# Chapter 23

# How a Servant Leader's Ethos of Service and Stewardship Can Support Teachers' Professional Ethos in Twenty-First Century Schools

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## Introduction

There seems to be little consensus on the definitive meaning or scope of teachers' professional ethos (Weinberger et al., 2018; Glover & Coleman, 2005; McLaughlin, 2005) and yet there is strong agreement that:

(a) it is critically important (Goodlad, 1999; Weinberger et al., 2018);
(b) it is an essential aspect of school climate and effectiveness;
(c) it can be "nurtured through guided and supervised reflective practice" (Weinberger et al., 2018, p.8); and that
(d) it is not being adequately prioritized or effectively supported in K-12 schools (Day et al., 2009; Santoro, 2018; Frank, 2015; Nash & Agne, 1972).

We begin this chapter by clarifying our understanding of the meaning and dynamic relationship among the concepts of ethos, professional ethos, teachers' professional ethos, and school ethos. We then discuss the challenges teachers face in developing and maintaining professional ethos. We explore the potential of a school principal's application of the servant leadership philosophy with its constituent virtues, particularly that of stewardship, to support a leadership ethos that enables (i) the growth and protection of teachers' professional ethos, (ii) the positive development of youth, and (iii) the flourishing of the whole school community.

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## Defining Personal and Professional Ethos

The concept of ethos is 'notoriously' difficult to define (McLauglin, 2005). The word itself is derived from the ancient Greeks and although it predates Aristotle it is his definition modern authors are most inclined to cite (Beck, 2018; Rozema & Bush, 2005; Hannah & Avolio, 2011). For Aristotle, ethos equated to one's credibility as perceived by others, and thus included concepts of trust, character, and reputation (Rozema & Bush, 2005). Modern definitions, such as that from Webster's New World dictionary, tend to be a bit broader, including "the characteristics and distinguishing attitudes, habits, beliefs, etc. of an individual or a group." According to the Oxford English Dictionary, ethos also means "characteristic spirit of a culture, era, or community."

For Aristotle, people's ethos would be described as being somewhere on the range from noble to ignoble ethos (Weinberger et al., 2018). For many authors today, however, the term ethos is considered only positive. For example, Caza et al. (2004) write that ethos "…represents what people (and organizations) aspire to when at their best and when they do their best. It buttresses ethics as a stable point by being the underlying standard of goodness" (p. 173). While we concur with Aristotle that not all ethos is positive, in this paper we will only be addressing positive ethos. Our conception of educators' professional ethos is consistent with Muller's (2019) understanding that:

> Professional ethos is based on mastery of a body of specialized knowledge acquired through an extended process of education and training; autonomy and control over work; an identification with one's professional group and a sense of responsibility toward colleagues; a high valuation of intrinsic rewards; and a commitment to the interests of clients above considerations of cost (p. 8).

In the current paper we focus on the influence of the ethos of educational leaders on two critical dimensions of effective schools – teacher ethos and school ethos.

## Teachers' Professional Ethos

In **The Call to Teach** (1995) David Hansen discusses differences between teachers, even when they may have almost identical obligations:

> no two teachers have the same personal and moral impact on students (Jackson et al., 1993). For better or for worse, every teacher has a distinct and varying influence on students' orientations toward learning, toward knowledge, toward other people. Moreover, those differences have to do with a lot more than overt dissimilarities in personality and teaching style (Hansen, 1993a). They have to do with the ethos of the person, his or her characteristic conduct when in the presence of students, his or her reputation, expectations, hopes, fears, worries. The relationship between a teacher and students is invariably a moral one. (Location 418 of 4062)

Hansen asserts that each teacher has their own unique ethos, including the most mundane teaching tasks and routines, concluding that "all professional ethos include accepting responsibility for these chores." Drawing from Hansen's seminal *Exploring the Moral Heart of Teaching* (2001), Latzko (2012) reports that Hansen defined teachers' ethos:

> as a moral sensibility, an orientation of attentiveness towards students and the teaching profession that underlines teachers' thought and action [and] goes beyond… conceptions of individual belief systems…. It goes beyond the professional knowledge that is necessary in the field of learning, instruction and subject matter. It clearly refers to the professional moral and ethical beliefs, knowledge and skills that teachers need for their professional judgements and for guiding their relations with students in a professional manner (but also with school leaders, colleagues, parents and others) and for preparing their lessons. The teaching profession, then, can be understood as moral in its nature, which declares moral education to be a continuous feature of teachers' daily work in classrooms. (p. 203)

More recently Latzho and Paezler (2018) reviewed and catalogued the different ways a number of prominent educational scholars have defined teachers' professional ethos in their writing. They conclude "taken together, concepts of teachers ethos address professional identity, professional procedural morality, professional responsibility and care, moral judgment, as well as moral attitudes" (pg 153).

Any given teacher's individual professional ethos can meet all of the criteria above and yet still be substantively individualized, varying in their conceptualization and the practice of their educative ethos. In David Hansen's (1995) study of teacher ethos he concludes that each classroom as well as each teacher has a unique ethos. The development and maintenance of an individual teacher's educative ethos is influenced by many things including the ethos of the teacher preparation program they attend, the ethos and context of the school where they teach (Floden et al,. 2020), the ethos of the school leader (McLaughlin, 2005), and their own moral self-cultivation (Sherblom, 2012, 2015).

It is unlikely that teachers will develop a robust professional moral and ethical ethos by chance. Interpreting Aristotle, Weinberger et al. (2018), tells us that "ethos takes place from the collective ethos to the individual one" (pg 3) and that ethos is learned and nutured, both individually and collectively. The question then becomes, how can teachers best be supported in their learning and development of professional ethos individually and collectively. Establishing a whole-school ethos of renewal is a critical means by which principals support the development of early career and veteran teachers. In this paper we posit that school leader's are both well positioned and obligated to support the development of teacher's professional ethos through their own servant leadership ethos with its central characteristic of stewardship.

## School Ethos, Culture, and Climate

Many authors and government sponsored reports use language that suggests that a school's collective ethos can be referred to alternatively as *school climate*, or *school culture*, depending on the point in time and the national context (Glover & Coleman, 2005; Eisner, 1994). At this point in time in the United States, school climate is the more popular of the 3, while still describing a similar concept:

> A school's climate is "the quality and character of school life" (The National School Climate Center 2019). It is composed of several areas, including relationships between teachers and administrators and students, school safety, the institutional environment, and the school improvement process. (Thapa et al., 2013)

While we acknowledge that these terms are largely but not completely overlapping, they are, in fact, often used interchangably (Glover & Coleman, 2005; Eisner, 1994; McLaughlin, 2005). They refer to the collective aspect of schools that, in the ideal, can be described as

> characterized by a school community that believes in the inherent value and equal worth of each human being, in education as an inalienable right, in the non-negotiablility of education for its own sake, in the multiple ways humans learn, in the moral responsibility of all teachers (including parents) to assist young people in finding their own identities and developing moral dispositions, in resisting the pressure to value children as an investment in the economic well-being of adults, in the joy of teaching that arises out of helping others accomplish their goals within the bounds of democratic civility and civitas, and much more (Goodlad, 1999, p. 572).

A positive school ethos, as the all-encompassing medium in which students learn and develop is central to the aim of promoting flourishing in youth and adults. Flourishing in individuals can be thought of as the holistic development of the person's psychological nature as it relates to fulfilling one's potential for moral agency (Bier & Sherblom, 2020). The flexibility of the term **ethos**, applicable to school community, school leaders, and teachers, makes it a powerful concept to supplement school culture. As with the desired positive teacher ethos, the desired school ethos of renewal, inclusion, and moral responsibility cannot be left to chance. Teacher ethos requires intentional design, implementation and monitoring in all aspects of the school's operations. Thus, the school principal's ethos may be the most important factor influencing teacher and school ethos (Murphy et al., 2017; Day et al., 2009; Theoharis, 2010; Leithwood & Louis, 2012). In the following section we discuss challenges to the development of teachers' professional ethos and the powerful influence of school leaders.

## Moral Motivations for Choosing and Leaving a Career in Teaching

Most people choose a career in teaching for moral reasons. A recent systematic review of empirical studies investigating why people choose teaching found 70 studies published between the years 2007 and 2016. Looking across these studies the researchers found that altruism and intrinsic motivations were the most commonly identified factors influencing an individual's decision to become a teacher (Fray & Gore, 2018). Altruism as a motivator included factors such as: service to others, the desire to help and support students, and *to make a difference* and contribute to society. Intrisic motivations include a passion for teaching and interest in the subject matter, intellectual stimulation or participation in something interesting, personal development, as well as a desire to work with children or young people. Many teachers felt *called* to teach and made their decisions to teach while still in their youth (Fray & Gore, 2018).

Unfortunately, many teachers report feeling unprepared for the realities of teaching and are so dissatisfied with their working conditions that teacher turnover has become a serious problem for schools across the U.S., although it is most intense for those serving the poorest and lowest performing students. The Alliance for Excellent Education (2014) estimates the annual cost of teacher turnover at nearly $3 billion and rising. In the first of a recently released series of reports by the Economic Policy Institute, García and Weiss (2019a) warn readers that "*The teacher shortage is real, large and growing, and worse than we thought (p.1)*". In the National Academies of Science Consensus Report, *Changing Expectations for the K-12 Teacher Workforce: Policies, Preservice Education, Professional Development, and the Workplace* (2020), they report that 16% of U.S. teachers do not return to their schools from 1 year to the next. This degree of teacher turnover causes instabilities that can threaten students' learning and reduce school effectiveness, making it even more difficult to build the professional reputation of teaching and the attractiveness of the profession. The changing expectations of teachers and challenging work environments underlie teacher dissatisfaction and high rates of turnover (Floden et al., 2020; García & Weiss, 2019a).

The relationships between teachers, a school's administration, and the community more broadly shape a school's ethos, with consequences for teachers and students (Bryk et al., 2010). The climate affects how well the school provides a learning community in which administrative supports and leadership are strong, there is time for peer collaboration, and employees share a strong sense of purpose. Unfortunately, teachers in the US report a high level of conflict with, and lack of support from, administrators and fellow teachers, with little control over their work.

García and Weiss (2019b) report less than half of respondents to the 2015–2016 National Teacher and Principal Survey reported being fully supported by the school administration, their colleagues, or the community in general. Only slightly more than a third of teachers strongly agree that "there is a great deal of cooperative effort among the staff members" (38.4% do) or that their colleagues share their views of what the school's mission should be (36.0%). Fewer than one in three teachers affirm that they are recognized for a job well done (32.4%). Given these working conditions, it is not surprising that teaching is becoming an unattractive career option, both for people making decisions about their careers as well as for teachers who are leaving the profession (García & Weiss, 2019b).

A recent Gallup poll reported that 7 out of 10 schoolteachers said they feel emotionally disconnected and/or dissatisfied with their workplace environments. In fact, of the surveyed professionals, teachers were least likely to feel their opinions at work counted and the least likely to feel like their supervisor created an "open and trusting environment." These findings are consistent with previous research on teacher turnover and retention in which one of the most often cited reason for teacher dissatisfaction was lack of administrator support (Zumwalt & Craig, 2005). These teachers reported a desire to have principals more actively engaged in mentoring but found a lack of support for their development and growth as professionals (Ingersoll, 2003). Clearly many school principals are not establishing a school climate in which Teacher's professional ethos can flourish, and many teachers are leaving because of it.

## The Need for New Approaches to School Leadeship

At the same time that growing numbers of teachers are leaving the profession, evidence is mounting that those teachers that stay are experiencing increasingly high levels of stress, burnout and demoralization (Santoro, 2018; Dunn, 2018). Although the list of reasons and solutions to this national problem are myriad, the need for new approaches to school leadership is always on the list and frequently at the top (García & Weiss, 2019b; Louis & Murphy, 2017; Leithwood & Louis, 2012). There is a widely shared contention that traditional models of leadership are inadequate to the task of developing and protecting the morally anchored and pedagogically adaptive teacher ethos needed in twenty-first century schools (Crippen, 2005; Brumley, 2012). The field of education is not alone in calling for new leadership approaches, as Larry Spears, a successor to Robert Greenleaf, asserts in his discussion of the rise of Servant Leadership across several sectors of the global economy (Spears & Lawrence, 2002).

> In these early years of the 21st century, we are beginning to see that traditional, autocratic and hierarchical modes of leadership are yielding to a newer model that is based on teamwork and community, one that seeks to involve others in decision-making, one strongly based in ethical and caring behaviour, and one that is attempting to enhance the personal growth of workers while improving the caring and quality of our many institutions. (p. 2)

Based on a growing body of research from the fields of positive organizational scholarship, business management, health care, and governmental organization we posit that the leadership philosophy of servant leadership with its constituent virtue of stewardship holds great promise for the development and protection of teacher and school ethos. We argue that the practice of servant leadership can produce Goodlad's (1999) ideal of "a schoolwide ethos of moral stewardship and a classroom ethos of nuturing pedagogy" (p.578).

## The Mission of Schools and Leader Ethos

> *Throughout history, and in cultures all over the world, education rightly conceived has had two great goals: to help students become smart and to help them become good.*
>
> —Thomas Lickona & Matthew Davidson, *Smart & Good High Schools* (2005)

One of any society's primary duties is to socialize the next generation. In the U.S. schools have historically been an important mechanism for fulfilling the goal of socializing generations of youth to effectively operate as democratic citizens. According to Goodlad the primary mission of schools is to provide systematic education, addressing both the purposes of our democracy as well as the personal development of the individual (Smith, 2008). To accomplish these goals schools have many moving parts, but one crucial component is the school leader's professional ethos.

Leader ethos is described by Hannah and Jennings (2013) as "the purposeful and principled moral and ethical self that reflects the values, principles, ideals of – and duties and obligations to – the collective to which the leader belongs. (p.9)" It entails internalizing into one's identity and moral self those principles and ideals that the collective holds in highest regard, even in the face of adversity.

Educational leadership, for the purposes of this chapter, refers primarily to building-level administrators that hold the professional licensure and positional responsibility to run the school. In the U.S. this position is most often called the principalship.

## The Role of the School Principal in the Development of Teacher and School Ethos

It is widely recognized in the study of effective schools and student academic success that the school principal is a critical variable (Leithwood et al., 2004). A Wallace Foundation study (Seashore Louis et al., 2010) of 180 schools in nine states, concluded, "We have not found a single case of a school improving its student achievement record in the absence of talented leadership." According to a recent report by the Bush Institute on Education (Ikemoto et al., 2014) the school principal is responsible for as much as 20% of an individual student's school achievement. There is also evidence that school principals play a powerful role in the development of students' character, with student values changing over time to become more consistent with the school principal's values (Berson & Oreg, 2016). According to the growing body of research investigating educational leadership and school effectiveness, principals do not impact students directly but instead have an indirect impact on student's through their direct and powerful impact on teachers and school ethos. In an in-depth look at schools that succeeded where others failed, Habegger (2008) concluded that success was due to a principal's ability to create a positive school ethos, primarily through two types of activities: creating a sense of belonging and providing a clear direction for all stakeholders—students, teachers, parents, and community.

School principals are trained in management and administration, which is necessary but not sufficient to lead schools. Few principals intuitively know how to effectively nurture positive ethos in their schools, nor do they necessarily have the leadership philosophy and skill necessary for doing so. For most school leaders, however, the principles and strategies to support professional teacher ethos and create a positive school ethos can be learned (Gray et al., 2007). We argue that the leadership philosophy of Servant Leadership offers a viable approach to successfully develop and protect positive teacher and school ethos due to its foundational concerns with valuing people, building community, supporting the holistic development and well-being of all stakeholders, and offering shared leadership.

## Servant Leadership and the Ethos of Service

Conceptually, Servant Leadership (SL) is an ancient principle, present in every major religion. However the modern business management term was coined in 1970 by a retired AT&T executive – Robert Greenleaf. Greenleaf conceptualized SL as a secular/humanistic organizational leadership philosophy. What sets SL apart from traditional leadership models is the thesis that Servant Leaders become leaders because of their strong intrinsic motivation to serve. Greenleaf saw the act of leadership as one of service to others and, unlike other leadership scholars, he believed leadership entailed a leader's responsibility to all stakeholders – employees, customers and the community. Servant Leadership explicitly precludes leaders from acting in their own self-interest and emphasizes the leaders obligation to support the personal and professional growth of all stakeholders.

Servant Leadership is both inspirational and practical. It embodies the notion that service to others quenches a spiritual thirst in humans for leading lives of meaning and purpose while at the same time filling the functional need in modern institutions for personnel that are more highly engaged, productive and resilient. Servant leaders take a holistic approach to work and see themselves as stewards of the people, resources, and institutions entrusted to them. They are motivated to lead by the desire to serve and support the growth of the people around them, especially providing leadership for the good of those they lead. Servant Leaders promote the long-term mission of the organization and the overall good of the community and are characterized by the practices of authenticity and the sharing of power and status for the common good (Laub, 1999, p. 81).

As articulated by Greenleaf, Servant Leadership applies to both people and institutions and has an explicit moral mission. It is about serving and developing other people to also serve the good of humanity. In *The Servant as Leader* (1970), Greenleaf said:

> The servant-leader is servant first … It begins with the natural feeling that one wants to serve, to serve first. … Then conscious choice brings one to aspire to lead. The best test, and difficult to administer, is: Do those served grow as persons? Do they, while being served, become healthier, wiser, freer, more autonomous, more likely themselves to become servants? And, what is the effect on the least privileged in society; will they benefit or, at least, not be further deprived?

Later, Greenleaf added the stipulation: "No one will knowingly be hurt by the action, directly or indirectly (Greenleaf, 1998 p.43)."

Servant Leadership is unique in its goal of reproducing itself such that followers become servant leaders. Thus SL is not exclusively reserved for those in positions of authority. Servant Leadership can be practiced by anyone in the organization. Greenleaf encouraged organization's to support the critical inquiry and innovative thinking necessary to challenge the status quo and work toward a better society. In *The Institution as Servant*, (1972) Greenleaf articulated what is often called the SL "credo."

> This is my thesis: caring for persons, the more able and the less able serving each other, is the rock upon which a good society is built. Whereas, until recently, caring was largely person to person, now most of it is mediated through institutions – often large, complex, powerful, impersonal; not always competent; sometimes corrupt. If a better society is to be built, one that is more just and more loving, one that provides greater creative opportunity for its people, then the most open course is to raise both the capacity to serve and the very performance as servant of existing major institutions by new regenerative forces operating within them (p. 1).

Robert Greenleaf articulated servant leadership as a philosophy of leadership in a series of very popular essays in the 1970s. However within his lifetime little was done to operationalize SL as a leadership theory that could be scientifically investigated. This changed at the turn of the century and over the last 20 years there has been an explosion of interest and investigation of SL. As different research groups have sought to study SL they have begun to develop and validate measures of SL. While each group has parsed the specific foundational virtues or characteristics of SL slightly differently and use slightly different terminology, the various models are conceptually consistent.

The servant leadership model and programming we have been developing and investigating at the Center for Character and Citizenship at the University of Missouri—St. Louis is adapted from van Dierendonck and Patterson's (2015) virtue-based model of servant leadership. This model proposes that a leader's sense of compassionate love motivates their desire to serve and encourages the cultivation of virtuous attitudes such as humility, courage, forgiveness and gratitude (van Dierendonck & Patterson, 2015). In this model virtuous attitudes enable and animate virtuous leadership practices (van Dierendonck & Patterson, 2015) such as empowerment, foresight, and stewardship. It is the notion that Servant Leaders operate from an ethos of stewardship that best serves to develop, support, and protect teacher and school ethos.

## The Meaning of Stewardship

The concept of Stewardship dates back to ancient rights of kingship, where a designated Steward would rule in the stead of an underage king, or while a king was away at war. While a Steward might have complete control of a kingdom, it was understood that the Steward was not the rightful king, and was only managing and conserving the kingdom in the king's place until such time as the rightful leader took or retook the throne. The term has come to be used in a more general sense of responsible caretaking and leadership. Webster's Tenth Collegiate Dictionary defines stewardship as the careful and responsible management of something entrusted to one's care (Smith, 1999). Stewardship is described as the activity of safeguarding something precious (Yontz, 2012). Hernandez (2008) defines stewardship as, "the attitudes and behaviors that place the long-term best interest of a group ahead of personal goals that serve an individual's self-interests" (p. 122). Brinckerhoff (2004) declares that "organizations actually belong to the communities they serve, and leaders have temporary stewardship over their assets" (p. 3). One is a steward of the environment by caring for the earth's natural resources; one can be a steward of their place of worship, by giving of their time, talent, and treasure to maintain and/or expand the facilities and grow the congregation; one can be a steward of wealth and material resources through hard work, frugality and responsible investment; and along with many other things one can be a steward of public institutions such as schools.

In the 2nd edition of *Stewardship: Choosing Service over Self Interest,* (2013) Peter Block writes that

> Stewardship asks us to be deeply accountable for the outcomes of groups, institutions and communities without acting to define purpose for others or control them. It requires us to systematically move choice and resources closer and closer to the bottom and edges of the organization. (p.26)

Stewardship, according to Block, questions the belief that accountability and control go hand in hand. Block posits that stewards operate from the belief that the work is better served by giving control to those closest to the work. Rather than taking a top down approach and deciding from on-high what kind of culture to establish, and thus defining purpose, stewardship asks that all stakeholders join in the conversation about what the organization will become (Block, 2013). Robert Greenleaf's view of all institutions was one in which CEOs, staff, and trustees all played significant roles in holding their institutions in trust for the greater good of society. Servant-leadership, like stewardship, assumes first and foremost a commitment to serving the needs of others. It also emphasizes the use of openness and persuasion rather than mandates and coercion (Spears & Lawrence, 2002).

## The Moral Stewardship of Schools

In his seminal book, *Moral Leadership: Getting to the Heart of School Improvement*, Thomas J. Sergiovanni (1992) describes school stewardship and its nested nature.

> Stewardship represents primarily an act of trust, whereby people and institutions entrust a leader with certain obligations and duties to fulfill and perform on their behalf. For example, the public entrusts the schools to the school board. The school board entrusts the school to its principal. Parents entrust their children to teachers (p. 373)

Smith (1999) provided a conceptual model of moral school stewardship that included six interdependent components; (1) commitment to a shared mission, (2) the development of a democratic learning community, (3) dedication to whole-school renewal, (4) engagement in critical inquiry, (5) participation in professional development, and (6) the preparation of future educators. Below we discuss how a school principal's Servant Leadership philosophy and stewardship practice can support teachers professional ethos using Smith's 6 component model of the moral stewardship of schools.

## Commitment to a Shared Mission

In his bestseller, *The Fifth Discipline*, MIT researcher, Peter Senge (1990) noted, —If any one idea about leadership has inspired organizations for thousands of years, it's the capacity to hold a shared picture of the future we seek to create. A school leader's successful stewardship rests on a school communities' shared understanding of the general purpose of schooling and the specific vision of what their school can be at its best. A servant leader will take a broadly collaborative approach to the development of the school vision, mission and core values seeking input and understanding from all stakeholders through a participatory process. A participatory process is often lengthy and messy, involving multiple facilitated meetings and community comment strategies in order to give all stakeholders the opportunity to be heard. While the mission of all schools must be academically anchored, a school led by a Servant Leader practicing the virtue of stewardship will also include a broader vision – one that begins with a discussion of the role of schools in a democracy, encompasses the well-being and involvement of the whole school community, and prioritizes moral as well as intellectual development.

> For the stewardship of schools to be actualized, a commitment to a common purpose is the most critical work of leaders. Without a clear and common mission, the purposes, conversations, and personnel within schools cannot be safeguarded or improved because partnerships will not be working in synergy (Yontz, 2012, p. 57).

The principal's stewardship of the school mission will involve continuous communication of the mission to all stakeholders and ensuring that all subsequent decisions and policies are developed in alignment with the mission and communicated in the context of the school mission. Servant leaders inspire followers' commitment to the mission by modeling democratic discussion processes and consensus building strategies – not forcing the school community's agreement through mandates (Kouzes & Posner, 2007). In *The Power of Servant Leadership*, Robert Greenleaf (1970) recommends asking the following question to ensure a necessary characteristic of a servant leader:

> Can the leader accept that optimal performance rests, among other things, on the existence of a powerful shared vision that evolves through wide participation to which the key leader contributes, but which the use of authority cannot shape?

For the school mission to truly undergird a positive school ethos it should not only be collaboratively created it should be highly visible on the school walls as well as in school policy, official documents and printed or digital communication mechanisms like email updates, parent newsletters and event invitations to the community. It should be referred to during everyday activities embodied in the interactions of the entire school community – the obvious and the subtle – including bulletin boards, staff to staff conversations, and staff to student greetings in hallways (Suggitt, 2014). New community members, be they students, teachers, support staff, and/or parents should be introduced to the mission and given the opportunity to formally sign on. The school mission should be an enduring agreement, however, it should also be revisited periodically to maintain community-wide commitment and ensure the mission's continued relevance and contextual embodiment.

From a Servant Leadership perspective a school leader's moral stewardship of teachers' professional ethos will include reserving time for all teachers, especially beginning or early career teachers, to contribute to the discussion and decisions around the collaborative processes for developing the school mission, vision and core values as well as their content. Servant leaders should also look for opportunities to allow teachers to articulate their individual purpose statements and to reflect on how their individual purpose statements and professional aspirations align with the school mission, vision and core values.

## The Development of Democratic Community

The United States is said to be the first nation founded on the shared commitment of all citizens to the protection of equal rights. Although we have often fallen short of its most lofty ideals, our American democracy is said to be characterized by "government by the people," "social equality," and "majority rule" (American Heritage Dictionary, 2017). Going beyond this critical need for democratic citizenship, philosopher John Dewey reflected "Democracy is a mode of associated living, or conjoint communicated experiences under which citizen participation is premised on informed opinions, self-reflective practice, open-mindedness, and a toleration of diversity" (Dewey, 1916, p. 93). School leaders, teachers, and students can be powerful stewards of our democratic ideals. In an article on servant leadership, Crippen (2005) conveys the assertion of Glickman et al. (2005) that:

> In a democratic society, it is vital that students learn to think reflectively, function at high stages of moral reasoning, and be autonomous decision makers (Glickman et al., 2005 p. 156). Hence, the role of school leader and/or teacher becomes critical in providing the example and environment to foster such democratic ethos. (Crippen, 2005 p.3)

Smith considers the moral stewardship of schools to be inescapably intertwined with the development of democratic community. Smith discusses the tensions that exist in a democracy and the need for students to have opportunities to gain the skills to manage conflict and constructively address disagreements – often involving multiple legitimate purposes such as the tension between individual rights and the common good. According to Furman and Starratt, teachers should facilitate

> Classroom debates of differing perspectives to teach respect for different points of view as well as provide for learning how to conduct such debates in public, following rules of civility and respect, as well as logic and evidence gathering. (Furman & Starratt, 2002, p.122)

Of course the development of democratic community in classrooms does not happen by accident. It takes intentional effort and ongoing cultivation at multiple levels. School leaders must be willing to share decision-making responsibilities and enable faculty and staff to hone their own skills of constructive conflict, compromise, and consensus building – modeling democratic values whenever possible. Starrett (2007) defines leadership for democratic community as being concerned with cultivating:

> An environment that supports participation, sharing of ideas, and the virtues of honesty, openness, flexibility, and compassion. Democratic educational leadership should be focused on cultivating school environments where … richer and fuller humanity is experienced and activated by people acting in communion. … (p. 7)

The question then becomes – how is this intentional effort on the part of school leadership operationalized in ways that support teachers professional ethos? Furman and Starrett (2002) provide the following answer:

> Since democratic community is processual, leadership practice attends to the creation and maintenance of democratic processes and structures that nurture "thinking aloud together." Leadership in this regard is intentional and opportunistic. All decisions and issues that substantively affect school community members should be open to democratic deliberation. Thus, leaders need to attend with sensitivity to the continuous flow of concerns and decision opportunities within the life of the school, and those in the surrounding community that affect the school. (p. 125)

## Dedication to Whole-School Renewal

Robert Greenleaf was a student of 'how things get done' and how processes can be improved in organizations. He spoke of the need for individuals to work together as regenerative forces from within institutions to raise the institution's capacity to serve and perform as servant toward the goal of building a better society. A servant leader's ethos of stewardship obligates an organizational leader to operate as a regenerative force within the institution as on-going whole school renewal. Smith tells us that "schools must become self-renewing, cultivating the capacity for solving their own problems and meeting the needs of the unique set of young people within their borders (p.168)" The terms *regenerative* and *renewal* are similar in their optimistic and forward marching tone while the term *school reform* conjures up the terms deficit theory and disruption.

John Goodlad (1999) articulates an important distinction between the language and ethos of school renewal vs. that of school reform. Goodlad points out that the language of school reform is militaristic and economic with an ethos dominated by excessive accountability, standardization, and punishment and this framing results in teachers and students that are stressed and anxious. Goodlad describes the ethos of renewal as one of self development and growth, where the people in schools are constantly improving their individual practice as well as developing the collaborative structures and caring climate necessary to improve schools. Goodlad goes on to observe:

> The language of school reform virtually eschews reference to the maturing of the self into greater wisdom, civility, civic mindedness, democratic character, and participation in the whole of the human conversation… the omission is downright scary and the scariness is exacerbated by an emphasis on accountability rather than responsibility, conformity rather than creativity, punishment rather than renewal (1999, pg 576)

The language of renewal rather than reform more productively addresses a seeming paradox embodied in stewardship – the need to simultaneously promote both organizational conservation and change. To some extent school leadership is about the polarities of providing organizational stability while driving change, hence the many book titles about educators as *change agents*. Today's school leaders, individually and collectively, are charged with ensuring that the institutions designed to educate youth for the industrial economy metamorphize into organizations that prepare youth for an economy and future that is characterized by the phrase – volatile, uncertain, complex and adaptive (VUCA). An effective Servant Leader's stewardship must include foresight. However, while their focus is invariably on emerging needs and improving strategies, school leaders must also be concerned with conserving the resources, organization, and community entrusted to them. Becoming a Servant Leader means becoming a touchstone of stability and predictability as well as a symbol of forward progress. In the Fifth Discipline (1990), Peter Senge maintains that conservation, paradoxically, enables change. Senge observed:

> Change leaders often forget to ask a powerful question: "What do we seek to conserve?" Change naturally induces fear in us all: fear of the unknown, of failure, of not being needed in a new order of things. When we obsessively focus only on what needs to be changed, and not on what we intend to conserve, we reinforce these fears. But when we can clarify what we intend to conserve, some of this fear can be released. When leaders consciously apply this principle, they usually discover that people seek to conserve identity and relationships (pp. 334–335).

An ethos of stewardship can allow educational leaders to promote the atmosphere of personal and professional safety and growth necessary for the continuous renewal of the organization and the people.

## Engagement in Critical Inquiry

Joyce and Calhoun (1995) tell us that "School renewal recreates the organization from within—through changes that support continuous examination and improvement of the education process at every level" (p.19) and this requires school leaders to develop the habit and model the routine use of critical inquiry. Critical inquiry is defined as the process of gathering information, evaluating objectives, and utilizing the insights gained from this process to effectively and responsibly manage school resources. In this light, "critical" does not necessarily mean that this process will be a *negative* one but the perspective should be introspective in a way that *all* systems currently in place should be periodically analyzed. This includes reflecting on power dynamics, social expectations, cultural influences, and interpersonal relationships. The "inquiry" element necessitates the routine investigation (formally through assessments or informally through conversation and awareness) into whether the policies and procedures of the school continue to serve the school mission and stakeholders, and function in the way that they were intended, without producing unintended negative consequences. Smith (1999) reminds us that "busy school people do not find it easy to question the regularities (the day to day routines and schedules that organize school life) in their daily individual work, much less the collective work of their school" (p. 170).

Yontz stated that "inquiry into both personal practices and school-wide policies should be done with an understanding of the interconnectedness of the many aspects of school" (2012, p. 61–62). When engaging in critical inquiry, moral stewards must recognize that the situations within schools are complex in ways that require creative problem-solving that should rely on data, facts, and an objective look at all the factors that impact the school and their dynamic role in the success of the institution.

It is through critical inquiry that the school principal can periodically assess their servant leadership success by asking themselves Greenleaf's original "best test" questions, mentioned previously: Do those being served grow as persons, and can we say that no one will be hurt? It is important that principals have a high degree of self-awareness and the ability to be radically candid with themselves and the school community especially around issues of social justice and equity. Robert Greenleaf warned that "awareness is not a giver of solace – it is just the opposite. It is a disturber and an awakener. Able leaders are usually sharply awake and reasonably disturbed. They are not seekers after solace" (1998, p.09). Moral stewardship includes seeking out disparate stakeholder opinions and the intentional collection of countervailing data.

## Stewardship Through Professional Development

At its core, servant leadership is about valuing and developing people (Greenleaf, 1970). Larry Spears (2005), former president of the Greenleaf Center spent several years reviewing the original writings of Robert K. Greenleaf and determined "*Commitment to the growth of people*" to be one of the essential characteristics of a Servant Leader. Spears concluded that:

> The servant-leader recognizes the tremendous responsibility to do everything within his or her power to nurture the personal, professional, and spiritual growth of employees. In practice, this can include (but is not limited to) concrete actions such as making available funds for personal and professional development, taking a personal interest in the ideas and suggestions from everyone, encouraging worker involvement in decision making. (p.4)

One of the most direct ways that school principals commit to the growth of their people is through supporting and participating in a variety of individually and collectively relevant professional development/learning experiences. Studies show that many beginning and veteran teachers feel unprepared for the new and evolving educational expectations or for the diverse and often shifting student populations of today's classrooms. Developing and sustaining professional teacher ethos in today's schools requires significant and sustained learning opportunities and supports through professional development in and outside their schools.

Smith (1999) reminds us that in order to optimize the return on professional development "certain conditions must be in place… The school culture must provide trust and support, encourage and nurture risk taking, ensure collaborative inquiry into teaching and learning, embrace cooperative decision making, and provide specific avenues for instruction and training" (p.173). This suggests that professional development contributes to ethos, but that ethos also contributes to professional development by supporting mutual trust and encouragement. Sergiovanni (1992) describes this aspect of moral leadership in terms characterizing stewardship:

> As leaders of leaders, they work hard to build up capacities of teachers and others so that direct leadership will no longer be needed. This is achieved through team building, leadership development, shared decision making, and striving to establish the value of collegiality. (p. 123)

## The Preparation of Future Educators

The final component of Smith's model of moral stewardship in schools concerns the preparation of the next generation of teachers and the potential benefits to both the teacher preparation program and the partnering K-12 school. Given the shortage and high turnover of first year teachers—Smith provides examples of programs she considered innovative and highly successful. Her examples all involve the collaboration of teacher preparation programs and partnering schools beyond simply being open to receiving student teachers and assigning a mentor teacher. In keeping with a Servant Leader's commitment to the stewardship of schools, Smith asserts that these collaborations must provide:

> three key elements: practical curricula that address the needs of diverse learners; opportunities for teacher candidates to reflect on their own beliefs and feelings about working with individuals who are different from them; and an array of field experiences, including working with the partner school's community; and having support during the first year of teaching. (p176)

In describing the gap between teacher-education research and practice when it comes to *the moral work of teaching or MWT*, Sanger et al. (2013) assert that:

> while practitioners, teacher candidates, teacher educators, and program administrators commonly acknowledge the presence and the value of the MWT, teacher education programs and practices just as commonly lack explicit, substantive, and intentional treatment of it (p.8).

A Servant Leader will want to ensure (a) that the teacher preparation program and the student candidates that come to the servant leader's campus and interact with children share the same mission as the school; (b) that they are properly introduced and prepared to interact with the particular students they will be working with, (c) have had the opportunity to observe mentor teachers and (d) time to discuss with them what they observed. Smith provides examples of innovative university-school partnerships that enable school principals to contribute to shaping teachers' professional ethos while they are still undergraduates. Ideally, according to Smith, moral stewards play a role in selecting teacher candidates, co-teach seminars with teacher preparation faculty, have teacher candidates work with school faculty to conduct special enrichment and remedial programs, and enable other innovative programs that get undergraduate and graduate students reflecting on school practices and working with diverse K-12 students as early as possible. These practices will require the investment of additional time on behalf of teacher educators and school personnel. School leaders must enable collaborating teachers to take the time to have deep discussion with students to deconstruct classroom learning events.

## Conclusion

Servant Leadership, with its obligation to provide moral stewardship, assists educational leaders in supporting the growth and development of all people in the organization. In the specific case of schools, it provides guidance to Principals on *how* to support the development of teachers and staff. Further, the concept of *teacher ethos* assists those educational leaders in imagining teacher development as a supported self-cultivation of the teacher's own strengths. Using the model of stewardship, we can see that teacher ethos and the collective school ethos are large parts of what Principals are to steward and leave significantly stronger. In the process of being a steward of the teachers' professional ethos, the leaders' own development and aspirations are grown, supported through this nurturing relationship. Psychologist Erik Erikson describes this type of pro-social orientation as *generativity*, often characterized as a *desire to give back*. Greenleaf discussed leaders' duty to be, and inspire others to be, regenerative forces within their organization. As principals develop their ability to give teachers what they need to be their best selves this capacity contributes to the leader's own maturity and ethos development, in turn, enabling them to embody their own best professional ethos and represent the school's best ethos.

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