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A RELATIONSHIP AMONG PUBLIC SCHOOL LEADERSHIP, ETHICS, AND STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT

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ABSTRACT

Historically, it has always been important for school leaders to possess and adhere to high ethical standards. Ethical standards, when demonstrated by school leaders, inspire trust within students, parents and the community in general. This in turn builds support for the school and establishes an environment that is conducive to success.

However, with the advent of NCLB and high stakes testing, the pressure on schools to demonstrate improved student achievement has accelerated. Hence, the need for ethical leadership practices within public schools has never been greater. Yet, while much has been done to examine the relationship of various instructional methodologies, staff development programs and curriculum initiatives to student achievement; little has been done to examine the relationship between leadership ethics and student performance at the campus level.

This exploratory correlational doctoral study through Walden University examined the relationship between the ethical training of elementary campus principals and student performance within their schools. The study found that a significant relationship exists between the level of ethics training of principals and student performance. The findings pose significant implications for programs that prepare educational leaders and for institutions that develop policy or provide training and on-going staff development for educational leaders.

Introduction

The mental struggle school leadership goes through when taking careful measures in avoiding poor decision-making processes is a stressful issue that demands leaders' attention. Begley's (2004) report concerning the connection of motivation and behavior of school leadership related four motivating forces, "personal preference or self-interest; an inclination towards consensus; an inclination

towards or concern for consequences; and an inclination towards trans-rational ethics or principles” (p. 8). Begley noted that some ethical values supersede others because of the multiple value sources for leadership, *self*, *group*, *profession*, *organization*, *community*, *culture*, and *transcendental*. These value sources may force an instinctive reaction to a problem rather than finding a remedy or the best response through careful deliberation. In agreement with Schön (1983), Begley stated, “Leaders in schools must become reflective practitioners” (p. 11), actively reflecting upon their knowledge and past experiences in order to prepare for and react to impending dilemmas.

One dilemma described by Meier et al. (2004) is that the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB) is rendering school systems nearly powerless as schools travel on a path that will lead to branding most as inadequate. School systems will be powerless for reasons such as poor recruitment of highly qualified teachers, a loss of federal endowment, and a loss of academic freedom (Meier et al.). In addition, some states have been coerced by the law to compromise their standardized testing priorities by forcing them to eliminate certain assessment technologies (Maryland) (Meier et al.) or to discontinue assessing subject areas such as social studies and fine arts (Maine) (Meier et al.). According to Meier et al., important methods of differentiating instruction for obtaining and developing critical thinking, research, and writing skills are minimized by NCLB. Additionally, teaching to a standardized test has cost some principals and teachers their academic freedom to be innovative, no recess time, no field trips, and less hands-on learning experiences (Meier et al.).

In order to maximize the school mission toward student achievement without taking unethical shortcuts or sacrificing organizational dignity, even in the face of diminished local power, education leaders must maintain a sense of selflessness. This occurs through establishing and maintaining a solid moral foundation. Whitaker (2003) depicted that an effective leader’s essential values of what is best for students and expected of the faculty and staff are a

fundamental example of a solid moral foundation. In other examples, Jones and Hooper (2006-2007) and Sergiovanni (2005) suggested that positive change can occur through building trust in the organization through such avenues as team building, sharing responsibilities, serving one another, genuinely respecting one another, conforming to one cause, and embracing one another's differences. Also, Bass (1999) described that leaders should be selflessly committed to organizational success.

Furthermore, Begley (2004) declared, "it is important to establish a balanced appreciation of the relationships among personal values, professional values, organizational values, and social values" (p. 6). Sergiovanni (2005) reinforced this by promoting the sharing of values while Campbell, Gold, and Lunt (2003) described how shared beliefs help to eliminate unpredictability in decision-making by favoring and enhancing relationships with stakeholders. Because of the pressures of NCLB, education leaders set such efforts on a backburner in order to focus upon applying quick fixes to areas of weakness that are magnified by AYP (Campbell et al.).

Literature Review

Ethics has many meanings; however, the review will concentrate on a selected focus. "Ethics is concerned with the kinds of values and morals an individual or society finds desirable or appropriate" (Northouse, 2001, p. 250). Sergiovanni (1992) added that values and beliefs typically dominate the outcome of our decision-making processes. DePree (1989) and Northouse both discussed that the identity of leadership involves the use of ethics, morals, and values to define the role. In the process of this chapter, leadership is narrowed down to the field of education leadership. Thomas and Davis' (1998) description of education leadership is aligned with DePree and Northouse, adding that the position, "supports public education, equity, fairness, and equal access to quality education for all children"

(p. 14). Additionally, Blankstein (2004) stated, “Ideally, values reflect the attitudes and beliefs of the school community” (p. 85).

As an indication of ethical education leadership’s effect upon schools, Hawley and Rollie (2002) and Sergiovanni (1992) declared that the leader must be the role model of the school community’s values. Aside from setting the example for faculty, staff, and students, proper support must be given as a safety net. According to Little (1999, cited in Lashway, 2001), “school values, beliefs, and norms must...support teacher learning” (p. 2). Day, Harris, and Hadfield (2001) reiterated the idea that in-service training was essential for receiving the most out of the abilities of the organization.

Barth (2001) described that students benefit in such an environment because they notice and emulate democratic beliefs, which can result in their improved achievement. Some of the elements of ethical and moral leadership are caring; supporting staff; building confidence in others; establishing high standards of performance; motivating stakeholders; communicating effectively; problem-solving; lifting and maintaining high morale; inspiring faculty, staff, and students to do their best; sustaining a productive organizational culture; setting goals; understanding law; and modeling expectations (Bass, 1999; Day et al., 2001; Hawthorne, 2001; Paul, 1988; Rice & Dreilinger, 1990).

Ethics and Morals

Ethics and morals are often interchangeable terms. Rebores (2001) stated, “Ethics is concerned with human conduct,” where a person can, “choose one course of action or an alternative course of action” (p. 6). Kant (1980) professed that ethics examines the, “intrinsic quality of actions” and is a, “philosophy of disposition” (p. 71). In other words, ethics pertains to the quality of internal devices that define or shape one’s character. Weissbourd (2003) added that adults continually develop ethics, or morality. Kant also declared, “Ethics is concerned with actions necessitated by the inner obligation

which springs from the rights of others in so far as they are not compulsory” (p. 211). Earlier in the text, Kant asserted, “There is nothing more sacred in the wide world than the rights of others” (p. 193).

Kant’s (1980) description of *moral goodness* aligns with the definition of morals. He declared, “Moral goodness consists...in the submission of our will to rules whereby all our voluntary actions are brought into a harmony which is universally valid” (p. 17). Kant also wrote of morality as following an established rule. Dewey (2002) echoed Kant’s belief of morality being governed by rules when he discussed how morals are formed by habits of consideration for others (in other words, self-conscious laws of goodness and badness).

Values and Judgment

One’s desires and decisions are rooted in values. Gill (2003) described values as, “principles held dear in people’s hearts by which they live (and sometimes die)” (p. 313). Rest (1979) asserted, “behavior reflects the interplay of many kinds of values” (p. 177). When discussing consequences of actions (or, behavior), Dewey (2002) declared, “Morality begins at this point of use of knowledge of natural law, a use varying with the active system of dispositions and desires” (p. 299). In other words, one’s moral values naturally stir according to a situation. Glasser (1998) described that one’s primal motivation comes from differentiating what feels good and what feels bad.

Decision-making can be placed in a theory of its own as it relates to ethics, morals, and values. In describing choice theory, Glasser (1998) stated, “All your significant conscious behaviors, that is, all behaviors that have anything directly to do with satisfying basic needs, are chosen” (p. 71). Rest’s (1979) idea supported Glasser’s (choice) theory that *moral judgment* is, “primarily governed by cognitive processes” (p. 247). Sullo (2007) described that choice theory sense of behavior as a *valuing filter* in which people allocate

good, bad, or impartial worth to new data, whether they are aware of it or not, as an assessment of how much it fulfills a current necessity. Desi (1980, cited in Lawrence & Nohria, 2002) added to Glasser's choice theory by noting the importance of emotions in human nature, an element Glasser left out. Kant (1980) stated, "The supreme principle of all moral judgment lies in the understanding: that of the moral incentive to action lies in the heart. This motive is moral feeling" (p. 36).

Leadership Practice

Gill (2003) conveyed that leaders should be visionaries, strategists, cultivators of practical ideals, and enablers of others to sustain those ideals. Tied to the qualities mentioned here is a quality that Covey (1989) called, "your Emotional Bank Account" (p. 255). Covey expressed, "Ethos is your personal credibility, the faith people have in your integrity and competency" (p. 255). Great leaders need such qualities for one special reason in particular, encountering dilemmas.

Concerning dilemmas, Bolman and Deal (2001) stated, "We still face an onslaught of vexing problems that are frustratingly recalcitrant in the face of our search for rational and technical solutions" (p. 172). Senge, Scharmer, Jaworski, and Flowers (2004) declared that until leadership escapes from the way it always thinks, from the industrial-aged status quo of hierarchical power and management, dissonance will continue to occur between organizations and their governance. Wheatley (1994) described that in her professional life avoidance was the solution until realizing that the approach toward the dilemma of inadequate communication needed to change so she reorganized and collaborated with other problem-solvers who were creative thinkers. Bolman and Deal (2001) asserted that school leaders must fully care and commit to the obstacle by being insightful, opportunistic, loving, and empowering in addition to valuing those who work for (or, with) them.

Kumle and Kelly (2006) reiterated, “Leadership...provides the vision of the end result....Leadership provides for stability, not the feeling of instability or surprises” (p. 12). Leaders must also keep a healthy balance in organizational relationships by providing a steady variety of single and group rewards and by promoting harmony and trust by physically organizing the work environment so individuals within related specialties are easily accessible to one another (Lawrence & Nohria, 2002). Leaders can also establish an environment of loyalty, continuity, and consistency to and for the organization. Lawrence and Nohria concluded with the caveat that the entire organization must come to one accord as a sign of allegiance to the cause.

Fryer (2004) conveyed findings that organizations that concentrate practice on the constructive aspects of operations, rather than the destructive aspects, are more productive. Those aspects include faithfulness, flexibility, fidelity, meekness, and kindness. In addition, as a reaction to higher demands of productivity, West and Sacramento (2004) proposed that leaders promote professional development, autonomy, and community (through positive social interaction). Gigerenzer (2006) reiterated the point of positive social interaction (furthering the point by emphasizing frequent interaction with all employees) as well as suggesting for leadership to treat all employees the same.

Ethical Educational Leadership

Ethical educational leadership is governed by self-regulation within organizational and other regulations. It requires careful and thoughtful analysis of situations and other areas of concern. Rebores (2001) explained that there are three reasons why ethics thinking is crucial to education leadership. The first reason is that the concerns of ethics are vital for decision-making and the necessary deliberation upon central morals. A second reason is that an ethical attitude is a well-ordered attitude. Third, ethical study provides an exceptional plan

of action for addressing a dilemma. Sergiovanni (2005) expressed, “Leadership is a responsibility....Leaders minister to the needs of the school by being of service and providing help....Leadership combines management know-how with values and ethics” (p. 19).

The reasons behind the choice of action must be authentic for virtue’s sake of actuality. Thomas and Davis (1998) expressed that moral decision-making in leadership is guided in obligations that are embedded in *shared values, trust, honesty, fairness, equity, empowerment, human dignity, doing the right thing, rule of law, and beneficence*, which they referred to as central ethics that guide the entire organization in the face of stringent demands. These ethics are also requirements for building what Sergiovanni (1992) called a *virtuous school* that strives to meet every need of students. Capper (1993) advanced the idea of a virtuous school by stating, “Administrators can practice this ethic of caring through all their interpersonal interactions and in building a nurturing school culture that consistently demonstrates what the people in the school care about” (p. 273). Sergiovanni (2005) suggested that education leaders ask themselves, “What values do we believe should guide our actions?” (p. x). Capper (1993) referred to utilizing *ethical logic* for scoping all angles of a dilemma before acting.

Ethical education leadership must be grounded in a central core of principles that are unshaken by dilemmas and other position-related difficulties. Mayeroff (1971) described some principles: *commitment, understanding, forbearance, integrity, faith in others, meekness, and student-centeredness*. Beck (1994) discussed understanding others’ trains of thought, responding appropriately to others, and staying committed to the relationship. Beck related that the reason for these principles is to support growth and to help take care of the needs of others because, as the author noted, “Actions and attitudes consistent with caring are linked to observable positive outcomes in societies, organizations, and persons” (p. 38).

Starratt (1994, cited in Marshall and Oliva, 2006) stressed the idea that one of the primary ethical duties of education leaders is to

ensure that all non-dominant cultural groups are treated respectfully. Grove, Fontenot, and Montgomery (2003) expressed, “Principals have to serve the students not only as a principal, but also as a parent and counselor in some instances” (p. 19). Sergiovanni (2005) further offered the principles, or virtues, of *optimism*, *credibility*, *camaraderie*, and *respect for diversity*.

Pressures, Demands, and Difficulties

There are multiple factors that afflict education leaders. Mitgang (2003) asserted, “Never before has the bar been set so high for America’s public education system to ensure that every child achieves at high levels” (p. 1). Lambert et al. (2002) discussed how educators have become servants to not only students and families but also to the needs expressed on the national realm. Johnson (2004) mentioned in his study that the teachers themselves can cause difficulty by standing firm against an initiative or change. NCLB has had an impact on public education that increasingly demands attention to nationwide gains in student achievement.

Another example is the pressure placed upon education leaders by government entities. Jones and Hooper (2006-2007) discussed problems education leaders face such as the burdens of NCLB, meeting Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP), more attention given to standardized testing, capital reduction, and the necessity of curriculum that promotes the achievement of all students. Meier, Kohn, Darling-Hammond, Sizer, and Wood (2004) described that NCLB, “caused a number of states to abandon their thoughtful diagnostic assessment and accountability systems — replacing instructionally rich, improvement-oriented systems with...punishment-driven approaches—and it has thrown many high-performing and steadily improving schools into chaos” (pp. 4-5). Meier et al. also noted their fear that, eventually, most public schools will be recognized as failures because they believe that NCLB penalizes highly diverse schools because higher degrees of diversity increase the likelihood of not making the goal of AYP.

Another pressure applied by NCLB is the fact that schools are judged entirely by the results of their standardized test scores. Marshall and Oliva (2006) reiterated this concern when they expressed how such legislative actions disregard the relevant factors of socioeconomic status, culture, and home environment in which students live and through which education leaders trudge to find ways to educate every child equally. The authors also related that legislators portray a belief that providing education for every student is an easy task accomplished through assessment and comparison. Furthermore, Quinn (2005) expressed an even more personal concern at the professional level, the prospect of losing one's leadership role due to a lack of adequate progress according to *NCLB* standards.

Response to Pressures, Demands, and Difficulties

To fight or adapt to the pressures, demands, and difficulties education leaders constantly face, Beck (1994) suggested that principals should be induced, "to reassess...values, thoughtfully and collaboratively to define (or redefine) success...and to guard these values and definitions, then they are challenged" (p. 83). Beck also noted that this is the duty of education leadership. Marshall and Oliva (2006) declared that education leaders, "must be able to present arguments that educational excellence means moving beyond test scores and working with parents and communities to build inclusive, safe, and trusting spaces" (p. 196).

In spite of the high-stakes demands, Starratt (2005) promoted that the act of learning should be based in virtues of *presence*, *authenticity*, and *responsibility*. Presence pertains to a total commitment to all elements of the learning environment. Authenticity refers to participating in the learning process with integrity that respects others. Responsibility means valuing awareness of and involvement in the areas of environment, the public, customs and the past.

The Impact of Ethical Educational Leadership

In light of current cultural demands, education leaders ensure that organizational values are suitable. Rebores (2001) stated, “The principal can have the most extensive impact on a school’s culture” (p. 62) because of positional authority. Alvy and Robbins (1998) described that, if affiliations within the school are strong, the moral impact of education leaders’ decisions and actions elevates behavior. Weissbourd (2003) reiterated that it is not just important to set an example, but the level of commitment of leaders’ relationships with students is just as important. Lambert et al. (2002) substantiated, “School leaders must search for ways to create a culture of high expectations and support for all students and a set of norms around teacher growth that enables teachers to teach all students well” (p. 3). Blase and Blase (2000, as cited in Barnett, 2004) noted that when education leaders maintain channels of communication and opportunities for improvement with faculty and staff, they more positively influence student achievement.

One tool for influencing student achievement is professional development instituted by the education leader to promote successful instructional practice. Dewey (1944) discussed that schooling is unique because, “adults consciously control the kind of education which the immature get...by controlling the environment in which they act, and hence think and feel” (pp. 18-19) in order to improve society. Furthermore, Starratt (2004) expressed that education leaders’ schools must examine organizational and legislative influences.

Ethics Training For Educational Leadership

St. Germain and Quinn (2005) reported that new principals, even though they had some amount of experience as school administrators, were unprepared for their newly acquired positions. The authors stated, “tacit knowledge essentially is untaught, but integral to successful decision making in situations in which time is

limited” (p. 88). Additionally, Reiss (2004) expressed that an increase of support is necessary to combat the pressures and difficulties facing these principals.

To begin or renew the spirit for battling the daily stresses of education leadership, help could be on the horizon in the form of relevant ethics training. Beck (1994) declared, “Indeed, caring and competence go hand in hand when it comes to educational leadership, and preparation programs must seek to cultivate both” (p. 120). Bass (1999) stated that ethics training should begin with theoretical concepts and lead into viewing practical situations.

Fullan (1997) discussed that education leaders sometimes are so caught up in a dilemma that is constantly interrupted by day-to-day events that they become, “victims of the moment” (p. 37). Fullan, as well as Blumberg (1989, cited in Sergiovanni, 1992), advised that education leaders should continually strive to be educated in order to improve practice. Additionally, Capper (1993) stated that education leaders should be adept in ethical logic. The author stated, “The preservice training of school administrators should reflect a substantial opportunity to develop and use the knowledge, skills, beliefs, values, and attitudes needed to administer a school in a distinctly moral manner” (p. 270). Beck (1994) asserted that leadership preparation programs must help, “leaders to examine their fundamental ideas and beliefs about the nature of persons, the purposes of education, and the roles of leaders in achieving these purposes” (p. 109). Becoming more sophisticatedly educated is the heart of leadership’s purpose (Beck, 1994).

In addition, knowledge, values, experience, and numerous skills and characteristics comprise the necessary toolbox of ethical education leaders. Thomas and Davis (1998) listed several tools: *active listening, authentication of data, effective communication, precise focus upon concerns, optimism, self-resolve, inspiration of others, promotion of risk-taking, clear objectives, an organized plan of action, and enthusiastic conviction*. Marshall and Oliva (2006) related

that education leadership skill sets should also include *community integrity, judicious deliberation, and discourse*.

Methodology

This study searched for a significant relationship between (pre and in-service) ethics training for elementary public school principals and gains in their students' achievement in grades three to five. It also investigated for a significant relationship in students' overall achievement gains between principals who have received formal pre and/or in-service ethics training and principals who have not. Six hundred principals throughout a southern U.S. state were selected by nonrandom sampling by a *single-stage* (Creswell, 2003) process of *convenience sampling* (Creswell) to participate in a cross-sectional, 29-item, closed-questioned, online survey designed by the researcher in order to access information such as professional experiences, student achievement, faculty and staff information, and prior ethics. With the assistance of Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS), the Chi-Square test was utilized to find a significant relationship between ethics training put into practice and gains in students' achievement results in addition to analyzing the students' overall achievement gains between principals who have received formal ethics training and principals who have not.

Quantitative Data Analysis and Findings

The results of the survey regarding the first relationship studied were broken into standardized testing results reported by the participants. Table 1 displays the overall SAE changes. The code 999, which appears in the row above Total, refers to the unanswered items of the 40 participants who did not complete the survey beyond the third item. The phrase *every participant* refers to the 111 principals who completed the entire survey.

Of the 111 participants, 57 indicated an overall increase in scores from the previous year (Table 1). Nearly half as many participants indicated that their school's scores stayed approximately the same. Only eight noted a decrease, while 19 reported inconsistent results in overall change.

Table 1

Overall Change/Non-Change of Standard Scores

	<u>Observed N</u>	<u>Expected N</u>	<u>Residual</u>
Increased from the previous year	57	30.2	26.8
Decreased from the previous year	8	30.2	-22.2
Same from the previous year	27	30.2	-3.2
Wavering in	19	30.2	-11.2
Increases and decreases	40	30.2	9.8
999	40	30.2	9.8
Total	151		

Table 2 reflects the results of the Chi-Square test utilized to analyze gains in the principals' students' achievement in grades three to five. Within each survey item's column, the Chi-Square value is in the critical region. For those items where degrees of freedom (df) = 4, the critical Chi-Square value (χ^2) = 9.49 when the level of confidence (p) = .05 (the level of confidence throughout the test). For those items where $df = 3$, $\chi^2 = 7.81$. For the item where $df = 2$, $\chi^2 = 5.99$. As indicated in the following table, the minimum Chi-Square value is 47.78, which far exceeds the critical values just listed. Consequently, the researcher can reject the null hypothesis (Gravetter & Wallnau, 2005). There is a significant relationship between pre and in-service ethics training for public elementary school principals and gains in their students' achievement in grades three to five.

Table 2

Chi-Square Test Statistics

	Change/ Non- Change of Std. Scores	Read Score <u>Up</u>	Read Score <u>Down</u>	ELA Score <u>Up</u>	ELA Score <u>Down</u>	Math Score <u>Up</u>	Math Score <u>down</u>	Score Cat. w/ High <u>Up</u>
χ^2	47.78	46.16	145.13	72.19	71.62	133.34	128.18	43.67
df	4	3	3	3	2	4	3	4
Asymp. Sig.	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000

a 0 cells (.0%) have expected frequencies less than 5. The minimum expected cell frequency is 30.2.

b 0 cells (.0%) have expected frequencies less than 5. The minimum expected cell frequency is 37.8.

c 0 cells (.0%) have expected frequencies less than 5. The minimum expected cell frequency is 50.3.

A second Chi-Square test was employed to analyze the statistical relationship in students' overall achievement gains between principals who have received formal ethics training and principals who have not (as reported by the principals). The results of the test are displayed in Tables 3-5.

Table 3 displays the number of participants who reported an overall increase in student achievement.

Table 3

Overall Achievement

	<u>Observed N</u>	<u>Expected N</u>	<u>Residual</u>
Increased Overall	57	57.0	.0
Total	57(a)		

Table 4 displays the division of the participants who reported an overall increase in student achievement. Fifty-five reported that they have received formal ethics training, while two reported that they have never received formal ethics training.

Table 4

Training

	<u>Observed N</u>	<u>Expected N</u>	<u>Residual</u>
Received Ethics Training	55	28.5	26.5
No Ethics Training	2	28.5	-26.5
Total	57		

As shown in Table 5, the Chi-Square value, where $df = 1$, $\chi^2 = 49.281$ is well within the critical region of 3.84 (Gravetter & Wallnau, 2005). Therefore, the researcher rejects the null hypothesis. There is a significant relationship in students' overall achievement gains between principals who have received formal ethics training and principals who have not.

Table 5

Second Chi-Square Test Statistics

	<u>Training</u>
χ^2 (a)	49.281
df	1
Asymp. Sig.	.000

a 0 cells (.0%) have expected frequencies less than 5. The minimum expected cell frequency is 28.5.

Interpretation of Findings

Regarding the first studied relationship, when examining Table 1, one could argue that more students are learning more and meeting more expectations in school. The tables displayed the results of the survey that were broken into standardized testing results reported by the participants. Table 2 presented the results of the Chi-Square test of the second relationship. As indicated, there is a significant relationship between pre and in-service ethics training for public elementary school principals and gains in students' achievement in grades three to five. This entails that ethical decision-making by education leadership impacts student achievement. As a principal's (and other stakeholders', for that matter) ethics enhance, students' achievement enhances.

Tables 3-5 encompassed the results of the second Chi-Square test. As previously indicated, setting high ethical standards is essential to promoting ethical behavior. Once the ethical behavior is set in place, the organizational culture can become more productive because, as Smith (2006) described, culture is, "the residue of past group success...stored in the form of collective assumptions, or mental models that are unquestionably accepted as representing reality" (p.

12). Ethics training and peer collaboration (Lashway, 2003) are two examples of promoting such success.

The findings of both Chi-Square tests uncovered significant relationships because education leaders' ethics, which are displayed in behaviors, or practices, are a tangible influence upon those who are a part of the organization. Most probably, school leaders who have had formal ethics training also consistently practice ethical behavior and most, if not all, of the stakeholders function in unison for the benefit of students. Stakeholders such as faculty, staff, students, and parents (or guardians) judge and react to principals based upon their actions, whether the results of decisions are made spontaneously or purposefully. Therefore, as previously discussed, principals' ethics and students' achievement tend to align together.

What is created out of this is an aligned *educational life cycle* with a binding factor being the actions of faculty and staff members who align their actions with ethical principals' actions by also promoting the best for students. The focus of the alignment should be to value increasing student achievement. When students feel valued and they respond accordingly, they are doing what is right for them and, consequently, are moving toward responsible, ethical decision-making for their own educational and social benefit. The results of the survey strongly exhibited this claim because a much greater number of respondents stated that they have received formal ethics training and their students made achievement gains overall, while so few respondents reported having had no formal ethics training and also reported overall student achievement gains.

Implications for Social Change

This investigation addressed social change in education by highlighting the lack of attention given to ethics and formal ethics training since it is so often treated as an inherent quality that one is filled with and then further develops on its own through professional

experiences rather than treating ethics as a quality that more quickly develops with additional training and attention as a supplement to professional experiences. As indicated in Table 2, there is a significant relationship between pre and in-service ethics training for public elementary school principals and gains in students' achievement in grades three to five. Thus, it compels higher learning institutions, other preparatory programs, leadership organizations, and legislators to commit to developing a highly effective course of action that demonstrates greater respect for the impact ethical decision-making has upon student achievement.

The commitment must move beyond declaring beliefs concerning ethics and into instructing how to best employ those beliefs. Leadership organizations such as the Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium (ISLLC) and National Association of Elementary School Principals (NAESP) promote codes of ethics, but neither of them requires or even offers courses, programs, or curriculum on leadership ethics. The lack of action on these organizations' parts cultivates two problems. First, the codes are not looked upon as legislation. Second, the organizations do not display enough professional or political clout to enforce their codes.

In addition, this investigation will hopefully result in change in the legislative approach to ethics with more consideration given to the political necessity to address ethics in education for the efforts of increasing student achievement (in both educational and social aspects). NCLB brought about the label of *highly qualified* when referring to certified educators. However, highly qualified does not sufficiently describe expectations much outside of certification requirements. In education, there are no certification requirements that insist upon courses, programs, or curriculum on leadership ethics. Expectations concerning ethical behavior are not clear and direct even though ethics, morals, personal beliefs, and values are important elements of leadership.

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