

Research Article

ETHICAL LEADERSHIP PRACTICES OF OUTSTANDING FILIPINO SCHOOL HEADS

Received: August 9, 2021

Revised: September 20, 2021

Accepted: October 1, 2021

Cherrylen Villadiego¹ and Inero Ancho^{2*}

¹Department of Education, Philippines

²Philippine Normal University, Philippines

*Corresponding Author, E-mail: ancho.iv@pnu.edu.ph

Abstract

The present study utilized the phenomenological method of research to look at the narratives of Gawad Ginintuang Leon Awardees for Outstanding School Heads have learned and reflect on how they felt about the phenomenon. Through a validated semi-structured interview guide, the ethical leadership practices of four outstanding school heads were explored. In the pillar of model integrity and commitment, the awardees manifested common ethical leadership practices through modeling respect, observing honesty in their dealings, dedication to their profession, enthusiasm in delivering services and performing excellently. In the context of nurturing encouraging environment, the awardees attested common ethical leadership practices through establishing a harmonious relationship, sensitivity to the needs of others, flexibility, and having humane resolutions to issues/conflicts, employing effective communication and advocate professional growth. Under the pillar of upholding trust and fair treatment, the recipients showed common ethical leadership practices like being a role model, establishing fair selection, and promotion systems, good feedbacking system, promoting equality and equal opportunity and good financial management. Lastly, in support of encouraging inclusive involvement and transparency, the awardees shared common goals, collaborative planning, and delegation of tasks, paying attention to the concerns of others, and establishing a strong partnership with stakeholders. This study would help the school and community come up with the ideal qualities of a Gawad Ginintuang Leon Awardee that shall help them come up with the best practices, and deal with challenges with creativity leading to a better leader quality. This study could also serve as a basic skeleton for the school and community in qualifying Gawad Ginintuang Leon Awardees for Outstanding School Heads showcasing best practices, creativity, and values of ethical leadership.

Keywords: Awardees, Ethical Leadership, Filipino, Practices, School Head

Introduction

This 21st century, school leadership has become more challenging and equally demanding for school heads. Schools at present are more difficult to handle because of the variety of innovations, problems, threats and increasing goals. In recent years, many countries around the world, including the Philippines, have paid attention to education and their improvement. The goal of these countries, particularly, the Philippines, is to be globally competitive in terms of the education system that would be implemented in their places to help serve their people. McCarthy (2013) stated that governments put demands on the schools to produce graduates who can certainly adapt to the 21st century challenges in the world of work.

Everyday, ethical dilemmas are being resolved by school heads. The society has come to believe that school heads will make ethical choices for the greater good and their actions will be driven by a dedication to moral and academic excellence (Hollenbach, 1989). According to Ciulla (1998), ethics and honesty is the heart of leadership, and should be taken seriously for the success and long-term survival of an organization. Aydin et al. (2013) cited that it should be emphasized that school heads must become ethical leaders; ethical in a sense that they must possess esteemed ethical values.

Klein (2006) stated that the field of education is left behind by the medical and human services sectors, which require school heads and teachers to take professional ethics courses. Failure to provide opportunities for the school heads to acquire such competence of ethics is a failure to serve the children (Shapiro & Stefkovich, 2005). Therefore, as a discipline, the school heads have a moral obligation to educate prospective managers to be able to follow the values, laws, morals and virtues associated with the creation of ethical schools.

School heads from public schools here in the Philippines are one of those “Lingkod Bayanis” Civil Service Commission – Gawing Lingkod Bayani and Bawat Kawani). They ought to exhibit high ethical standards in leading their people. It is also evident that school heads are the key leaders in the educational system. They are accountable for carrying out the school’s vision and mission.

Furthermore, other countries have their own ethical standards that apply to all their government employees. In the United States, The Office of Government Ethics has developed Standards of Conduct for all the federal employees. Each federal employee should be familiar with their responsibilities under these regulations and Federal conflict of interest laws. All rules are derived from the following fourteen principles of ethical conduct in Executive Order 12731.

In a particular city schools division, an annual recognition is given to administrators and teachers who have served the youth with exemplary competence and dedication. The office expresses gratitude for the efforts of schools whose excellent performances of teachers, instructional leaders, and non-teaching personnel who did exemplary performance are recognized. Also, if the administrators, supervisors, and teachers want to become an awardee they must have brought honor and prestige to teaching profession through unquestioned morality, integrity and conscientiousness as evidenced of respect and high regards of his/her teachers, students, peers, superiors and subordinates and the community. As well, an outstanding performance, achievements in professional and civic endeavors aside from school. Hence, all of these efforts shall be

recognized in the program of Gawad Ginintuang Leon Award. This program comprises three stages specifically: Stage 1 is for Screening and Shortlisting Period involving evaluation of the nomination write-ups. Stage 2 is for Onsite Validation of Qualified Nominees from Stage 1. Lastly, Stage 3 is for the Final Panel Interview of Qualified Nominees from Stage 2.

The criteria for the Gawad Ginintuang Leon are same as those other giving bodies all over the country. These criteria are anchored on the Civil Service Commission Program on Awards and Incentives for Service Excellence (PRAISE) and DepEd Order No. 9, series of 2002 re: Establishing PRAISE in Department of Education. The nominees were evaluated based on the following criteria: (1) Performance Rating of the Office Performance Commitment and Review (OPCRF) – 30 Points. This is a Results-Based Performance Management System. It is a shared undertaking between the superior and the employee that allows an open discussion of job expectations, Key Results Areas, Objectives and how these align to overall departmental goals. It provides a venue for agreement on standards of performance and behaviors which lead to professional and personal growth in the organization; (2) Significant Accomplishment/s – 15 Points. Project or work accomplished, number of strategies or activities done which have significantly impacted the performance of the school, number of accomplished work or projects that benefited the community. The role of TEA Governance must be highlighted; (3) Impact of Accomplishments – 25 Points. Scope or replicability of the program/project/activity, number of people/office benefited, and transactions facilitated, level of attainment per identified performance indicator; (4) Innovation – 20 Points. Original, creative programs, projects, activities made in the last three years in connection to the award category and the extent to which it is being used, and the results; number of persons who benefited; scope/replicability of the innovation, level of attainment per identified performance indicator. The role of TEA Governance must be highlighted. Lastly, (5) Awards and Membership – 10 Points. Major awards or citations received relevant to the category and active membership in a reputable professional organization.

Literature Review

The heart of leadership refers to what an individual believes, values, dreams about and, is committed to; it is the individual's personal vision (Sergiovanni, 2005). Leadership necessitates action and strategies that derive from our own vision, experience, and reflective abilities which are mental processes – referring to the head in this case. However, leadership is not a term for oneself, but followers should rightly understand it (Sharma, 2014).

Northouse (2010) mentioned that leadership is a mechanism by which a person controls a group of individuals in order to achieve a common objective. Individual's expectation of a good leader is based on what these leaders say and do; that is, expectations are based on an individual's direct or indirect experience with the actions of the leader. One key element of successful leadership is to promote a shared vision, which is a major element of transformation in the process of alignment and participation of the whole community (Lukas et al., 2007).

In the same way, ethical leadership can be described as the demonstration of normatively acceptable behavior through personal acts and interpersonal relationships and the encouragement of such behavior to

followers through bidirectional contact, strengthening and decision-making (Brown et al., 2005). More precisely, this description finds a leader who is ethical, moral and compassionate, and their actions will be advantageous for all stakeholders including followers, organization and society (Hartog, 2015).

Ethical leadership is the implicit and explicit promotion of desirable ethical actions for self and followers through efforts regulated by rules and principles that promote learning inspiration, healthy optimism and unity of intent to uphold the values of empowerment, service to others, respect for human rights, reform for betterment and fulfilling duties towards society, future generations, environment and its sustainability (Shakeel et al., 2016). Utilizing ethical leadership skills, school heads elucidate the school works and what standards are required for these works. They use a fair award system according to employee's success and develop processes for success. These outcomes indicate that ethical leadership skills of school heads can uphold a creative culture in schools.

Leaders are the main agents of change in enhancing the efficiency of their organization. Via their direction and monitoring they seek to evoke improvement. Sousa (2015) stated that leaders need to figure out where they want the company to go and how they are going to get it there. Nevertheless, there is a need for such flexibility in leadership practices to shift from hierarchical approaches to styles of leadership that promotes shared governance and encourages staff empowerment (Williamson, 2005). Thus, good leadership is not merely the product of achieving a role, but rather of having the knowledge and understanding of appropriate leadership skills along with the personal capacity to successfully execute those skills (Sharma et al., 2012). Additionally, leadership is a process of directly influencing individuals' activities or a group of people in efforts to achieve goals. It involves a force which initiates actions in followers and leaders alike (Bush, 2008). As stated by Miller et al. (2007) defined leadership as the activity of influencing others by willingly striving for group goals. Leadership also is a method of shaping the goal setting and achievement behavior of an organized community. The most successful leaders also blend these with other core attributes of gratitude, humility, and caring leadership (Baker, 2013).

To become a good leader, a leader must have an experience, high commitment to the organization, knowledge, and high-patience in carrying out its duties (Ameen et al., 2018). Leadership and how it is understood, described and enacted make it a very personal undertaking. Kruse (2013) has characterized leadership as a process of social influence that extends others' efforts to accomplish goals and objectives. Ward (2020) described leadership as an art of motivating a group of people to take action towards a common goal. In the same vein Ameen and Ahmad (2012) depicted leadership as an incomparable capability of individual characteristics.

As envisioned by McCray et al. (2012), ethical leaders pay an exceptional consideration in building the capacity of their followers for the purpose of sustainability. Ethics in school leadership is imperative in a context of increasing performance-driven accountability (Ehrich et al., 2015). Hegarty and Moccia (2018) identifies ethical leadership components and matches them to the leadership style that incorporates them. These are gratitude, humility, justice, mercy and compassion, prudence and objectivity, magnanimity and lastly,

integrity and resilience. It is known that giving an excellent education in schools is vital for a community to improve and flourish.

Methodology

The study utilized the phenomenological method of research study. It was selected to look at what the Gawad Ginintuang Leon Awardees for Outstanding School Heads have learned and reflect on how they felt about the phenomenon. The phenomenological research format allowed the shared characteristics of a group's lived experiences. Hence, this research design aims to arrive at a definition of the essence of the phenomenon in question (Creswell, 2008).

Table 1 Summary of the Profile of the Participants

Profile	Participant 1 (P1)	Participant 2 (P2)	Participant 3 (P3)	Participant 4 (P4)
Position	Principal II	Principal II	Principal II	Principal III
Years in Service as Public School Teacher	15 years	23 years	13 years	20 years
Years in Service as Public School Head	12 years	12 years	10 years	5 years
Highest Educational Attainment	With units of Master of Arts in Educational Management	Master of Arts in Education With Specialization in Educational Management	Doctor of Education With Specialization in Educational Management	Doctor of Education With Specialization in Educational Management

Table 1 presents the profile of the participants. For this study, the researchers considered it professionally sound to target a specific group, particularly the awardees of the 2017, 2018, and 2019 Gawad Ginintuang Leon for the Outstanding School Heads as Participants. The researchers utilized purposive sampling. Etikan et al. (2016) described this as a participant's deliberate choice because of the qualities that the participant possesses. It is a non-random strategy that does not require a fixed number of participants or underlying theories.

The instrument used in this study was the validated semi-structured interview guide, which contains several questions regarding the ethical leadership practices of the outstanding school heads. The validation of semi-structured interview guides is considered as the basis for the revisions of the tools before administering them to the participants. The researchers administered the semi-structured interview to the 2017, 2018, and

2019 Outstanding School Heads of the schools city division under study. The researchers considered gender sensitivity in writing the instrument to make it free from any form of biases. It was carefully administered to the four selected Outstanding School Heads as it was mentioned.

The data collection procedure of this study included six phases such as: Phase 1- Approval to conduct the study from the schools city division; Phase 2- Securing a letter of consent for participants; and Phase 3- Interview, observation and document analysis based on the data gathered from the school participants.

Though there are several ways of qualitative data analysis, in this study, the five-step analysis introduced by Bhandari was used. (1) Preparation and organization of data. The narratives from the recorded interview were transcribed; (2) Review and exploration of data. The transcribed text was examined several times for patterns or repeated ideas that emerge; (3) Development of a data coding system. Based on your initial ideas, a set of codes were established to categorize data; (4) Assigning codes to the data. The participants' responses were individually reviewed several times and tagged with codes. As the data is repeatedly examined, new codes are added to the inventory if necessary; (5) Identification of recurring themes. After the codes were finalized, these were classified thematically, the codes were linked together into cohesive, overarching themes.

Results and Discussion

This section presents the results and findings based on the problems stated. The Outstanding School Heads participants cited and described their own perceptions and experiences about their manifestations of ethical leadership practices during the in-depth interviews.

Modeling Integrity and Commitment

The outstanding school heads consider their role for transformative contributions given the leadership platform and authority to introduce significant developments that will serve the best interest of their subordinates and honor their school. This is the noble internalization of their role as school heads, keeping their integrity and commitment in doing their part as leaders even during times of discouragements and low points in their leadership experiences.

P1 cited, *“There should be equal treatment to both social status, whether they are the top level or low level. Being a role model and understanding the concerns of the people they serve were also identified as ways of showing respect.”*

P2 understands that she is a servant leader and protecting her position would allow her to gain people's respect in return. P2 stated that her position should not in any case be used for power play or control. She expressed her belief in the dictum respect begets respect.

P2 further exclaimed, *“As leaders it is important to “Walk the Talk”.... Respect is earned; so in my opinion, I should lead by example...”*

Another way to show respect according to P3 is to hear the side of their subordinates and respond to their needs accordingly.

P3 mentioned, *“Ah ok, I have said I listen to my teachers depending upon the issues Then after that I give advice. I let them feel that they are being taken care of by me, because you know respect begets respect.”*

Along with modeling integrity are virtues and values lived by the awardees like respect, honesty, dedication among others.

P4 stated that she shows respect by recognizing their individuality.

P4 stated, *“I do not look at people on their lapses but instead I see the positives in them”, she said. She also underscored that she is an advocate of equality and equity.”*

In modeling integrity, they recognize the importance of being particular with observing honesty as a virtue. Though it is a reality that you can never please everybody. P1 was quoted:

P1 stated, *“I think this is important because people will still doubt other people’s activity...it’s a culture in the system.”*

P2 insists that one needs to persist to uphold the value of honesty for they believe as they continue to uphold this virtue, it will eventually permeate people and be part of their value system as well.

P2 explained, *“You need to start a culture of honesty because this culture develops as the system progresses.”*

Proven with her experience that indeed it is possible. She said that though you may not influence everybody but with the few people that gave their trust, this is already a great accomplishment so their encouragement is never to give up practicing honesty until you have done something to break the poor cultures.

Further, P2 exclaimed that “honesty is still the best policy”. And that as a leader one must take that principle as an accountability in fulfilling one's duty as a leader.

P2 added, *“They should see this in me as a leader; worthy of trust because I am honest.”*

The virtue of honesty can also be best illustrated in the way they handle financial matters both personally and professionally. They see money issues as a great deterring factor in building integrity, thus, they cautiously handle financial matters through honesty.

Another notable practice of the awardees is their commitment. Along with commitment, the awardees show immense dedication in the performance of their role. This virtue is reflected through their selflessness - doing their tasks for call of duty and not for sheer recognition.

P1 mentioned, *“I do not work for promotion; I will accomplish my assigned task whether people appreciate it or not.”*

Moreover, dedication for P2 means doing tasks willingly even if she will need to make sacrifices. For her, they must stay committed to do their tasks wholeheartedly. Dedication according to her should be manifested and evident in their dealings with people and in how they perform their tasks.

P2 mentioned, *“It is my duty to perform my task with all my heart because I committed to do it in an organized and excellent manner; this is why I am doing all I can to do my duties”*

as a principal of the school. Teaching and non-teaching staff should sense how dedicated a teacher is.”

Their dedication is not just a matter of doing their task but goes beyond- to leading by example, mentoring and giving technical assistance to their teachers. Their dedication to their profession is shown in their commitment to train their teachers and develop them as future leaders.

P3 shared, *“Teach them how to do it; like doing “explicit-teaching”. When you delegate tasks make sure that you have already taught them, monitored and evaluated them, then give them technical assistance too. That is how I train leaders like me. I truly develop leaders.”*

Moreover, it is inspiring to feel enthusiasm alongside commitment in the dispatch of their leadership role. Enthusiasm is a natural part of their system as school heads as they perform their tasks. P1 said that she serves beyond what is expected of her.

P2 exclaimed that she willingly does her duty to the best she can. She believes that she needs to persevere to fulfill her duty as the school principal for the smooth operation of the school.

P2 as quoted states, *“The benefits that I should be giving to all the teaching personnel and non-teaching personnel.”*

Her driving force according to P2 is in fulfilling her task of being able to serve her subordinates. Their modeling of values and virtues like respect, honesty, dedication, enthusiasm, quest for excellence and perseverance are evident practices of integrity and commitment.

Nurture Encouraging Environment

The outstanding school heads strongly believed that a harmonious relationship among their subordinates and all other stakeholders is a strong determinant to their professional and personal success along with the success of their subordinates and clientele and the school in general. The outstanding school heads' priority is the welfare of people and not their personal gain. They see to it that they deal with issues and concerns in a way that is humane and uplifting to parties concerned.

The outstanding school heads also pay close attention to maintaining a harmonious relationship to all the groups of people they work with and come into contact within the discharge of their duty as a school head. From their superiors, teachers, pupils, partners and other stakeholders. It is very clear to them that the success of their leadership is very much reliant on how they deal with people.

For their superiors, respect is essential in establishing a harmonious relationship. They communicate respect through obedience and compliance to directives.

P1 claimed, *“I am obedient especially to my superior and my principle in life is to comply first before complaining; we do not lose if we do this; it is for our own goodness anyway.”*

P2 shared the same view saying, *“I maintain my harmonious relationship with them by submitting their requirements on time; reports at and of course.”*

Also, being open to their concerns is another way to get connected with their superiors.

P3 shared, *“I am open to them, and I make them feel comfortable as we confer. I also make them feel their worth by telling them that our goals will be fulfilled with their help.”*

Though admittedly there is no perfect formula to a harmonious relationship for conflicts are inevitable due to diversity, they somehow have their rule of thumbs to at least minimize conflicts especially among colleagues and subordinates. Being genuine, being warm and being loving to them amid misunderstandings and differences. Treating them as a family and not merely a subordinate, treating them fairly, are other strategies mentioned. Motivating them to grow. These strategies might not work in all cases but they believe they can somehow help avoid tensions and conflicts.

P1 claimed, *“There is no particular formula but the rule of the thumb; what they see in me is what they get. You cannot please everybody; whatever you wish to show is never enough. My attachment – loving the school and my fellow-workers is genuine. I always smile - these maybe the reasons why I do not encounter many problems; but not everybody will like you – there will always be somebody out there who does not like, and it is inevitable.”*

P2 explained, *“I do not treat my teachers as my subordinate; if you do otherwise, this would create a conflict. I treat them fairly and everybody is given equal opportunity - show their talents and skills. One thing I am proud of is my way in motivating my teachers, when motivated, it will eventually lead to promotion.”*

Findings further underscore the significance of observing effective communication in their function as school heads.

P2 stated, *“Communication is very important, without it, we misconstrue each other. In employing communication, we prioritize our staff and teachers.”*

Believing in the importance of proper communication, they are conscious and careful with their behaviors and actions in their communication dealings.

As to proper communication, they believe that there are many ways of communication but one needs to be discerning on how to deliver one's message. And that they must look into a strategic way of doing so. P1 believes that though there are formal channels and protocols set in the delivery of communication like memos and letters, a more personal approach like face to face or casual conversation is a more sincere way of communicating to people. She further explained that there are nonverbal signals that can break the meaning of the message if we just rely on social media in sending messages. She sighted that paralanguage like tone and how you verbally deliver the message is very significant to convey your message. This strategy does not only convey the literal meaning of the message but it also conveys sincerity and care making the communication process more effective.

P1 explained, *“To be effective in communication, we better talk to people concerned in person; messenger, text are far different as means of communication.”*

Sensitivity to the needs of others is another way of maintaining a harmonious relationship. Sensitivity to them means responding to the personal and professional issues and concerns of their subordinates and clienteles. Doing so expresses genuine concern and care for them. P1 explains that considering your subordinates is a way to show concern. P1 shared her practice and said that in cases of personal emergencies

she would excuse her subordinates and take the responsibility to find somebody to take over the class. While she is strict in terms of handling classes, family concerns should be prioritized according to her.

P1 explained, *“I am strict at work because we cannot just leave those children that way, but if family matters butt in like your child is sick, or your parent is undergoing chemo-therapy, I allow them to prioritize their families, and make way that someone will substitute for them. I allow them to go home in cases like this one.”*

P1 also believes that showing genuine concern to her teachers will eventually lead them to be sincere in their teaching profession.

P1 said, *“Your concern for others, make them feel you empathize with them. They will feel that your presence at any moment...They feel that they can run to you at any moment. They are not shy to ask for my assistance.”*

Striking observation common among the awardees as found in this study in dealing with issues is their loving correction instead of punishment. They openly communicate and reflect on the issues and patiently coach or mentor their subordinates to mediate and resolve issues.

Though they have the conviction that people should take accountability for their actions, findings reveal that the awardees humanely act with these issues. They do not pin down the person nor emphasize the mistake but instead focus on how the issue is resolved. This reinforces their value for people. They resort to conferencing and dialogue with their subordinates. In these dialogues, they discuss consequences of the issue and let the person concerned reflect on his/her action. Or they offer technical assistance and do coaching and mentoring should there be necessity.

P2 stated, *“Be sure to stand accountable for your actions. Think about a thing ten times before doing it. Mistake is inevitable. We conduct conferences, and we usually discuss our lapses and how to resolve these lapses and make better and create a better atmosphere. I do not blame others; it is not my cup-of-tea. Better think of some ways on how to solve the issue.”*

P1 pointed out, *“That is important, that is why I keep on reminding my teachers that if this is the issue, then this may happen or maybe that may happen. I give them options. It is important to remind them the consequences of their actions; also make them understand the concept of accountability; that you are accountable of your acts. Options are open, and I make them also understand the possibilities and consequences of these options.*

Moreover, they will lovingly confront the teacher and do actual mentoring or correction when they observe some misconduct.

P3 added, *“What if she does not do her/ his job? ...Simple, let us say “on cleanliness” at work. I make them feel that their classroom is their house, and I give suggestions on how to maintain its cleanliness. I do not speak directly asking them to clean their rooms, but I usually and indirectly ask them to clean their room. If nothing happens after my first suggestion and*

visit, I suggest that we both start cleaning up; and you will be surprised that the room gets totally cleaned on your next visit.”

With their way of resolving the issues on accountability, this study found that their harmonious relationship with their subordinates is a primary concern for the awardees. They are very considerate in handling the issue and that giving sanction is the least resort. However, for worst case scenarios where the teacher continues to be defiant after the dialogues, they stated that they also resort to elevating such cases to the Division Office as indicated in their school policy but with emphasis on their efforts to mitigate the problem to the best they can at their level.

P2 cited, “We have set rules for that, right? Advice after committing the first offense; but when it reaches the third offense, report the act to the Division Office, you cannot just leave the situation that way, especially when the case is heavy. We, as school heads, are always available for advice. We do not allow things to get worse, so we immediately attend to arising conflicts and settle them as soon as possible.”

They use a diplomatic approach in dealing with their issues, they observe maximum tolerance but will not also compromise school policies and follow guidelines and do give sanctions when necessary.

The awardees also shared that they should avoid self-entitlement but instead make people feel that their position is not a barrier to a more open communication between and among them. And that fair treatment should be practiced as they interact with people.

P1 exclaimed, “You must not put your position/ power in your head, we are all fellow-workers; only the school made you the head. You are part of the team, and the parents are your co-workers and assistants in doing the assigned tasks.”

P2 explained, “They say it is hard to please everybody, and as a principal you have to do your role, and take your role, you cannot choose but be with them and work in harmony with them. You need to communicate to all of them.”

Other practices shared is being actively involved in monitoring the situations of students and teachers. The challenges of online classes for example are constantly monitored and addressed. P3 emphasized the use of feedback mechanisms to understand their (teachers and pupils) situation. This is to be able to provide the technical assistance they needed.

P3 exclaimed, “I monitor classes. I monitor the parents, pupils – online or modular. From the feedback issues or concerns from parents, I give technical assistance to teachers... I always remind them to be patient all the time; especially in dealing with the parents.”

Moreover, P3 finds its accountability as a school head to exhaust all possible means to respond to the needs of the pupils and teachers like facing the challenges of this pandemic.

P3 reclaimed, “Adapting to current situations like pandemic... I find difficulty in it, but my role as a school head should never be compromised, we can extend help to our teachers, parents and to our pupils; and we need to find ways.”

For their learners and parents, they express concern and love as a way to maintain their good relationship with the parents and students. Acting as second parents to their pupils taking into consideration their welfare.

“P2 said, *“Sa learners, sa mga pupils iparamdam mo na ikaw ang kanilang magulang dito sa school.”* (Translation: *Let the learners and the pupils feel that you are their parents in school*).

P2 shared further that she ensures that they establish a good relationship with the parents and avoids conflicts.

P2 stated, *“Ensure a good rapport with the parents, so to have a smooth relationship with them. In my 12 years as a principal, I never had a fight or argument with parents.”*

Striking observation common among the awardees as found in this study in dealing with issues is their loving correction instead of punishment. They openly communicate and reflect on the issues and patiently coach or mentor their subordinates to mediate and resolve issues.

Moreover, they provide an environment where professional growth is advocated and accomplishments are properly recognized. Professional growth for teachers is a primary concern on the awardees. They include capability building interventions in the schools action plans. Also, teachers are highly motivated to pursue higher education for promotion purposes.

The awardees also offer technical support like packaging application documents for promotion.

P3 shared, *“What I usually do is to help them evaluate their documents ...with God’s grace, one of them was promoted already from T3 to Master Teacher. Now, we are also hoping for the promotion of two more teachers). This technical assistance is accorded to everyone. All this boils down to their desire for the growth of their subordinates.”*

Further, as another way to motivate their subordinates to perform, they practice giving awards through issuance of certificates particularly after conducting seminars. This is a way for them to recognize accomplishment. But aside from these formal forms of recognition P3 underscored the simple acts of appreciation like saying thank you and wearing big smiles as genuine ways of appreciating their subordinates' accomplishment. These simple acts receive better receptions than certificates because they find it more personal and more sincere according to P3.

Upholding Trust and Fair Treatment

The outstanding school heads put their position in a limelight where praise and criticism is inevitable. This is crucial in either building a positive image or putting their identity in a bad light. The awardees consider this a fact in their role as a school head. Thus, as they perform their leadership role, trust and fair treatment are commonly taken into account to avoid criticisms and doubt that will put their leadership into question.

Major decisions on direction, promotion, operations are their common roles in school. As the head people would rely on their fair judgement and appropriate action to push for development and success in these undertakings. These expectations from them put a big concern on their plate. In order to manage these expectations, they emphasize the need to maintain trust in the delivery of their major roles.

One of the crucial roles of school heads is their influence in the professional growth of their subordinates. Being the head, they are given the authority to endorse appointments and facilitate ranking for promotion purposes. This platform of authority makes them susceptible to make unfair judgements, biases, favoritism and power issues. Aware of this, the awardees are extra careful of their behaviors and practices. Thus, they set boundaries and safety nets to protect their reputation.

The outstanding school heads adopted systems for selection and promotion set by the institution. The Praise Committee was cited as the committee responsible for the teachers ranking. This committee is responsible for making sure that all teachers are given equal opportunity for promotion and that they undergo the process and not simply by appointment of the head.

P1 emphasized, *“It is important that every committee, like the Praise Committee facilitates the teacher’s ranking, we had our third year for the title “best teacher”. We do not compete in Gawad Leon without competing at a school level. The chosen competitor- teacher is never appointed or chosen but has to undergo through the process of selection. I am not the only one who interviews them, but I also invite EPS and Committee.”*

P1 mentioned that during rankings she only acts as observer and interviewer being the school head but inhibits herself from grading the applicants to avoid biases. This is also her way of respecting the selection committee’s decision. This she believed builds credibility to the ranking and recognition of their teachers as it leaves no doubt on the part of the applicants. Her way of showing fairness, honesty and integrity.

P1 exclaimed, *“For example, we do not influence the Praise Committee, we allow them to exercise their right and opportunity to evaluate on their own. We respect the results of their judgement- that is where you manifest fairness, honesty and integrity. One time, one of the contestants was very close to me, I was there during the observation and interview, but I opted not to give a grade. I invited EPS, or other people to allow them to assess her. That is a concrete example.”*

P2 also explained how they safeguard the integrity of their promotion system. She confirms this system as an effective way of avoiding injustice and biases.

“In promotion, there is ranking system. The candidates need to submit the proper requirements and undergo the process. The ranking committee shall facilitate the paper evaluation, and it is an open system. The applicants are dealt with fairness and justice. There was never an event where the ranking was tagged injustice.”

The outstanding school heads also created a systematic and functional feedback mechanism is implemented where students and parents can evaluate the performance of the faculty and personnel of the school. A standard evaluation method and instrument is used to ensure the credibility of the feedback. They believe that the voice of the customer is important to make necessary improvements for a better service and a satisfied customer.

P1 explained, *“The most important activity that we do in school is the “feedback mechanism”; we use a particular tool even on parents’ and teachers’ feedback over*

the performance of the utility workers. We also have forms for our students for monitoring and evaluation because the voice of the customer for me is important.”

Another strategy mentioned to ensure fairness in giving recognition to their deserving subordinates is to form an external selection committee and a criterion for them to avoid biases and favoritism. They believe that they should give honor where honor is due. These are expounded on the sharing of P2 and P3 below.

P2 stated, “: In all the award systems happening in school, everything was treated with fairness, like for example, the judges for the title “most outstanding classroom”, come from the outside, so I usually invite one from PTA, a friend or a co-teacher in my previous school. All will undergo due process and the one who would satisfy the criteria would win.”

P1 explained that their turf of authority is limited to endorsement not promotion.

P1 said, “We do not have the power to promote or appoint, everything will undergo due process through our division office.”

For endorsements, all teacher applicants are given equal treatment and equal chances to apply for promotion but need to submit themselves to the school ranking process. A selection committee called Praise Committee is an in place system to ensure that promotions and appointments are in congruence to set criteria for selection. This process avoids biases and favoritism and ensures that promotion is based on merit.

P2 mentioned, “We have what we call school ranking and it happens on a yearly basis (applied on T1, T2, T3, and T3-MT1); there are criteria to be satisfied. We have committees in school which facilitate ranking.”

With this selection system, the awardees can only motivate their teachers to apply or to go for post graduate studies for better chances of promotion but have no direct control over the selection and promotion process as reiterated by P1.

P1 pointed out, “What I can afford to do as a principal is to recommend. We motivate our teachers to apply for the position, but we cannot promote them – the division office does the thing. I can only encourage my teachers. Your intellectual skills are never a basis for promotion, you must earn your Master’s degree units.”

Given the limitation, they extend technical assistance in packaging application documents of the teachers for them to maximize points from the merits they earned which resulted in the promotion of some of their teachers. This technical assistance is accorded to everyone.

P3 shared. “What I did was to help them have their papers evaluated, until one of them was promoted from T3 to master teacher, and we are waiting for two more teachers to get promoted.”

The outstanding school heads are notable in managing their personal financial matters. They maintain a loan free lifestyle contrary to a stigma of public school teachers - being buried on-debt.

P1 said, “Hindi kasi ako pala utang so wala talaga akong loan for the last 15 years kahit isang loan wala ako”. (Translation: I do not borrow money and I never had a loan for the past 15 years.)

P2 narrated, *“I do not have personal loans especially in school. So far I am able to manage my salary that is why I do not have loans. Even Though it is not that enough, I can still afford not to borrow. I am shy. So that makes me debt-free.”*

P1 shared that she has learned her lessons during her early years in the teaching profession. So, she decided to stay out of debts and instead lived within her means and maintained a bank savings as a buffer when a crisis arose. In their personal financial matters, we could say that they manage their finances well. They also advocate this practice especially to the younger teachers to avoid being trapped in loans that lead to financial stress.

“I was assigned as a secretary at the District Office before and I saw the struggle of teachers who have so many loans. What I did was to finish all my loans, and I deposit the money intended for my loans so as not to spend this. If I need an amount then I withdraw the amount I needed, but I make sure that I will repay this.”

These practices of the awardees have proven to uphold trust in their leadership and fair treatment is experienced by their subordinates and people.

Encouraging Inclusive Involvement and Transparency

The outstanding school heads emphasized the significance of inclusive involvement and transparency in all school transactions. It is an evident practice of the awardees to involve and engage every sector of the school’s stakeholder in the planning, implementation and resolution of the school’s affairs and practice transparency as they do so.

Various mechanisms for inclusive transactions are used. Mechanisms like conferences, meetings, reporting and even casual or personal level conversations were used to ensure that every group of stakeholders took ownership of the developmental initiatives of the school. Transparency and involvement to them are major factors in obtaining success in their endeavors.

P2 stated, *“If we have regular class we have to have two SOILA every year: beginning and end of the year; and have a quarterly conference with parents. An open forum should always exist so we could listen to what they wish to tell. We listen to them because this could resolve the issues we need to settle in school.”*

The demonstration of transparency in their dealings and transactions reinforces their desire to maintain people’s trust. They are able to uphold trust and transparency using strategies like, delegation of tasks, and observance of the Standard Operating Procedures especially on financial matters. P2 mentioned practice is the strict adherence to proper disbursement and reporting of their MOOE where they proudly shared that for 12 years as a principal, she never received a negative report from Commission on Audit (COA).

P2 shared, *“When it comes to canteen issues, the engineering department takes care of this, mine is the MOOE alone. I was able to employ the roles of a principal over this MOOE, and in my 12 years of being a principal, I never received a letter of AOM from COA, asking me to explain things up. I am always cleared and my budget has been clearly liquidated all*

the time. We also post our financial reports on our transparency board; and I see to it that the transparency board gets updated all the time.”

In addition to transparency, they also adhere to school policies and protocols. The disbursement for example of their MOOE is in accordance with proper documentation, processing, and auditing.

P3 exclaimed, “I am always transparent, especially in financial matters. Like for example, in MOOE, we see the financial status here, and this also manifests the way how school heads manage the organizational finances. All the people involved work in close range with me – the custodian procures things up.”

As the outstanding school heads are responsible in handling their personal finances, it can be observed that they too are good managers of school funds. The practices like transparency through reporting and proper documentation and delegation of financial responsibilities to reliable people were the major strategies that they used to maintain their reputation in the area of financial management. With this they were able to gain people’s trust.

P3 stated, “We need to exercise transparency in all our programs and projects. They should also know the financial matters on MOOE. They should know all the things that are happening in school; like example, today, we have a project “OK” Oplan Kamustahan or Online Kamustahan...we have to monitor each other and know what is happening among us to manifest transparency...”

P2 cited, “When it comes to finances, I do not handle the money. We have an assigned person for this matter, and this could be the PTA or a teacher, but I do not wish to handle school funds at all.”

Though they refrain from becoming custodians to collections, they however monitor how these are spent through submission of financial status reports.

P1 said, “As I have told a while ago, I do not handle school funds, but I want the person assigned to submit a financial report and ask them to also be transparent to me; I should know first whatever they wish to spend the money for.”

For the MOOE, since this is under their direct responsibility monthly liquidation is strictly observed. With this practice, P2 proudly shared that in her 12 years as principal, she has been conscientiously submitting her liquidations on time.

P2 exclaimed, “It is not to boast off but my asset as a principal for 12 years was that I was never late in my liquidation.”

These reports document how their finances were managed. These documents are presented to all stakeholders concerned as a transparency inclusive involvement mechanism.

Other strategies practiced along inclusive involvement and transparency is an open communication line among all stakeholders:

P3 pointed out, *“I am open when it comes to communication; I listen to other people’s opinions and ideas and let them feel appreciated and empowered...I want to sit down and talk with them.”*

From the practitioners, clienteles and other partner stakeholders. They mentioned practices like collaborative planning and inclusive school management.

P2 stated, *“We have a monthly meeting, and everything is recorded in the secretary’s minutes of the meeting.”*

The outstanding school heads emphasized that the opinion of all stakeholders are heard and valued. It is a common practice among these awardees to sit-down together to discuss and plan together to set and implement the school’s developmental goals. They view each group of stakeholders as a key partner in achieving set goals. Conferences, meetings, casual talks and building of harmonious relations were among the practices mentioned. These avenues are used to keep everybody informed and listened to.

P2 shared, *“We have a stakeholders’ day apart from our casual talks with them.”*

Findings show that dissemination of information through observance of transparency were believed to erase mistrust and ill judgement which promote a better partnership and working environment. This they believe will eventually result in achievement and successes of both individuals and the school in general.

All the participants agree on the significance of listening to the needs and concerns of their stakeholders. For them this plight must be given appropriate action in the given social, political, legal and cultural context.

It was also mentioned that they let stakeholders feel their importance. They build good rapport knowing that their stakeholders are their partners for development. They see to it that the stakeholders feel they are valued by treating them like a family. P2 mentioned that doing so, they continue to feel and receive support from the stakeholders.

P2 expressed, *“We continue to build good rapport with our stakeholders so they will continue assisting the school in cash and in kind. We are in direct need of the stakeholders’ services and make them feel they are important. We make them feel they are part of the school organization so for them to go on helping the school.”*

P3 said, *“Yes, there are a lot of issues and concerns like in ODL, we let the parents know their huge roles in assisting the learning process of their children; and their efforts were all appreciated.”*

P3 added, *“For example, in designing computerization programs, the parents’ participation is very important. We conduct meetings for improvement plans and the parents are with us during the crafting, proposal-making, and defense of the program. We make sure that they are in the school’s SIP projects.”*

Statements above capture in context their responses on how they handle the plights of their stakeholders. The practices clearly display transparency and inclusive involvement among all parties concerned in dispatching their role as school heads.

Findings show that the outstanding school heads model integrity and commitment in the practice of their leadership role, nurture encouraging environments in their workplaces, uphold trust and transparency in their dealings and transactions, and encourage inclusive involvement and transparency. Nothing worthwhile can be achieved by these outstanding school heads if they have not considered their capacity for transformative contributions if given the leadership forum and authority to make significant changes that favor their subordinates and add honor to their school. This is their noble internalization of their position as school heads, in which they uphold their integrity and commitment to doing their part as leaders even when frustrated and underperforming.

Despite the many roles and responsibilities that come with being a school head, they ensure that their organization performs well and profits from their efforts. The outstanding school heads modeling of values and virtues like respect, honesty, dedication, enthusiasm, quest for excellence and perseverance are evident practices of integrity and commitment.

In the pillar of model integrity and commitment, the awardees manifested common ethical leadership practices through modeling respect, observing honesty in their dealings, dedication to their profession, enthusiasm in delivering services and performing excellently. In the context of nurturing encouraging environment, the awardees attested common ethical leadership practices through establishing a harmonious relationship, sensitivity to the needs of others, flexibility, and having humane resolutions to issues/conflicts, employing effective communication and advocate professional growth. Under the pillar of upholding trust and fair treatment, the recipients showed common ethical leadership practices like being a role model, establishing fair selection, and promotion systems, good feedbacking system, promoting equality and equal opportunity and good financial management. Lastly, in support of encouraging inclusive involvement and transparency, the awardees shared common goals, collaborative planning, and delegation of tasks, paying attention to the concerns of others, and establishing a strong partnership with stakeholders.

Conclusion

The case of Gawad Ginintuang Leon Awardees for Outstanding School Heads has created a new dimension for the Ethical Leadership Practices and are continuously evolving and developing. The Gawad Ginintuang Leon Awardees for Outstanding School Heads sensitivity in upholding leadership practices and virtues/values along with the four themes: Model Commitment and Integrity, Nurture Encouraging Environment, Uphold Trust and Fair Treatment and Encourage Inclusive Involvement and Transparency clearly show that they understand the impact of ethical practices in their leadership role and that they practice a high level of ethics in their leadership calling. They are internally motivated, with a deep commitment to making a significant impact as they play their role as school head.

To meet the demands and challenges, that school heads have the kind of leadership that would hold them up to the demands of today's leading schools, the Gawad Ginintuang Leon Awardees for Outstanding School Heads are striving and fighting in cultivating an ethical culture in their given turfs, they admit that there is no perfection in anything thus, crises and issues will always be experienced by leaders. However, one must commit to continuing upholding integrity to beat and defeat oppositions; and would bring victory and success to fruition. Thus, an Ethical Leadership Development Program that was created to develop the ethical leadership practices that will serve as an inspiration for school heads and aspiring school heads to exhibit ethical leadership practices that can create an effective and efficient working environment.

It is recommended that the School Districts and Divisions consider and implement the proposed Ethical Leadership Development Program specifically for the finalists and awardees of Gawad Ginintuang Leon. Also, the best practices of the Gawad Ginintuang Leon Awardees for Outstanding School Heads on Ethical Leadership must be properly documented and published to enable replication of these best practices to other schools when deemed fit. As this study limited the participants to the Gawad Ginintuang Leon Awardees for Outstanding School Heads, it is recommended that a follow-up study on the perception of the constituents of these awardees be sought to widen the perspective of this study.

The present study also has its limitations. The participants of this study were composed of four elementary school heads and were awarded as Outstanding School Heads of Gawad Ginintuang Leon in the years 2017, 2018, and 2019. A qualitative study is always and almost limited in general. First, we cannot make generalizations out of our small-sized sample and that generalizing is not able to meet the main goal of the research. Also, because of COVID-19, the participants shared very limited stories during the conduct of the study. They wanted to share more of their thoughts and feelings about their awardee practices and experiences, but the crisis did not allow them. Their personal businesses somehow affected the impact of the study.

References

- Aydin, A., Sarier, Y., & Uysal, S. (2013). The effect of school principal's leadership styles on teachers organizational commitment and job satisfaction. *Educational Sciences: Theory and Practice*, 13(2), 806-811.
- Ameen, A., & Ahmad, K. (2012). Towards harnessing financial information systems in reducing corruption: A review of strategies. *Australian Journal of Basic and Applied Sciences*, 6(8), 500-509.
- Ameen, A., Almari, H., & Isaac, O. (2018). Determining underlying factors that influence online social network usage among public sector employees in the UAE. In *International Conference of Reliable Information and Communication Technology* (pp. 945-954). Springer, Cham.
- Baker, E. L. (2013). Leadership and management—guiding principles, best practices, and core attributes. *Journal of Public Health Management and Practice*, 20(3), 356-357. DOI: 10.1097/PHH.0000000000000063

- Brown, M. E., Treviño, L. K., & Harrison, D. (2005). Ethical leadership: A social learning perspective for construct development and testing. *Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes*, 97(2), 117-134.
DOI: 10.1016/j.obhdp.2005.03.002
- Bush, T. (2008). *Leadership and management development in education*. London: SAGE.
- Creswell, J. (1998). *Research design qualitative, quantitative and mixed methods approaches*. London: Sage Publications.
- Cuilla, J. B. (1998). *Leadership ethics: Mapping the territory*. In J. B. Cuilla (Ed.), *Ethics, The Heart of Leadership* (pp. 3-25). Westport, CT: Quorum Book.
- Ehrich, L., Harris, J., Klenowski, V., Smeed, J., & Spina, N. (2015), The centrality of ethical leadership. *Journal of Educational Administration*, 53(2), 197-214. <https://doi.org/10.1108/JEA-10-2013-0110>
- Etikan, I., Musa, S. A., & Alkassim, R. S. (2016). Comparison of convenience sampling and purposive sampling. *American Journal of Theoretical and Applied Statistics*, 5(1), 1-4.
- Hartog, D. N. D. (2015). Ethical leadership. *Annual Review of Organizational Psychology and Organizational Behavior*, 2(1), 409- 434.
- Hegarty, N., & Moccia, S. (2018). Components of ethical leadership and their importance in sustaining organizations over the long term. *Journal of Values-Based Leadership*, 11(1).
<https://doi.org/10.22543/0733.111.1199>
- Hollenbach, D. S. J. (1989). The common good revisited. *Theological Studies*, 50, 70-94
- Klein, J. (2006). *A collegiate dilemma: The lack of formal training in ethics for professors*. Retrieved from <http://www.collegevalues.org/articles.cfm?id=1416&a=1>
- Kruse, K. (2013) What Is Leadership? *Forbes*. Retrieved from <http://www.forbes.com/sites/kevinkruse/2013/04/09/what-is-leadership/2/>
- Lukas, C. V., Holmes, S. K., Cohen, A. B., Restuccia, J., Cramer, I. E., Shwartz, M., & Charns, M. P. (2007). Transformational change in health care systems: An organizational model. *Health Care Management Review*, 32(4), 309-320.
- McCarthy, R. (2013). *ASEAN integration: Let's not forget the implications for education*. Retrieved from www.unescobkk.org
- McCray, J. P., Gonzalez, J. J., & Darling, J. R. (2012). Transformational crisis management in organizational development: A focus on the case of Barnes & Noble vs Amazon. *Organizational Development Journal*, 30(1), 39-52.
- Miller, T. N., Devin, M., & Shoop, R. J. (2007). *Closing the leadership gap: How district and university partnership shape effective school leaders*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press and Sage Publications.
- Northouse, P. G. (2010). *Leadership: Theory and practice* (5th ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE.
- Sergiovanni, T. (2005). *The school headship: a reflective practice perspective*. Boston, MA: Pearson.
- Shakeel, F., Kruyen, P., & Van Thiel, S. (2016). Ethical leadership in the public sector: a structured literature review. Paper presented at *the International Studying Leadership Conference*, University of Edinburgh, Edinburgh, UK.

- Shapiro, J., & Stefkovich, J. A. (2005). *Ethical leadership and decision making in education: Applying theoretical perspectives to complex dilemmas*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Sharma, S. (2014). *Attributes of school heads-leadership qualities and capacities*. In *International COngress for School Effectiveness and Improvement*, 04-07 Jan 2011, Limassol, Cyprus.
- Sharma, S., Sun, H., & Kannan, S. (2012). A comparative analysis on leadership qualities of school heads in China, Malaysia & India. *International Online Journal of Educational Sciences*, 4(3), 536-543.
- Sousa, D. (2015). *The leadership brain: Strategies for leading today's schools more effectively*. New York: Skyhorse Publishing.
- Ward, S. (2020). What is leadership? and can you learn to be a good leader? *The Balance Small Business*. Retrieved from <https://www.thebalancesmb.com/leadership-definition-2948275>
- Williamson, T. (2005). Work-based learning: A leadership development example from an action research study of shared governance implementation. *Journal of Nursing Management*, 13(6), 490-499.