Full Length Research Paper

Ethical codes expected of school administrators

Zulfu Demirtas

Faculty of Education, Firat University, 23119-Elazig, Turkey. E-mail: demirtaszulfu@gmail.com.

The aim of this study was to evaluate ethical codes used by school administrators in Turkey. The study assessed the perceptions and doubts of school administrators about the ethical codes they are expected to obey. The study used the qualitative research model. The study group was comprised of school administrators working in primary schools and high schools in Elazı and anlıurfa provinces of Turkey during the 2008 - 2009 academic years. The participants reported/developed a total of 34 codes. Among these codes, the highest recognition occurred in the "justice" and "honesty" ethical codes. These two ethical codes are followed by the "professional competence" and "objectivity" codes respectively. Fourteen of the developed ethical codes were developed/reported by only one participant.

Key words: Ethics, ethical codes, professional ethical codes, school administrators, school administrator's ethical codes

INTRODUCTION

Ethics is the study of moral acts and judgments (Peiper, 1999). The criteria used in moral assessment of behavior, individual attitudes and values, and how these criteria are formed pertain to ethics (Kuçuradi, 2009). Ethical issues, concerns, and dilemmas practitioners experience provides the basis for planning professional development activities.

Ethics concerns everyone. The globalization process has raised certain ethical debates in the fields of business, education, policy, media and health (Çelik, 1999: 87). School administrators and teachers are also involved in this discussion.

Ethics refers to systematic thinking, inquiry on morality and an engagement with questions about the moral life (Cevizci, 2002). From another perspective, ethics is defined as a branch of philosophy, addressing and providing information for analyzing problems of conflicting human values (Kuçuradi, 2009). Ethics is primarily concerned with those actions that fall within the sphere of humankind's morality. Many humans work throughout their lives in order to earn a living. This employment is sometimes called "professions", and the acts of people while engaged in these enterprises fall into the scope of ethics.

Since social work has always been a value-based profession, ethical issues have long been essential to social work education and practice round the world (Congress and McAuliffe, 2006). Professional ethics, which emerged along with the process professionalization, addresses the "right" and "wrong" actions pertinent to certain profession

(Aydın, 2003). Codes of conduct to be obeyed in a certain profession are considered as professional ethics, and these rules are meant to be universally binding on those professionals (Kuçuradi, 2009). Every profession needs ethical values and produces its own professional ethics (Demirta and Ersözlü, 2007; Peiper, 1999). Professional ethics is arranged and safeguarded by the members of a certain profession. It instructs members of the profession; forces them to adopt certain behaviors; restricts their personal tendencies; excludes incompetent and unprincipled members from the profession; regulates intra-profession competition and aims to safeguard service ideals (Demirta and Güne , 2002). In this context, professional ethics can be considered as the general principles and rules concerning what are right or wrong, or what is fair or unfair in professional actions, either in or outside of the workplace.

Like all other professions, education administration should also outline and obey its own ethical codes. Professional ethical codes developed for school administrators warn them to avoid using their positions for their personal interests (Haynes, 2002). School administrators should abide by high ethical criteria based in fully moral and conscientious responsibility to improve the quality of education. These leaders also should internalize their rules (Çelik, 1999).

Ethical codes serve as a mechanism that describes an organization's general value system and objectives; and guides for appropriateness of the decisions to ethical principles for the institutionalization of ethics within an

organization (Northcraft and Neale, 1990). These codes are expected to contribute to organizational development; and in turn, organizational development is expected to enhance the welfare level of the professionals. According to Himelboim and Limor (2008), ethical codes appeal to persons active in relevant field, calling on them not only to preserve appropriate standards but also to foster solidarity among adherents.

The aim of the present study was to evaluate ethical codes used by school administrators in Turkey. The study assessed the perceptions and doubts of school administrators about the ethical codes they are expected to obey.

METHODS

Model

This study used the qualitative research model. The qualitative research model requires the researcher to be flexible, to re-organize the research process according to the collected data and to follow an inductive approach through a study pattern and data analysis (Yildirim and im ek, 2006). In this framework, school administrators were asked to specify the professional ethics principles they have to obey and their perceptions about these principles. Professional ethics codes reported by the school administrators and their perceptions about these principles were evaluated after content analysis.

Study group

The study population was comprised of school administrators and vice- administrators (administrators) working in primary schools and high schools in Elazı and anlıurfa provinces of Turkey during the 2008 - 2009 academic year. The study group consisted of the administrators who volunteered to take part in the study. Within the scope of the study, a total of 65 interview forms appropriate for assessment were collected; 37 were from Elazı and 28 from anlıurfa. The collected forms were evaluated.

Data collection tool

A written interview form was used as data collection tool. The interview form, prepared in line with the aim of the study, asked the participants to write three "ethical codes a school administrator should obey" and to specify what should be understood from these codes. In case of inconsistency between the ethical code mentioned by the participants and the explanation of that ethical code, the codes were not included in the list. For example, this ethical code was not included in the list because of inconsistency between the code and its explanation: "Undertaking required controls: Required controls should be undertaken in all kinds of activities." Some participants wrote explanations without specifying any ethical code. These explanations were not taken into account. Examples of such useless explanations are: "The well-being of the school should be given priority among others", "The teachers should be motivated and teaching should be made qualified", "A school manager should build a good dialog with his personnel and should have a student-centered point of view."

Written interview forms were analyzed by two specialists and their approval were taken. The results of the study were shared with six participants from Elazı province and, by taking their approval

the study's internal validity was achieved. External validity of the study was attempted by way of a detailed description and transfer of the codes which were evaluated based on raw data. To the extent it was possible; no interpretations of the arising ethical codes were made. An external specialist controlled whether the researcher carried out the study in an objective and consistent manner with the study activities. This practice assured the study's internal reliability. In addition, raw data obtained from the study were presented to an external specialist. The results, comments and suggestions of the external specialist and the results, comments and suggestions arising from the study were analyzed for consistency. Therefore the study's external reliability was tested. Yıldırım and im ek (2006) reported that sharing the results and comments with participants and taking expert opinion can provide internal validity of a study, while detailed description of the results can provide external validity for a study. They further indicated that consistency analysis provides internal reliability and consent analysis provides a study's external reliability.

Data analysis and interpretation

The NVIVO7 Program was used in data analysis. Each of 65 written forms collected from the participants were given a number (1, 2, 3 …65) and each form was saved as a separate Microsoft word document format. The number of evaluated ethical codes varies between one and three. Among the ethical codes written in each form, only the ones suitable for evaluation were included in the list. Thus, a list of ethical codes was drawn. How many times each ethical code was expressed by the participants was identified. To indicate what should be understood from 20 ethical codes expressed by at least two participants, direct quotations were made. These quotations were commented and compared with literature data. Fourteen ethical codes that were expressed by a single participant were only included in the list; no quotation or comment was made for these.

RESULTS

Table 1 displays the findings about the professional ethics codes developed by school administrators and vice-administrators working in primary schools and high schools and a count of how many times these codes were expressed by respondents.

The data shown in Table 1 indicate that the participants reported/developed a total of 34 codes. Among these codes, the highest recognition occurred in the "justice" and "honesty" ethical codes. These two ethical codes are followed by the "professional competence" and "objectivity" codes respectively. Fourteen of the developed ethical codes were developed/reported by only one participant.

Justice

Among the ethical codes that should be obeyed by school administrators, the "justice" ethical code was indicated/expressed by a total of 17 participants. Four participants defined their codes as "Justice and equality." Some direct quotations that reveal the respondents' understanding of "justice" are given as follows:

Table 1. Ethical codes and number of references.

Ethical codes	References	Ethical codes	References
Justice	17	Patience	2
Honesty	17	Empathy	2
Professional Competence	13	Respecting difference	2
Objectivity	11	Ethical discipline	1
Equality	9	Reliability	1
Respect	8	Loyalty	1
Transparency	7	Sincerity	1
Consistency	6	Open to criticism	1
Tolerance	5	Democracy	1
Avoid being manipulative	4	Flexibility	1
To consider human precious	4	Trustworthy	1
Responsibility	4	Diligence	1
Determination	3	Incorruptibility	1
Professional commitment	3	Humanism	1
Avoiding discrimination	3	Conscience	1
Love	3	Resistance against illegal orders	1
Avoid prejudices	2	Authorizing the subordinates	1
Total	119	Grand Total	139

1. A school manager should be fair towards teachers and provide equal rights in organized activities.

2. A school manager should be at the same distance from everyone and should not have double standards.

3. A school administrator should be fair towards everyone, not act based on his emotions towards the people he manages.

4 …A school manager should always support his working personnel and should motivate the lazy personnel.

5. It refers to being equal to everyone no matter from which language or ethnicity, and not discriminating people.

6. As a requirement of objectivity in his relations, a school administrator should punish or reward everyone accordingly.

All respondents' perceptions of justice are not the same. However, in relation to the ethical codes school administrators are expected to obey, almost all of the participants emphasized that school administrators should be equal to their personnel without discriminating against religion, language, race, gender, region or religious sect. Furthermore, the ideals of avoiding discrimination and double standards, exemplifying an inclusive philosophy, not acting emotionally when resolving administrative issues, supporting and motivating the personnel, applying fair punishment and rewards also fall within the scope of the "justice" principle.

Honesty

Among the ethical codes that should be obeyed by school administrators, an ethical code of "honesty" was indicated/expressed by a total of 17 participants. Some of their direct quotations about "honesty" are given below:

1. A school administrator should be honest and should inspire trust in anyone.

2. We should be transparent in all our actions. The personnel should have a clear perception about us. We have to bring a reasonable explanation for each action."

3. We should be consistent in what we know, believe and are.

4. Being honest to people in material and spiritual aspects, acting fairly."

5. He should first be honest with himself, then with other personnel.

6. It is about believing that the welfare of the students is the basic value and performing all decisions and actions accordingly.

7. It means consistency between what education administrators say and do.

8. Your expressions to the personnel should be true, clear and understandable. Personnel should not suspect dishonesty in what the administrator says.

The participants specified different views about the code of honesty as it relates to school administrators. The following actions were considered within the scope of honest behavior: transparency in actions; avoiding pretentiousness or false affectations; maintaining the objective of providing for the good of the students; honesty in material and spiritual terms; intelligibility; righteous and sympathetic towards his personnel; consistent in his words and actions; being honest with himself

and others; and inspiring trust in everyone.

Professional competence

A total of 13 participants specified the code of professional competence. Below are some of views the respondents expressed about this code:

1. A school administrator should have necessary professional competence. He should know and follow the legal basis of his duties.
2. He should have a wide knowledge about the legislation and his profession.
3. He should have enough knowledge about human management and human resources.
4. A school administrator should manage his educational organization and should have enough knowledge."
4. He should pay attention to continuous development."
5. He should have a complete personal development. He should have a well-established personality that is open to new ideas."
6. A school administrator should continuously renew himself and should inspire this approach to others."
7. It refers to having necessary professional experience. A school manager should be able to produce solutions to the problems in favor of the organization and the personnel.

The participants emphasized that, within the scope of a "professional competence" ethical code, a school manager should have a wide knowledge about the legislation and should be aware of the legal basis of his duties.

In addition, the following concepts were also considered within the scope of professional competence: having enough knowledge about human resources management; paying attention to continuous development; personally developing him and inspiring his subordinates to do likewise; being open to new concepts; being capable of producing solutions that favor the organization and its personnel.

Objectivity

Among the ethical codes that should be followed by school administrators, "objectivity" was indicated/ expressed by a total of 11 respondents. Here we quote some ideas that the participants understand about "objectivity":

1. "A manager should be tolerant, objective, honest and equal to all personnel. He should be fair and right."
2. "Gender, opinion, personality traits should not change our views about the teachers and students."
3. "It refers to adopting an objective, unprejudiced approach towards the teachers, parents and students."

4. "A school manager should be objective with his personnel irrespective of their language, religion, religious sect or character. If he should support a party, He should support those who fulfill their duties best."
5. "A school administrator should play no favorites should set this attitude as a principle in the decision-making process."

Within the scope of a code of "objectivity", school administrators are expected to treat the parents, students and teachers in an impartial and fair manner without making gender, status, religion, language or ethnic discrimination.

Respect

A total of eight participants reported "respect" as an ethical code. One of the participants reported this code as "love and respect". The respondents commented on their expectations from a respectful school administrator:

1. "It starts with self-respect of the administrator and continues with reflecting this respect to his subordinates."
2. "… A school administrator should be tolerant in his actions and should not treat his employees as objects. He should be aware of their qualities. . . ."
3. "Empathy is one of the indispensable principles of human relations. Human relations lay the basis of professional ethics. Professional ethics is the general spiritual rules that a person should adopt in his relations with other people."
4. "It means respecting the ideologies, opinions and differences he does not personally adopt."

School administrators are expected to treat their sub-ordinates as individual human beings under the ethical code of "respect".

To respect others, the administrators should first have self-respect. Finally, the administrators are expected to respect ideologies, opinions and differences they do not subscribe to personally.

Transparency

A total of seven participants reported the ethical code of "transparency". Transparency is rated by some of the respondents as shown in these quotations:

1. "Education administrators should be transparent towards the teachers and students; they should make their employees aware of what happens at school."
2. "Instead of secretly performing actions, a school administrator should take actions after discussing with his personnel."
3. "A school administrator should be transparent in all actions he performs at school."

Under the code of transparency, the school administrators are expected to explain all their actions to the people who are affected by those actions. It was emphasized that the actions which are concealed from school personnel can be considered with suspicious. The administrators should take these views into account.

Consistency

"Consistency" was reported as an ethical code by six participants. Some respondents' views about what they expect from school administrators under this ethical code are given below:

1. "An administrator is the representative of the organization for which he works. He is not allowed to act in such a way to humiliate his organization."
2. "A school administrator should be consistent in his decisions."
3. "A school administrator should not change his behaviors according to the day, person or conditions."
4. "His words and actions should be consistent; rather than using words, he should explain using his actions."
5. "A school administrator should be consistent and should form future in line with this approach."

School administrators are expected to take consistent decisions; avoid performing different actions at different times and for different people or conditions; to have consistent actions and words. Respondents considered that the consistency of school administrators will help to create a positive image about the school.

Tolerance

"Tolerance" was reported as an ethical code by five participants. Some respondents' views about what they expect from school administrators under this ethical code are given below:

1. "An administrator must be constructive and tolerant against problems"
2. "An administrator must give importance to tolerance in relations between staff at the same time staff should be protected in order to maintain authority."
3. "Tolerance, meet gracefully some actions that can be tolerate."

Within the scope of a code of "tolerance", school administrators are expected to be constructive and broadminded. Administrators are expected to tolerate some slight imperfections that against to themselves and the organization.

Equality

This code was reported by nine respondents. A total of

four participants reported this code as "justice and equality" instead of solely "equality." Since these views were reported under the "justice" section, only five responses were listed under the code of "equality." Direct quotations from the participants are as follows:

1. "…The administrator should treat his personnel equally; in other words, the reaction to a certain behavior (good or bad) should have a precedent. It should not vary according to the person involved."
2. "A school administrator should treat all teachers equally."
3. "A school administrator should treat all employees at school equally."
4. "An education administrator should be objective. He should be unbiased towards each employee working in his organization."
5. "The administrator should not consider ideology, religious sects, race or colors of the employees in decision-making."

School administrators are expected to remain impartial without making ideological, opinion, religious, race and color discrimination. In this context, equality is expected as the standard in all decisions and applications.

Avoid being manipulative

Four participants responded that, for the sake of ethics, school administrators should "Avoid being manipulative". The following are some explanations:

1. "An education administrator should work for the interest of the organization and should not think of his own interests."
2. "It means refraining from using the opportunities of the organization for his personal affairs."
3. "A school administrator should use public resources for the good of the public, not for his personal interests."
4. "A school administrator observes the interests of the school and the employees; he believes that his own interests are of secondary importance."

School administrators are expected to give priority to the interests of the school and the students above their own interests. It was emphasized that all decisions should observe the interests of the students and the personnel.

Responsibility

The ethical code of "responsibility" was reported by a total of four participants. For this code's application to school administration, respondents remarked:

1. "It refers to being aware of his responsibility and performing all actions accordingly."
2. "It means having necessary professional responsibility".

3. "It refers to having his responsibilities, having enough knowledge and acting accordingly."
"It refers to having required duty awareness in relation to his position."

The administrator's awareness of her responsibility requires a sufficient degree of knowledge. A school administrator having a sufficient degree of knowledge is expected to have a high conceptual competence and thus a high degree of administrative skill for organizational functioning.

To consider human precious

The ethical code of giving human life to value is developed by four participants. Participants are expressed their opinions for the code as follows:

1. "Each staff is a value and their opinions are valuable according to their own. People want to see value."
2. "Education's fundamental goal should be to take into account of human values; human values must be given utmost importance"
3. "An administrator should not be unreachable; he should give value to persons under his order, and also orally should honor them"
4. "They protect and support citizenship and human rights of all individuals as needed."

Participants are expecting school administrator's to give value to all people and to provide behaviors to feel themselves valued, in the context of his ethical code of giving value to human.

Avoiding discrimination

The ethical code of "avoiding discrimination" was reported by three participants. The expectations of the participants from school administrators within the scope of this code were as follows:

1. "A school administrator does not discriminate amongst his personnel. He cannot be good to a teacher and bad to another. He has to be equal."
2. "A school administrator should not discriminate between his personnel. Local-foreigner, male-female, etc."

The school administrators are expected to avoid discriminating between their personnel as part of their ethical code.

Determination

The ethical code of "determination" was reported by a total of three participants. These respondents said:

1 "A school administrator should consider the views of his staff; however, after making a decision on a certain subject, he should not be influenced by external opinions."
2. "An administrator should directly reach a conclusion on the decided matters, without chattering."
3. "A school administrator should determine which work to perform and should stand behind the actions he will perform."

Within the ethical code of "determination", school administrators are expected to take reasonable decisions in fulfilling the objectives of the school and be consistent in fulfilling these decisions. Personnel participation in the decision-making process is considered a significant contributor towards a sound decision.

Professional commitment

The administrator's "professional commitment" was reported by three participants as a necessary ethical code. These three offered the following explanations of professional commitment:

"An education administrator should first be committed to his profession; he should love his profession. A person who loves and is committed to his profession makes any sacrifice to safeguard professional integrity and to improve his profession."
"A school administrator should not abandon his position due to arbitrary reasons."
"It refers to safeguarding professional integrity and being satisfied with his profession. Incompetent administrators or the ones who ignore their positions should be suspended from the profession."

Within the scope of a "professional commitment" ethical code, school administrators are expected to love their professions, display professional sensitivity and improve their professional standards. In addition, the school manager is expected to take necessary steps to suspend the personnel who neglect professional integrity. Quitting their positions without any obligation is not considered a righteous act.

Love

The ethical code of "love" was reported by three participants. One of the participants reported this code as Love and respect". Respondents elaborated on what it "means to be an ethically loving administrator:

1. "A school manager should love people and the community he lives in. He should know how to handle the society with love and should try to inspire this view in others."
2. "Love is one of the main factors in professional ethics.

Everything starts with love."
3. "A school manager should build reciprocal love and respect in any condition."

Within the scope of "love" as an ethical code, the school administrators are expected to love humans and the society and to inspire others to this ideal.

Empathy

The ethical code of empathy was reported by two participants. The expectations of the participants within the scope of this code were as follows:

"A school manager should be able to perceive events from the point of view of other people, to understand their feelings and thoughts."
"A school manager should develop empathy for each of his subordinates. Each person has a different psychological, social and emotional world."

Within the ethical code of "empathy" school administrators are expected to have a capability of making empathy to understand the feelings and views of his personnel. Having a capability of understanding the inner world of individuals having different psychological, social and emotional characteristics seems to be important for the manager.

Respecting difference

The ethical code of "respecting difference" was reported by two participants. The expectations of the participants from the administrators within the scope of this code are as follows:

"A school administrator should take the opinions or behaviors of his personnel into account; he should concentrate on the process and the outcome."
"Cultural differences between the people in the East and West should not be ignored. Therefore, obtained information should have a national or moral identity."

The school administrators are expected to value their personnel and respect their differences under the ethical code of "respecting difference."

Avoiding prejudices

Two respondents reported that the administrator should "avoid prejudices". This pair said:

1. "An education administrator should not be prejudiced against his personnel and should approach them with good intentions."

2. "An education administrator should not be prejudiced."

Within the scope of the ethical code of avoiding prejudices, school administrators are expected to have good intentions towards their personnel and should not be prejudiced.

Patience

The ethical code of "patience" was reported by two participants. Within the scope of this code, the respondents held expectations of school administrators as follows:

"It refers to having a patient personality, which avoids considering events from a narrow point of view despite all negative situations."
"It refers to being patient in all matters until reaching the results and continuing activities without feeling tired or bored."

Ethical school administrators were expected to be patient in all negative situations and to have a broad conceptual competence. This conceptual competence is expected to enable them to develop a realistic point of view.

Other ethical codes

Apart from the 20 ethical codes mentioned above, a single respondent identified another 14 ethical codes. The fact that each of these codes was reported by one participant was considered as evidence demonstrating that these codes are not of general consensus. However, the fact that these ethical codes were reported only by one participant does not mean that they are not ethical codes or they cannot be considered as ethical codes. These codes include: "ethical discipline", "diligence", "democracy", "open to criticism" "flexibility", "reliability", "humanism", "incorruptibility", "loyalty", "sincerity", "trustworthy", "conscience", "resistance against illegal orders", "authorizing the subordinates".

DISCUSSION

The aim of this study was to determine the ethical codes school administrators should have and to determine how these codes were perceived by school administrators. The study used a qualitative research pattern. The study group consisted of a total of 65 administrators serving in primary schools and high schools in Elazı and anlıurfa provinces.
   A review of the literature contains ethical codes of justice, honesty, respect, love, trust, professional responsibility, professional competence, respecting human rights, organizational commitment, keeping his word, respecting the truth and humans, fairness, rejecting unfairness,

righteousness, objectivity, fulfilling duties and responsibilities (Örenel, 2005; Aydın, 2003; güden, 2007). In addition, almost all of the studies carried out on learning, educational research, management and organizational development contain ethical codes of "respecting human rights and integrity", "competence and professional development", "righteousness/honesty" and "professional responsibility (Russ-Eft and Hatcher, 2003).

The participants wrote three ethical codes they expect a school manager to have and explained what they understood from these codes. On the 65 interview forms, a total of 34 different ethical codes were reported. A total of 20 ethical codes were reported by at least two participants; 14 ethical codes were reported by a single participant. The ethical codes reported by at least two participants were consistent with the ethical codes in the literature. Among these ethical codes, "justice" and "honesty" were reported by the highest number of participants. These were followed by "professional competence" and "objectivity" codes respectively. Of the developed ethical codes, fourteen were developed/ reported by only one participant.

Justice requires being fair and impartial towards every one without discriminating on the basis of religion, language, race, gender, region and religious sect among the personnel. Honesty requires that the administrator "be herself", inspire trust in everyone, avoid lies, be clear and consistent. Professional competence requires having enough knowledge about legal arrangements, development and effective utilization of human resources, self-development, being open to newness, and having the capability to solve problems. Objectiveness requires being equal, objective and fair to parents, students and teachers without discriminating because of gender, status, religion, language or ethnical origin. Equality requires an unbiased approach to everyone without discrimination based on gender, religion, race and color. *Respect* requires considering people as humans rather than objects; and to respect all ideologies, opinions and differences. Transparency requires performing all actions in a transparent manner, without concealing anything, and requires awareness of the probability that the actions concealed from the school community will be regarded with suspicion. Consistency requires making consistent decisions, avoiding inconsistent actions and applying consistent words and actions. Tolerance requires being constructive and broadminded. Avoiding being manipulative requires giving priority to the interests of the school and personnel above personal interests, and observing the interests of the students and the personnel in all decisions. Responsibility requires being aware of his responsibilities and this awareness requires having enough knowledge, skills and competence. To consider human precious requires particularly valuing behaviors against employees in the subordinate position become important. Avoiding discrimination requires not

discriminating between the personnel based on differences such as being local-foreigners, male-female or other characteristics. Determination requires making sound decisions for realizing the objectives of the school. Professional commitment requires loving his profession, having professional sensitivity, improving professional standards and making attempts to suspend the incompetent personnel from the profession. Love requires loving people and the society and inspiring this love to in people. Empathy requires having the capability of considering the events from the perspectives of the personnel in order to understand their emotions and opinions; being able to understand the inner world of the people having different psychological, social and emotional characteristics. Respecting differences requires valuing and respecting all of the personnel despite any differences. Avoiding prejudices requires being well-intentioned towards the personnel and having no prejudices. Patience requires having the capability of patience and a broad conceptual capability despite all kinds of difficulties.

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