**ETHICAL LEADERSHIP**

**What is ethical leadership?**

Ethical leadership is leadership that is directed by respect for ethical beliefs and values and for the dignity and rights of others.

Government ethics applies to the processes, behavior, and policy of governments and the public officials who serve in elected or appointed positions. The role of government and its officials is to serve the public interest with ethical awareness and ethical actions. When governments serve the public interest and avoid engaging in behavior that promotes any private interests, they are acting for the common good.

On taking office, every public servant, elected or appointed, enters into a covenant with the people: that as a public official they will seek to promote the public interest in all political processes and ensure that policy adoption and service provision occur without favoritism or discrimination. Moreover, a public official must not use her or his position for personal gain and should avoid even the appearance of having a conflict of interest.

One may view government ethics as part of the broader field of *political ethics* that Dennis F. Thompson (International Encyclopedia of Ethics, June 29, 2019) explains as covering “…the ethics of process, which focuses on public officials, the methods they use, and the institutions in which they act; and the ethics of policy, which concentrates on judgments about the policies and laws government makes.” Political ethics also extends to political processes of a democracy that includes the ethics of elections, campaigns, and voting.

**Principles of Ethical Leadership**

There are different principles and Standards of Ethics that can be used by leaders when working with clients and employees. These ethical standards include beneficence, non-maleficence, veracity, justice, fidelity, autonomy and equality. The principles help in influencing organizational performance. Ethical leadership is based on different principles which include the following:

The principle of non-maleficenceholds that leaders have s an obligation not to inflict harm on employees.

The ethical principle of beneficence

The principle of beneficence is a moral obligation to act for the benefit of others. Beneficence reflects the counselor's responsibility to contribute to the welfare of the client. Simply stated it means to do good, to be proactive and also to prevent harm when possible8 (Forester-Miller & Rubenstein, 1992). There are two aspects of beneficence:

* Providing benefits
* Balancing benefits and risks/harms

Means to do good and to promote the well- being of clients9. Beneficence involves balancing the benefits of treatment against the risks and costs involved.

The principle of veracity (truthfulness)sets standards of being truthful and honest. Ethical leaders promote honesty on different issues with the team which builds integrity’s.

The principle of Justice

The principle of justice obliges leaders to equitably distribute benefits, risks, costs, and resources by fulfilling the following;

* To each person an equal share
* To each person according to need
* To each person according to effort
* To each person according to contribution
* To each person according to merit.

The principle promotes fairness to all clients. Fairness ensured that leaders treat everybody in the team without favoritism based on gender, religion, tribe or race. Leaders who show favoritism affect work performance and results created by individuals in public.

The principle of fidelity (trust)

Fidelity involves the ideas of trustworthiness, faithfulness and commitment. Ethical leaders promote faithfulness and trust. Ethical leaders build trust with their team and partners.

The principle of autonomy

Autonomy is the principle that addresses the concept of independence. The principle allows the individual the freedom of choice and action. It addresses the responsibility of the leader to encourage clients, when appropriate, to take their own decisions and to act on their own values. It’s important for leaders to encourage workers clients to be autonomous because it helps the client to make decisions sound and rational decisions. It focuses on respecting the independence and rights for clients to make their own decisions.

Principle of equality

The principle of equality is core to our global human survival and happiness. There are so many inequities in the world, based largely on the fact that people love to discriminate against others for so many reasons. Be it color, faith, gender, sexuality, height, weight, or even hair color, if you practice discrimination and inequality, you are not a well-rounded person, either intellectually or morally.

**Qualities of Ethical Leadership**

Ethical Leaders Respect Others

Leaders who respect others also make provision of independence and not impose any severe restraints. Respect for others show there are, creative needs and requirements. They communicate with other individuals, with a sense of their categorical worth and valuable individual differences. Respect includes giving credibility to others’ ideas and making use of them in an operative manner. At times, it may require that leaders consent with others. Leaders should encourage followers in becoming aware of their own needs, morals, principles and determinations, and assist followers in integrating these with the leader’s needs, values, and purposes. Respect for others is a multifaceted ethic that is similar to but goes deeper than the kind of respect that parents teach their children. Respect means that a leader listens carefully to the opposing points of view. It means giving subordinates in ways that approve their beliefs, approaches, norms and values. When a leader shows respect to his subordinates, they in turn feel proficient about their work. In short, leaders, who show respect treat others as worthy individuals.

Ethical Leaders Serve Others

A number of ethical theories notes a concern for the interests of others, this is known as ethical altruism. The service principle evidently is an example of altruism. Leaders who serve are altruistic, they place their follower’s welfare principally in their plans. In the workplace, altruistic service behavior can be detected in activities such as, guiding, mentoring, empowerment behaviors, team building, and citizenship behaviors. The leader’s ethical responsibility to serve others is similar to the ethical principle in health care of benevolence. The feelings of kindness, compassion, generosity and benevolence are inculcated within ethical leaders. In a general way, benevolence declares that providers have a duty to help others pursue their own legitimate benefits, welfares and objectives. Ethical leaders have a major responsibility to attend to others, be of service to them, and make decisions relating to them that are beneficial and not impose any detrimental effects upon their welfare.

Ethical Leaders are Just

Ethical leaders are concerned about the issues of equality, fairness and justice. They make it a priority to treat their subordinates in an equal manner. Justice demands that leaders place issues of fairness at the centre of decision making. As a rule, no one should receive special treatment or special consideration, except when his or her particular situation demands it. When individuals are treated in a different way, the grounds for different treatment must be clear and reasonable, and based on ethical values. In the present existence, there are number of situations, when individuals lie, state false notions and opinions, and get involved into unethical acts. In such cases, ethical leaders need to listen to both sides and impose just punishments to the one, who has committed wrong. It is appropriate to implement restraints upon any acts that impede discipline, norms and proper codes of conduct within the organization.

Ethical Leaders are Honest

Honesty is regarded as one of the most imperative traits that all individuals should possess, irrespective of their background and category. In order to be successful in their performance, in the achievement of goals and objectives, honesty, truthfulness and righteousness are regarded imperative. The importance of honesty can be understood in an appropriate manner, when individuals understand the meaning of dishonesty. Dishonesty is the act of lying, cheating, and misrepresenting the reality situation. The act of dishonesty is disadvantageous to the individuals to a large extent and imposes many detrimental effects. On the other hand, a person should frame his mind-set in such a manner that he should always be honest and truthful in his dealings with others as well as in the production of goods and services. Honesty always enable the individuals to form proper connections and relationships with others and pursue goals and objectives in an appropriate manner.

Ethical Leaders Builds Community

Leadership is a process, whereby a person influences a group of individuals to achieve common objectives. This definition has a clear ethical dimension, the reason being, it refers to the common objective. A common objective requires that the leaders and the followers agree and work collaboratively with each other. Leaders need to take into account their own and followers’ purposes while working towards goals that are suitable to both. When leaders and followers establish appropriate terms and conditions with each other, then it is vital that they should agree with each other and in case, they do not agree and possess differing viewpoints, then communication should take place in an effective and peaceful manner. An ethical leader takes into consideration, everyone’s viewpoints and interests, he shows care towards others and in this way contributes in the building of an effective community.

**The Importance of Ethical Leadership in Government**

Ethical leaders have qualities such as honesty and integrity, impartiality and transparency which promote improved results and performance of employees. The confidence, reputation and integrity of workers in public service is also enhanced. Promotion of ethical leadership is required because unethical behavior such as dishonesty, corruption and concealment negatively affects the morale of workers and generally waste resources for personal interest. Ethical leadership promotes good governance in public institutions. Its needed at all time and at all levels to guide civil servants to ensure that they follow ethical principles and values written in ethical code of conduct to nurture good leaders in government.

Leaders should have ethical culture by setting moral principles for example for their followers’ for instance formal ethical codes and ethical training. Ethical leaders help in giving meaning to their employees’ work and also ensure that decisions are based on moral values (Avolio et al, 2011). Ethical leaders also work to create an ethical work culture. It creates a progressive ethical culture in public institutions. Leaders can enable the government to have individuals that are moral and trustworthy. The public become more loyal with ethical leaders leading public organizations. This means that a work environment is governed by a fair, clearly articulated set of rules, rather than by personality or politics. *“In an ethical work culture, an organization’s management articulates a set of principles that are understood, and bought in to, by everyone in the organization. Every element of the organization rom performance reviews and mentoring to compensation—reflects the ethical principles that are articulated from the top.”*

Ethical leadership is associated with leader effectiveness and good governance. Leaders need to demonstrate ethical leadership in their daily behavior, decisions and actions. By sending out strong messages about ethics and establishing clear reward and sanction systems to hold the employees accountable for their actions, leaders can promote good governance in the public sector.

Increasingly ethical leadership is a prerequisite for improvement in the public sector. It’s suggested that ethical leadership is required to control unethical practices such as corruption and poor governance in public sectors in developing and developed countries.

Ethical leadership provide value to public institutions by inspiring employees to be motivated and live up to the organization’s values. Ethical leadership leads to greater employee satisfaction and lower turnover rates.

Ethical leaders can improve workers morale and committed to the management and their work. It improves to good accountability and efficient use of public goods and services. This contributes to overall growth and development for countries.

Ethical leadership controls public organization scandals, ethical dilemmas, and ethical issues. The unethical challenge in governments creates a bad image for government and leads to wastage of public resources.

It can also help governments to be more reputable, which improves partnerships and clients for public business for internal and international markets to purchase government goods and services.

**Challenges associated with unethical leadership**

Unethical leadership can be defined as, behaviors conducted and decisions made by leaders that disrespect and actions in contradiction to ethical principles and standards, in organizations. These actions lead to poor civil servants or employee performance and in the process lead to general misconduct because of its impact on attitudes and performance of employees.

Unethical leadership behavior and the implications in public institutions should be controlled because through corruption it negatively affects accountability and it leads to misuse of public resources.

Corruption is recognized as a major hindrance to good governance in the public sector. The public sector is occupied by unethical leaders who take advantage of gaps in public sector systems and structures for personal interests. The government in the country should prompt the public sector to focus on anti-corruption measures to control corruption.

**Recommendations on dealing with unethical leadership**

There is need to promote integrity using ethical leaders. The responsibility of ethical leaders such as council leaders using ethical leaders who would superintend the work of civil servants to control inappropriate accountability. In addition to that the ethical leaders would also promote conformity to policies and standards for the work of civil servants. The continuous misconduct by leaders and other employees could be terminated using established codes of conduct as well as rules and regulation.

In addition to that unethical behavior in public organizations by leaders should be controlled through establishing ethical leadership. Ethical leaders make efforts that incorporate moral principles in their beliefs, values and behavior; they are committed to higher purpose, prudence, pride, patience, and persistence.

To reduce incidences of unethical behavior and promote ethical behavior, managers in public organizations in developing countries should communicate ethical standards clearly, encourage subordinates to make decisions in an ethical manner, and hold subordinates accountable for unethical conduct.

Ethical leadership can reduce absenteeism and have a positive influence on organizational commitment and willingness to report ethical problems by controlling for the effects of employee characteristics, perceptions of procedural fairness, and supportive leader behavior.

Public leaders who are either elected or employed as civil servants working with or for government should be guided using ethical principles to guide the roles played by them and quality of their work to improve the integrity of public institutions. Without improvement the public will increasingly mistrust their leaders for failing to perform and abusing public service. It’s imperative for that reason to establish public institutions that would guide and train public service employees and leaders on how preform when working in the public sector to effectively control unethical behavior.

In conclusion, unethical leadership affects performance in the public sector leading to problems such as corruption. Leaders in the public sector should effectively use ethical principles such as beneficence, non-maleficence, veracity, justice, fidelity, autonomy and equality to improve performance of public institutions.