This must be done to develop self-reliance and independence.
- **Principle of Normalization:** The teachers and learners in schools in Somolu Local Government must be allowed to function in as normal an environment as possible.
- **Principle of Fairness:** In Somolu Local Government, the teacher must be fair and allow the learner to succeed in school. If consequences are applied, they must be appropriate with regard to the degree of the offense.
- **Principle of Respect for Dignity and Worth of the Individual:** Teachers in Somolu Local Government must provide the learner an opportunity to learn or improve skills to master control over the learner's environment without degrading the learner as a human being.
- **A Continuum of Behavior Management Interventions:** Teachers in Somolu Local Government should use the intervention which least restricts the learner in the classroom, yet is still effective. Over – restricting the learner infringes on the learner's rights in the classroom.
- **Behavior Change must be Rational and Well-Planned:** In Somolu Local Government the behavior of the teacher must not be a behavior which hampers the learner's performance in the classroom the teacher must have a rationale for changing the behavior, and follow a behavioral procedure that will result in the implementation of a behavioral strategy that is prescriptive to the behavior and does not violate the ethical considerations or due process.
- **Consent:** Teachers in Somolu Local Government should be sure to notify those involved with the learner of the management procedures and obtain

consent to proceed. This practice will help avoid conflict of interest [10].

5. Ethical Responsibilities of The School Administrator

Schools should use certain codes as guide when developing ethics for administrators. Implementation of these ethics implies that, in practice, the administrators will conduct him or herself as follows:

i. Be Professional

- **Respect your own professionalism:** Take responsibility for your own development and ensure that you keep abreast of curricular and co-curricular developments.
- A professional administrator is dependable and maintains confidentiality.
- Support your school as a learning institution. Promote sound learning and teaching in your school by providing supporting and co-operative input.

ii. Acknowledge Your Responsibility

- Provide professional and social support for each learner. Should you suspect or know that a learner is experiencing problems, show interest and do something to help.
- Maintain consistent discipline. For instance, it is your responsibility to ensure that all learners abide by the school's dress code. Do not leave discipline subordinates.
- Insist that learners display good manners at all times.
- Inform parents of the behavior of their children.

iii. Diligence And Cooperation

- Be punctual. Conform to your school's prescriptions.
- Prepare well for your class teaching. Learners usually know if you have not prepared, and this can sometimes lead to disciplinary problems.
- Plan effectively for good behavior. Know your learners and their needs.

iv. Classroom Management

- Do not keep a class waiting for you, especially before the first period and after breaks.

- Do not keep a class with you once the period is over.
- Do not leave your class on its own.
- Do not as a form of punishment, send learners out of your class. (Every school must have a clear policy about this)

v. General Control In The School

- During the change in classes, the behavior of learners in the passageways must be monitored by teachers.
- Do not ask learners to go on errands.

6. Ethical Dilemmas

Administrators may often be faced with choices that require them to make decisions. All these decisions may not have any clear-cut resolution and are likely to be highly problematic. That's why; administrator may frequently be faced with ethical dilemmas. An ethical dilemma comes out from a situation that requires a choice among competing sets of principles, values, beliefs perspectives [11].

Ethical dilemmas occur when there is no straight forward answer about the right or wrong course of action in a particular situation. Dilemmas can occur anywhere. Complex dilemma can arise when the values of an institution clash with those of society or with an individual's personal or professional values. An ethical dilemma is not a choice between two rights. A school must reach consensus on a uniform disciplinary structure, in spirit and practice it must be firm, fair, consistent and positive. In tackling dilemmas, some of the following issues must be considered:

- What ethical issues are raised by these dilemmas?
- What possible solutions can you find for each dilemma and what are the positive and negative ramifications of each approach?
- How might your schools' mission and values guide you in choosing a course of action?
- Is guidance provided by existing codes or other ethics-related documents?
- In each case, do you want to tell staff and others how they must behave in this type of situation or would you like them to use their own judgement to find a solution?

Dilemmas are a useful tool for helping institution to think about their own approach to ethical matters.

They can also play a valuable role in ethics training, to encourage staff and other individuals to debate issues and deal with different circumstances that may occur. Dilemmas may be looked at with a view to developing an ethical policy or framework. Having a coherent and consistent set of policies and procedures in the form of a statement of ethical principle and behavior that is embedded in the culture of institutions can help the institution staff, students and others, to think about, address and resolve ethical issues. An institution wide statement should show what an institution stands for, what the internal and external community can expect from it and what it might reasonably expect in return.

7. Conclusion

What this paper has revealed is that the development of our country (Nigeria) lies on strength of our educational system. Consequently, for education to drive home its set objectives in the life of the people certain values and ethical issues/concepts as it appears in our education system must be in place. When such ethical issues as Fairness and Equity, Power and Authority, Justice and Injustice, Freedom and Responsibility, Punishment, Discipline and Rewards, are adequately harnessed in our education system, the set objectives will easily be achieved. However, this cannot be achieved on its own without concrete efforts of the education personnel (administrators/teachers), and the students (learners).

It was also deduced that a perfect educational equality cannot be attained, individuals have their uniqueness and peculiarities therefore treating all men the same will mean expressing inequality in their treatment. In the education system we should rather be talking about giving the individual equal access for education attainment. By this, individual personal traits and uniqueness should be taking into consideration. The consideration of personal traits, work ethics and educational objectives will further assist education administrators in managing the available resources in attaining the mapped-out objectives. The researcher concludes by making it clear that the ethical issues commonly noticed in our education system when critically analyzed will assist not only our educational planners but those to implement or run the management of the education system to achieve its desired goals.

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