Essay on ethical leadership in nursing education

Business, Management

Ethical leadership is an approach to management in an organization that requires the person in-charge to uphold a preset code of moral conduct as an example for other members of the organization to emulate. Scholarly interest in ethical leadership within organizations has increased since 2010 (Soneinshen, 2009). This is attributed to the emergence of a new approach to corporate governance that highlights the need for public accountability. In the field of nursing, ethical leadership has also been a subject of various studies due to the increasing number of medical employees' misconduct since 2005 (Valentine, Godkin, Page & Rittenburg, 2009). The implementation of ethical leadership within the nursing profession has led to the emergence of various pertinent issues: stockholder expectation vs. ethical consideration, need for leaders to become role models in upholding ethics, and emergence of new leadership styles.

The stockholder theory argues that a manager's primary responsibility is to the owners of an organization. Proponents of this theory highlight the need by managers to increase profit margins and achieve stockholder goals. The achievement of these milestones is what stockholder theorists argue should be used as a measure for a successful leader. The emergence of ethical leadership in the medical profession has created a conflict between the need to uphold ethics and stockholder expectations. This is because in some instances upholding ethical standards may result in increased costs and hence reduced profit margins for the stockholders. During training nurses are educated on the need to uphold the profession's ethical code in the execution of their duties. This, however, becomes difficult when the nurse has to deal with hospital owners whose main concern is profit generation.

Ethical leadership requires the person in-charge to uphold a high code of ethical conduct that may be emulated by the followers. The emergence of ethical leadership has hence introduced a new parameter for identifying leaders in the nursing profession: ethics. Nursing students should be educated that being a specialist in an area does not guarantee a leadership position in that field; they will have to display ethical conduct that is above the rest of their team members.

New leadership styles have emerged in the nursing profession as a result of the integration of ethical leadership (Valentine, Godkin, Page & Rittenburg, 2009). This is because ethical leadership entails resolving ethical issues that may arise in the workplace. Scholars indicate that an appropriate approach to handling such issues involves the leader creating forums to engage the employees on their opinion. This approach has emphasized the need for participative leadership style within healthcare organizations. The approach has also demystified leadership as a role where a person must know everything; this is because ethical leaders are required to engage their employees.

Studies indicate that more than 70% of ethical leaders who have overcome the issues discussed in the previous paragraphs have been successful in satisfying their employers, employees and other stakeholders' goals (Valentine, Godkin, Page & Rittenburg, 2009). This indicates that a proactive strategy that seeks to overcome the three issues should be adopted as a framework by healthcare organizations for their corporate strategies. Robbins (2010) notes that the use of the stockholder theory is becoming outdated and that only 15% of managers feel that it should be used to

measure their success. Another study indicates that 65% of stockholders would consider a manager successful based on their ethical record and not just financial performance (Robbins, 2010. These figures indicate that the adoption of ethical leadership in the nursing profession is bound to increase as it receives increasing support from owners of healthcare organizations.

References

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