

Quality Education News

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Issue 36

November 2015



A quarterly publication issued by the South African Quality Institute in the interest of promoting educational excellence.

Dear Supporter of Quality Education

Is humble leadership weak leadership?



At the end of September two world leaders visited the United States at about the same time. Both were separately invited by Barack Obama to the White House. Chinese President Xi Jinping was given a 21-gun salute as he stood alongside the American President. Pomp and ceremony was the style. Pope Francis was also treated royally but there were differences. Where everything was done with precise timing for Mr Xi, things happened slightly differently with Pope Francis. For example, he arrived fifteen minutes late for his White House appointment. Adoring children in an East Harlem school had delayed him and he happily didn't seem to mind ... in fact, Pope Francis seemed to prefer being in a classroom than in the Oval office.

The one leader was in charge of a country which has the second most powerful military force in the world – the People's Liberation Army which has 1.5 million personnel. In total contrast, the other leader has an 'army' of 125 Swiss Guards when he's at home in the Vatican. Yet millions flocked to see the pope and there was wall-to-wall coverage on TV of his every move and word. The one received admiration and sometimes adulation wherever he went; the other polite courtesies.

What accounts for the difference between the two leaders and the way that the American people treated them? In a single word: Humility. The one leader saw himself as a servant of the poor, the hungry, the dispossessed, the sick and the lonely. He empathised and touched them both figuratively and literally. The other saw himself as a powerful leader in charge of a superpower.

Wikus Jansen van Vuuren is the business development director at Henley Business School, South Africa. He asks the question whether being humble is a weakness in a leader. His tongue-in-cheek answer is 'No' unless you're in a boxing ring fighting a match! He gives a number of reasons why quality leaders display humility. Amongst them are :

- Humble people are aware of their shortcomings and weaknesses. They're open and honest about them. As a result they're willing to surround themselves with people who will fill the gaps in their personal abilities.

- As they are aware of their own mistakes, they are tolerant of the mistakes of others. Humble leaders are not judgmental but accept that failure is essential for learning.
- Such leaders create an organisational climate where knowledge is shared. That shared knowledge helps the individual and the organisation continually improve.
- Humble leaders are good listeners who are willing to listen to others and get advice – irrespective of that person's post level and status in the organisation.
- They are open-minded in their approach to learning and are always on a learning curve. Opportunities to learn from others are welcomed and followed through.
- Humble leaders show love and respect towards others. They are often treated by others in the same way.

An aspect of the humble leader is a willingness to be of service to others. This type of leadership is known as servant leadership – a style of leadership that goes back thousands of years. Think of great kings, queens, prime ministers, presidents and religious leaders of the past. However, the concept of 'servant leadership' didn't appear in leadership theory until 1970. In that year, the late Robert K Greenleaf wrote an essay titled: The servant as leader.

Whether we're a first-year teacher or anywhere else right up to the top position of Minister of Basic Education, most people display different levels of servant leadership. Individuals fit somewhere in the continuum described in Greenleaf's definition:

The servant-leader is a servant first. It begins with the natural feeling that one wants to serve, to serve first. Then conscious choice brings one to aspire to lead. That person is sharply different from one who is a leader first, perhaps because of the need to assuage an unusual power drive or to acquire material possessions. The leader-first and the servant-first are two extreme types. Between them are shadings and blends that are part of the infinite variety of human nature.

Although humble leadership is caring, empathic and gentle, it's not weak. There's a steeliness when decisions have to be taken on matters of principle. Even though President Obama once called himself a "great admirer" of Pope Francis, these two leaders definitely disagree strongly on certain political and religious matters.

In the 2015 classroom and staffroom, the aware leader knows that – unlike a few decades ago – effective leadership is far more subtle, far more nuanced. There's a definite move away from an authoritative type of leadership to one that is more persuasive in style. Today's true leader knows the huge strength of being a humble leader.

Jansen van Vuuren, W 2015. Humility is weakness? No – unless you're a boxer. *Business Day*, 23 September 2015, page 15.

Sincerely

Richard Hayward



This newsletter is edited by SAQI and distributed to those schools benefiting from their participation in the MySchool programme. MySchool acts as a conduit which raises and delivers essential funding for education and social development on a sustainable basis. This enables members of the community to participate in the future development of our nation.



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EVERY SWIPE COUNTS

Doing the right thing



South African schools land up in the media too often for the wrong reasons. One of the big 2015 scandals has been the unethical appointment of some teachers. If you have the right connections, you can get a post at the school of your choice. Certain teacher unions have interfered with the appointment process. A school might, for example, be given a principal who wasn't recommended by the School Governing Body even though their preferred candidate was the most professionally suitable one. Senior appointments such as that of a principal have been known to have been 'bought' for a quite hefty R30,000 fee! Such dishonest appointments shame the teaching profession. The goal of giving children a quality education becomes even more difficult for dedicated teachers.

Mark Twain, the American writer, observed that we should, 'always do what is right'. That's an ideal that applies everywhere. Beyond and more important than the syllabus for every subject that we teach, is a need to nurture ethics into young people. They need to know what's right and what's wrong. They shouldn't – to plagiarise a famous advertising slogan – Just do it!

What 'walk the talk' ethics should be seen in a school? If a person is a principal, these seven principles reflect ethical behaviour (Mattocks, T):

1. Contracts are not broken unilaterally.
2. Anonymous information is not used to injure others.
3. One does not personally profit from the position held.
4. Confidential materials are kept confidential.
5. One does not use school employees and school materials for personal matters.
6. Expense accounts are not falsified.
7. School leaders tell the truth, have integrity and adhere to the ethics of the profession.

In the classroom, teachers display ethical behaviour by:

- Identifying attitudes and traits expected of learners and being role models.
- Teach ethics formally in lessons and informally in day-to-day situations.
- Believe in the dignity and worth of every child.
- Be diligent in carrying out assigned duties and tasks as a teacher.
- Assess the learner's performance fairly, honestly and without bias or prejudice.

Ethical behaviour for school leaders includes looking at issues that affect the whole of society. South Africa is a country with millions living in poverty. Ethical school communities offer assistance in the form of community projects such as: high school students teaching English, Maths and Science at disadvantaged schools; collecting clothing and foodstuff for the poor; visiting children in hospitals and the elderly in old age homes.

Schools that are ethical deal with staff diversity. They ask direct questions such as: Does the staffroom reflect the diversity of the student demographics? Is there gender equality as regards the numbers and also the opportunities for senior management

positions? Is there any bias towards staff members based on cultural, political or religious background?

Every school is a microcosm of our global village. What ethical behaviour does the school show in keeping itself clean, neat and well-maintained? How does the school go about recycling to protect the environment?

Ethics is at the essence of an education that is excellent.

Mattocks, T 1998 Legal and ethical bases for educational leadership. *Phi Delta Kappa Fastbacks*, no.426, pages 7-51.

Here's a question around an ethical issue posed to a group of United States teachers:

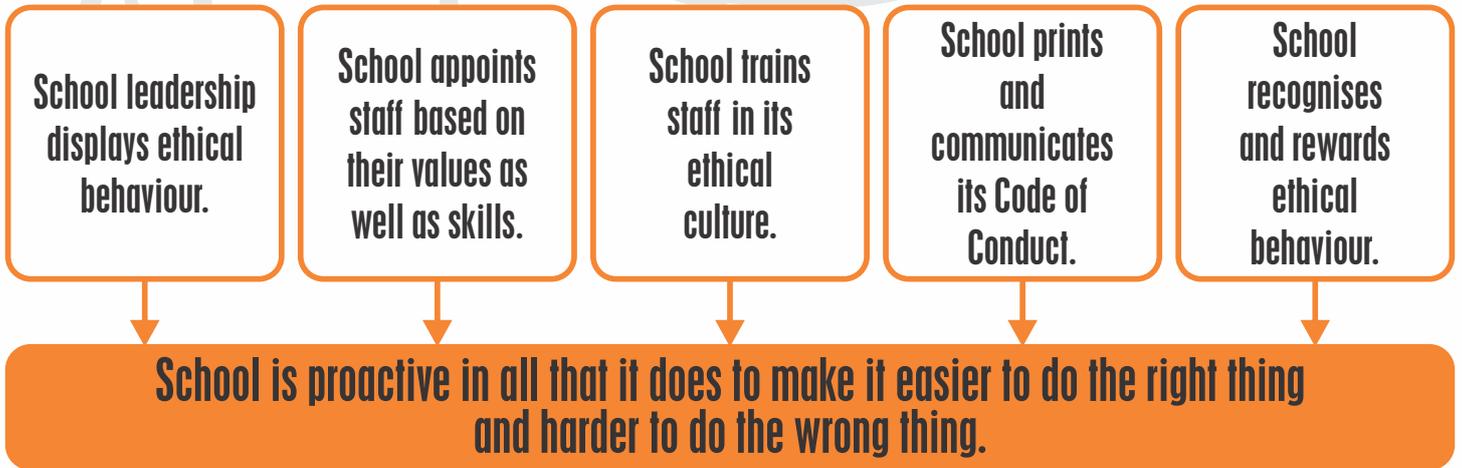
You are a principal in a school where it's obvious one particular teacher isn't liked among the staff. They keep leaving you anonymous tips of infractions that she has committed. How do you handle the situation in relation to the rights of the teacher?

- a) Confront the teacher with the information against her.
- b) Start doing more class observations/visits to the said teacher.
- c) Insist on receiving the names of the accusers before you do anything. The teacher has a right to protection against anonymous accusations.
- d) Advise the district or regional office to transfer her to another school where she may be better accepted.

The ethical response is c) because the principal should insist on receiving the names of the accusers before doing anything. Every person in a school has the right to protection against anonymous accusations.



Working with a vision



(Acknowledgement: Adapted from Atkinson S (ed.) 2014. *The business book*, page 225.)

Ethical challenges of staff members' children at the school

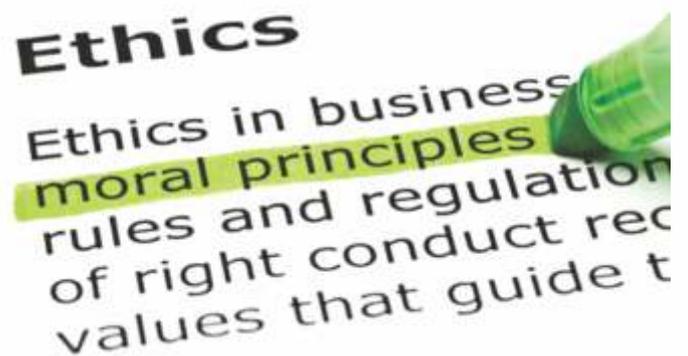
When parents send their children to the same school where they teach, it can be seen as a most positive statement. As professionals they recognise the quality of education being offered and they want to ensure that their own children receive it too. If the school is a fee-paying one, there are often school-fee discounts for teachers' children. Then there could be the convenience factor of the school being near to the family home. This makes getting the children to and from school that much easier.

Yet – if one isn't careful – there can be downsides if mom and dad are teachers at the same school. One teacher told me that his father was the principal at his high school. Dad never wanted to be seen as favouring his son in any way. As a result, his dad seemed to be tougher on him than any other boy at the school. The son felt that in this process he was denied awards and accolades that might have been given to him if he'd gone to another school. What he was (allegedly) ethically entitled to receive, was denied him.

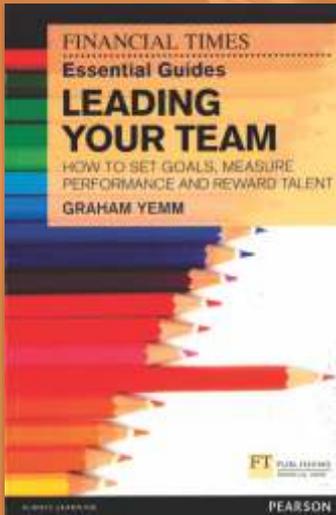
The other extreme is where a child is given school recognition and rewards not because of merit but because of their parents being on staff. (As an aside, there will be principals who've heard mutterings that a child has been given a prize because the parent is on the School Governing Body!) Even when a child deservedly receives an award it can be a bitter chalice if not managed well by the school.

Any accolade given to a child needs to be based on an ethical decision-making process. No child should be denied what is deserved simply because their parents are on staff. Likewise, no child should be given an iota more than is deserved because of one or both parents are on staff.

A way to help ensure fair ethical decisions is that the teacher-parent recuses himself entirely from every award selection meeting where the child could be a candidate. Let that ethical policy principle be known throughout the whole school community. Should the child then receive an accolade or award, everyone will know that it's based solely on merit.



BOOK REVIEW



Title: Leading your team
Author: Graham Yemm
Publisher: Pearson
Price: R206
ISBN 978-0-273-77242-2

Teaming up with your team

Although this book is focused on leaders in business, the similarities for schools are clear. Every teacher is a leader who leads a team of learners; every senior management team member leads a wider group of people. No business nor school is free of team members who initially don't 'fit in' or 'want to fit in'. Yet if professionally managed, every individual can become a valuable team member. Conflict happens in teams. This book shows how to deal effectively with these and other inevitable team challenges.

Graham Yemm, the author, has run a range of leadership, team building and team working programmes across the world. His academic knowledge of organisational climate and practical experience of working with teams, have resulted in this

splendid little book. There's an almost conversational style to his writing and the theoretical jargon is put across in an easy-to-grasp simplicity.

A picture – we are told – can tell a thousand words. This book has many pertinent charts and diagrams. They summarise aspects of teamwork which could be used as PowerPoint slides in staff development and learner leadership programmes.

The publishers, Pearson, have a byline for their books: 'Always learning.' This is definitely such a book for any team leader. As teachers, we are all team leaders. The book is a buy for anyone wanting a deeper understanding of what team leadership entails and how to be more skilful at it.



The publication of Quality Education News is made possible because of the goodwill of SAQI. Mr Paul Harding, the Managing Director, and the Board sponsor its publication as a social responsibility project. Most sincere thanks go to Mr Harding and the Board for their ongoing generous sponsorship.

Special thanks go as well to Mrs Vanessa du Toit and Mr Aubrey Jansen. Vanessa is the friendly and efficient secretary at Head Office who does many administrative tasks pertaining to QEN. Aubrey Jansen is the gifted graphic designer who puts such eye-catching colour and pizzazz around the printed word.

To our thousands (literally) of browsers and readers, many thanks for your comments and positivity. Many of you forward and/or print QEN on to folk who believe that Quality Education can be achieved. Of course it can! Very many thanks to you too.

Richard Hayward



SACE

South African Council for Educators

Towards Excellence in Education

Time for endorsement

In January 2016 the time will have arrived. It sees the start of the mandatory CPTD (Continuing Professional Teaching Development) system for every teacher. All teachers in South African schools will need to start accumulating 360 Professional Development (PD) endorsed-points over a cycle of three years. In previous years this ruling applied only to Heads of Department, Deputies and Principals.

SAQI has ten courses that are SACE-endorsed. The courses are run by Dr Richard Hayward, a former principal of two public schools. If you'd like more details, please contact him on 011 888 3262 or rpdhayward@yahoo.com. Alternatively, download the free issue 34 of Quality Education News and go to page 4. There's a brief description of each course. Download on either www.MySchool.co.za (on the home page click on 'Beneficiaries') or www.saqi.co.za (click on 'Quality Education').