
STEWARD LEADERSHIP IN THE PUBLIC SECTOR

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Abstract

This paper explores the concept of public administrators as something more than just public employees. More specifically, it defines stewardship, presents models for steward leadership in the private, religious and public sectors, and begins a dialogue of teaching future public administrators to embrace a steward leadership approach.

Introduction

As instructors to the future leaders of public organizations, we should constantly be asking ourselves what we should be teaching. Are the traditional and accepted approaches to management still relevant for society in the new century or should we look for new ways to manage public organizations? And even if the current curriculum is still adequately preparing young public administrators to do their jobs, are there concepts in that curriculum that have been missing for too long and need to be included?

When a student enters a Master's in public administration program, he or she usually expects to

graduate with the advanced skills necessary to manage an organization in the public sector. Students who enter business management programs expect to graduate with the advanced skills necessary to manage in the private sector. Such management usually involves the marshaling of limited resources to carry forward the vision in specific ways (Intervarsity Christian Fellowship/USA, 2001). Most managers, in either the public or private sector, are not only expected to manage, but are also expected to exhibit leadership qualities.

Mayer, in her book entitled “Goldilocks on Management,” noted that the leadership skills usually taught in Masters degree programs are strategic planning, decision making, and communication (Mayer, 1999). She quotes a 1996 article by Farkas and Wetlaufer noting the five distinct approaches to management that usually result from this educational process:

The **strategy** approach focuses on future positioning based on current realities, rather than on day-to-day operations. Leaders who use this approach spend 80 percent of their time dealing with (or thinking about) customers, competitors, market trends, and technological advances.

The **change** approach, which is common in rapidly evolving industries, requires creating an environment supportive to continual reinvention of the basic business. Leaders employing this approach spend much of

their time in the field to keep abreast of the latest innovations. They typically devote considerable attention to communicating to their colleagues and subordinates a philosophy that embraces change.

The **human assets** approach emphasizes a proximity to the marketplace and values the behaviors and attitudes of a broadly trained spectrum of staff. Leaders who take this approach focus their energies on personal issues, carefully recruiting, training, promoting, and evaluating the performance of staff.

The **box** approach is most frequently used in highly regulated industries such as banking and insurance. Leaders who work with a box approach desire to provide a uniform, predictable experience for their customers. Thus they spend much of their time establishing and communicating both formal and informal rules, regulations, policies, and procedures, which are to be followed explicitly.

Lastly, the **expertise** approach involves the selection, support, nurturing, and promotion of a particular area of expertise that provides a competitive advantage for the organization. Leaders who take an expertise approach spend the majority of their time cultivating that expertise through analysis, research, staff and product development, and meetings with other experts. (Mayer, 1999).

These approaches are used generally by leaders to deliver clarity, commitment and consistency to the organization.

It is doubtful that any instructor of public administration would dispute teaching strategic planning, decision-making, and communication as basic skills for future public administrators. Furthermore, it is probably agreed that leaders develop their own style that may or may not fit one of the above noted approaches. It is also probably agreed that styles may change from time to time to fit the circumstances at hand. But is it generally agreed that this is all there is to it? Maybe not. There is another approach to management that should be taught. It can be practiced alone or as a companion with those noted above. This approach is that of stewardship.

The purpose of this paper is to study the idea of steward leadership. The value of steward leadership will be explored. Its viability in the public sector, as well as its existence in the private sector, will be examined. Its religious connotation will also be addressed. The discussion will then focus on the importance of this approach to public administration theory and curriculum.

What is stewardship?

The Merriam-Webster Dictionary defines stewardship as, “the conducting, supervising, or managing of something: especially the careful and responsible management of something entrusted to one’s care” (Merriam-Webster, 1999). At Leadership.com (Authentic Transformational Leadership), a piece entitled “The Servant and the

Steward” describes stewards as leaders who know that they have been entrusted with valuable resources, most obviously the people who work in their organizations, which require nurturing if they are to grow and investment if they are to develop. They recognize that they are responsible for the climate and conditions in which their people operate (Authentic Transformational Leadership Limited, 2003).

The idea of stewardship has been around since the beginning of time. For Christians, stewardship began when Adam was given dominion over the Garden of Eden. Even prior to the *Bible*, the ancient Greeks, Buddha, and Lao Tzu were saying similar things (Spears, 1998). In the preface of his book, *Stewardship: Choosing Service Over Self-Interest*, Block notes that stewardship is to hold something in trust for another. Historically, stewardship was a means to protect a kingdom while those rightfully in charge were away or, more often, to govern for the sake of an underage king. Block likens us to the stewards; the underage king is the next generation (Block, 1996).

Kay Westbrook, begins her book, *Enter Into the Joy*, with a job description of a steward. She indicates that stewardship is not boring but instead is a challenging administrative position with broad-based decision-making powers. It requires commitment, courage, initiative and judgement. It encompasses all of life. She says that each of us will eventually have to give an accounting of our stewardship to our employer. The position of steward comes with an automatic job review (Westbrook, 1996).

In a position paper by the Business Executives for Economic Justice, it is noted that stewardship makes each of us responsible for ensuring the best, most productive, and most equitable use of the resources that we own or for which we have responsibility. It comes with membership in the human community. It is not a mantle we don when we have reached a certain level of success and can afford to give something back. It defines our relationship to each other and to the whole creation. It confers the responsibility to oversee the ongoing unfolding of creations. It influences how we utilize the whole range of resources at our disposal – money, time, power, prestige, authority and influence. Every human action has a stewardly dimension (Business Executives, 1992).

The same position paper (Business Executives, 1992) notes that there are different areas in which managers must exercise stewardship. Even though the position paper is geared toward private industry, several of the areas are extremely relevant to public service.

The first area is **stewardship of people**. Being a good steward of other people means making tough decisions with the welfare of all concerned in mind. It means paying attention to the people who are our primary responsibilities first. It also means going beyond what is minimally required in dealing with others. Finally, and perhaps most importantly, it means encouraging good stewardship in others.

The second area is **stewardship of products and services**. Being a good steward of our products and services means being concerned about how products or services are marketed and distributed, as well as how they are produced.

The third area is **stewardship of the community**. Stewardship does not allow us to be passive bystanders in our communities but rather insists that we use the resources at our command to sustain and improve the communities in which we operate. Being a good steward means not putting our heads in the sand about social problems but rather getting involved in finding solutions.

The fourth area is **stewardship of the environment**. Being a good steward means accepting the costs of protecting the environment as a legitimate and unavoidable cost of doing business. It means going beyond what is minimally required by law or even prevailing opinion.

The fifth area is **stewardship of the social fabric**. Being a good steward means giving time and talent as much as treasure. It means applying business skills and organizational experience to social problems. It means giving in good times and bad, but also holding the recipients of our charity to rigorous standards of stewardship themselves.

Through these various definitions, I believe we can start to develop a more comprehensive idea of stewardship and how it can be woven into fundamental leadership skills and traditional approaches to management.

Does a model exist for the practice of stewardship?

The practice of public administration is based upon existing theory, and models by which said theories can be put into practice. If the practice of stewardship is going to be incorporated into basic public administration theory, there must be some rules to guide us. Peter Block is a leading author and lecturer on stewardship for managers. In his book *Stewardship: Choosing Service Over Self-Interest*, he outlines a three-part model for stewardship as it relates to being in a position of power. Self-interest must be replaced with service as the basis for holding and using power (Block, 1996).

Power is granted from those below. The community creates the opportunity for a person to be in a position of power. Power is bestowed upon us by those we “lead.” If we serve those who put us in our position, then in an organization the recipients of our service and trusteeship are the core workers. They are the community, and they are the ones to which we become accountable.

Our contribution is our humanity. The obligation of accepting a position of power

is to be, above all else, a good human being. It is not to be a good leader, not so much to maintain order and fight back chaos, nor to know what is best for others. Stewardship is the willingness to work on ourselves first, to stay in intimate contact with those around us, to own our doubts and limitations, and make them part of our dialogue with others.

What is true is known to each of us. Trust comes out of the experience of pursuing what is true. What is true, lies within each of us. Stewardship is founded on the belief that others have the knowledge and the answers within themselves. We do not have to teach other adults how to behave, nor spell out for middle managers what their role will be.

Block also establishes nine principles for practice that would need to be incorporated by managers wishing to govern on the basis of stewardship. These principles are particularly important when functioning in a supervisory role. They are as follows (Block, 1996):

Maximize the choice for those closest to the work. The intent is to put decision making and the authority to act right where the work gets done. Core workers need the freedom of action to control costs, enhance operations, and give customers more control over the relationship. The choice we offer people is what creates accountability.

Reintegrate the managing and the doing of the work. Management becomes a set of tasks and activities, not a full-time job title. Everybody manages, although some have a wider view and a longer time perspective. The notion of manager prerogatives disappears. There is no privileged class of people. Everyone does work that brings value.

Let measurement and controls serve the core workers. The measures will be designed by those to be measured. Be realistic about predictability. Value longer-term, qualitative measures. Even if you cannot measure it, it might still be worth doing. Measure results and real outcomes, stop measuring people's behavior and style of getting there.

Yield on consistency across groups and support local solutions. Embrace consistency only when the law, regulations, or external demands require it. Give unique, local solutions the benefit of the doubt. Have executives and staff groups prove the need for consistency, instead of having supervisor and work teams prove the need for an exception.

Service is everything. People are accountable to those they serve. Service is aimed at customers and subordinates. Evaluations, feedback, and the very definitions of roles and services offered are

delivered from conversations with customers and subordinates.

De-glorify management as a job title and de-mystify the staff functions.

Management and staff groups exist primarily to contribute to people doing the core work. Let line people decide what kind of services they want to receive. No one should be able to make a living simply planning, watching, controlling, or evaluating the actions of others.

End secrecy. Support the idea of full disclosure. It requires giving complete information and telling the truth all the time. Knowledge is power, so give it away. Full disclosure and full information are the rule, so that people understand the consequences of the decisions they are making. Full disclosure also means to openly discuss bad news and difficult issues. No protecting or positioning is allowed. The more sensitive the issue, the more it needs discussing, especially in groups. We express our trust in our institution by the amount of information we allow to become public. Full disclosure also requires that people do their own communicating.

Demand a promise. There is a price to be paid by those given more choice over their work and that price is a promise. People engaged in the redesign of their governance need to commit to act in the interests of the whole organization. Freedom and

commitment are in every case joined at the hip.

Redistribute wealth. The reward system needs to tie everyone's fortunes to the success of the team, unit, and larger organization. Paying for outstanding individual performance becomes a minor element of compensation. Eliminate individual rankings and ratings. Self-interest is fed by individualism and overcome by community. The reward system needs to recognize that all employees are owners and all are managers.

Furthermore, Block establishes three specific areas of individual focus where each member of the organization will need to make his or her own decisions regarding stewardship. These areas include (Block, 1996):

Survival in our own hands. This means placing ourselves in the position of being creators of the organization to which we belong – standing on our own ground, discovering our own voice, making our own choices, regardless of the level of power and privilege we hold. It stems from our choice of the mindset that tells us that we have within ourselves the authority to act and to speak and to serve clients and those around us. We do not need permission to feel or to take what matters into our own hands.

Defining purpose. This means that we each have the right to define purpose for

ourselves. Purpose has to do with defining the kind of culture within which we live, not just with deciding what business we are in or what goals to pursue. We are deciding moment to moment what kind of culture we want to create. There is a need to wait for top management to declare their vision. By the time we define the vision of those above, it will be too late. Like computer technology, the moment it hits the marketplace, it is obsolete. If those above have a vision, we want to know it and support it, but it does not substitute for our own.

Commitment. We have the obligation to commit ourselves. It requires an emotional investment. To act now, to live with consequences, even with failure, and to give up our wish for safety. Taking responsibility is at the heart of claiming our freedom. The commitment has to be to the community within our workplace, not just to our own interests or our own career. Our answer to the question, “Are you here to build a career or to build an organization?” has to be clear and without hesitation. We are here first to build the organization. Each of us has to create our own effort, conduct our own experiment and name our own child. We will experience our freedom the moment we take our job assignment and make it our own. We each create our purpose with or without the support of those who run our organization. We do not need

sponsorship from above to do the right thing.

Isn't stewardship a religious principle? If so, how can it apply to public administration?

Many people consider stewardship to be strictly a religious principle. The notion exists that stewardship is spiritual and thus, has no place in the professional environment and certainly not in the public sector. I disagree.

First, let us examine stewardship as a religious doctrine. Moseley's book entitled *Joyful Giving*, is a collection of sermons promoting stewardship (Moseley, 1997). Being such, Biblical scriptural references accompany each sermon. In reviewing these sermons from the point of view of an educator and practitioner, many of them take on a very non-religious tone. In fact, the admonitions of the ministers and pastors seem to provide great direction and basis for public service. Examples of such are to follow.

In his sermon entitled "Where is Your Heart?" Richard Hamm defines Christian stewardship:

"In the broadest sense, Christian stewardship means taking care of God's world: the environment, the people, the flora and fauna. It means taking care of the resources God has provided us – the time, the talent, the money – using these resources in ways that

are pleasing in God's sight" (Moseley, 1997).

What if we replace all references to Christians and God with a more politically correct, or topic specific, term such as public or taxpayer? Now let's read Hamm's definition again with these small modifications:

"In the broadest sense, public stewardship means taking care of the public's world: the environment, the people, the flora and fauna. It means taking care of the resources the taxpayer has provided us – the time, the talent, the money – using these resources in ways that are pleasing in their sight."

Had you not known this text came from a religious sermon, would you have ever questioned its appropriate use by a public administrator?

In this same sermon, Hamm admonishes listeners to consider how they invest their time, talent, energy and money. He points out that individual's lives will be driven, directed and dominated by whatever it is that in which one invests (Moseley, 1997). As previously noted, it is often difficult for public administrators to maintain pride and a positive attitude in the midst of all the negativity of public service. For many public administrators, Hamm's question "Where is Your Heart?" may truly determine their commitment, success and longevity.

Timothy N. Tiffany approaches stewardship from a very physical point of view in his sermon entitled, "Dominion or Domination?" He reminds

listeners that, as stewards, humans have been given dominion over all the works of God's hands. He stresses the incredible wonder of this dominion (Moseley, 1997). What if we again change the Biblical terminology in Tiffany's sermon? It then reads, as public administrators, we have been given jurisdiction over all the assets of the public.

D. Edward Taylor speaks of stewardship as the care and keeping of creation, a trust from God. He notes that our call, our Christian vocation, is to be stewards of what belongs to God and is entrusted into our care. As individuals and as a community of faith, our trust includes money and possessions, time and abilities, human and non-human creation, the good news of Christ and mysteries of God (Moseley, 1997).

Once more, we can remove the religious reference and Taylor's words become very relevant for public administrators. Consider this version; Our charge, our vocation, is to be stewards of what belongs to the public and is entrusted into our care. As individuals and as a community, our trust includes money and possessions, time and abilities, human and non-human assets.

The Leader as Steward (InterVarsity Christian Fellowship/ USA, 2001) takes a very specific biblical account of Nehemiah and relates it to a non-spiritual circumstance of steward leadership. As a leader, Nehemiah wants to know about his people. He tries to see more deeply into situations, to identify himself with the people and their circumstances. He is humble rather than prideful. He remembers his promises (why he got

into public service in the first place) and takes risks. He knows what he needs and has planned out his strategy, with faith (confidence) that he will succeed. Yet again, if the biblical references are removed, and substituted as noted in parenthesis, Nehemiah is acting in the ways of a public steward.

Not all religious references to stewardship are found in the form of actual sermons. Many Christians learn and practice stewardship as a way of life. Likewise, many public administrators can learn to approach their careers with the attitude of stewardship. Kay Westbrook discusses stewardship as it applies to many aspects of our lives, none of which need to be tied to religious beliefs. She applies stewardship to such universal things as time, personal gifts, our bodies, the earth, and money. She talks of these things in terms of our managerial role and the fact that we have the freedom to make managerial decisions in our own lives on a daily basis (Westbrook, 1996).

The same holds true for public administrators. We function in managerial positions everyday. We have the opportunity to make decisions that impact our organizations in the same ways that our personal decisions impact our lives. If we practice stewardship in our personal lives, we are not likely to make decisions that impact our future in negative ways. Likewise, if we practice stewardship as public administrators, we will be unwilling to make decisions that impact future resources in a negative ways.

Jeff Patnaude, in his book *Leading from the Maze*, and in his Eagles Seminars stresses that

leaders and managers in both the public and private sectors have to approach their work as “not just making a living but making a difference” (Patnaude, 1996).¹ This method also captures the essence of what public administrators are doing when they approach their work with the attitude of stewardship. It’s not just a matter of going to work, putting in time, and leaving when done. The work that public administrators do has far reaching impacts for numerous individuals. It must be done with the attitude that a difference needs to be made in the lives of those who seek services or in the long-term viability of the organization.

How can stewardship exist in public organizations?

Any person who has ever worked in the public sector, regardless of the position, has heard it all, those nasty generalizations about government workers. It’s often difficult to convince anyone that public employees are anything but “overpaid, under worked, lazy, good-for-nothing, mooching off the taxpayers because they can’t get a real job,” etc. For professionals who have chosen to make public administration their career, they must be prepared to deal with this negative stereotype. As they find themselves in management positions, they must also be prepared to help their staff deal with these negative influences.

A 1999 article in *PA Times* noted the following, “Ask any group of practitioners what they do for a living. Very few will say that they feel proud to work for the government because of

the reaction of citizens is usually negative—couldn't you get a real job?" (Timney, 1999).

In addition to these negative pressures placed on public employees, there are also pressures from within. The charge to do more with less, cut taxes, cut budgets, provide more diverse services to growing populations, and so on, only adds to the difficulties faced by public administrators and their employees. These difficulties are compounded by the new economic environment of dwindling funding, competitive short-term grants rather than on-going formula or building block funding, and constant fundraising, just to maintain the status quo, let alone be visionary.

As previously noted, it is important to teach public administrators basic skills such as strategic planning, decision making, and communication, but these skills alone won't necessarily produce the kind of manager who can deal with these pressures. As Block noted, as public stewards we are responsible for the next generation (Block, 1996).

One way to combat this encroaching negativity is to provide public administrators with additional tools, especially tools that have deeper roots than traditional management tools. This is where the idea of stewardship comes into focus. If public administrators learn the concept of stewardship and apply it as part of their approach to management from the beginning, their attitude about public service and their ability to cope with the negativity that accompanies public service will be uniquely different.

Not only can the application of stewardship be of value in times of negativity, it can also shape the way a public administrator structures his or her career. This in turn will dictate how the public administrator approaches day-to-day tasks. This idea may seem somewhat intangible, so I offer a few examples.

If the focus of an adult services librarian is to provide access to best sellers and popular material, that librarian will likely be concerned with the here and now. The focus will be to provide as many copies as possible, as cheaply as possible. Little thought may be given to future patrons of that division of the library because the present demand is being met. It won't matter that the copies are paperback and durability is minimal. It won't matter that patrons will move on to other things and then multiple copies of the book will sit on the shelf for indefinite periods of time.

However, if the librarian approaches his or her work with stewardship in mind, the scenario will be different. Fewer copies of the book will likely be purchased to better spend what resources are available. Perhaps a few of the copies will be hardbound, even though more expensive, to prolong their usefulness. The librarian will be thinking about future patrons of the library and the integrity of the library system as a whole, as opposed to simply meeting the immediate and often fickle demands of the patrons. The librarian will practice the careful and responsible management of something entrusted to his or her care.

Another example might be that of a property tax appraiser. The immediate responsibility of this individual is to place values on property for the purpose of tax assessments. No one likes to be taxed and for many, property tax is the worst. So the appraiser wants to place a value that meets the requirements of the law but doesn't anger the property owner too much. In the course of examining the property, the appraiser discovers a property characteristic that substantially increases the value of the property as well as the values of the neighboring properties.

The standard approach might be to take the easy way out by either ignoring the characteristic altogether, or acknowledging it only on the initial property and none of the neighboring properties. If the appraiser approaches this task with stewardship in mind, the property characteristics would be applied to all the affected properties and appropriate adjustments would be made. Even though this would not be the most popular thing to do, the appraiser has stewardship over his or her task, i.e., the careful and responsible management of something entrusted to one's care.

In a more tangible sense, a stewardship approach lends itself well to some very practical results. Take, for example, a human resource professional who discovers an error in employer-paid retirement contributions for employees. The error is minute and will likely go unnoticed. It occurred several years prior under another director. However, the impact on some retirees could be many hundreds of dollars. A steward in this position will realize his or her responsibility for

those retirees who have entrusted the management of their retirement contributions to the human resource office.

In these examples, a stewardship approach may not even be considered by these staff members unless they have personally been taught, or if it is encouraged by a manager who understands stewardship and practices it on a daily basis. Stewardship is not generally the first response of staff people and managers. Unless we are consciously practicing this approach, it will not likely exist.

All this may be reminiscent of an ethics lesson. A class in ethics may be required for the MPA degree; however, stewardship is more than just good ethics. Business Executives for Economic Justice contend that true stewardship must be applied daily by managers in every aspect of both our private and public lives. It means prioritizing, and even choosing among various courses of action, all of which are good (Business Executives, 1992). It means practicing stewardship in a number of different areas, not just handling the major ethical questions that arise from time to time. As public managers, we face difficult choices on a daily basis that can impact the well being of many others.

Why is stewardship an important attribute for public administrators?

Managers in the private sector are responsible to consumers and shareholders. They are constantly concerned with the product, the value

of the stock and the overall profit margin. Long-term profitability and viability are constant concerns for managers, board members, and presidents. Those concerns are not directly paralleled in the public sector. For many public administrators, the bottom line is never measured. Service will be rendered and then the individual will move on. Public sector employees do not always focus on the consumer/customer because there isn't a competitor from whom individuals can get services. In addition, public sector organizations are not usually concerned with making a profit. Something else must motivate public administrators. Perhaps stewardship?

Timney noted the need for public administrators to examine their attitudes and motivations when she said, "Public administrators have lost a sense of the greater meaning of their work to the functioning of our system of government. They [public administrators] have lost a sense of the meaning of public service. Citizens have lost a sense of connection to government. Many citizens and even MPA students talk about "the" government as if it were a monolithic entity entirely separated from their lives except to coerce them out of their money and their rights" (Timney, 1999).

The value of an attitude of stewardship becomes increasingly important when considering not only how public administrators approach their tasks while on the job, but how they feel about themselves and what they do for a living. There must be some sense of making a difference.

Will the private sector view public stewardship as frivolous or credible?

As previously noted, “Business Executives for Economic Justice” is a group of Christian business and professional managers who attempt to integrate religious beliefs with the daily lives of jobs, families, churches and communities (Business Executives, 1992). One of their main objectives is to encourage other business people to incorporate the principles of stewardship into the daily practice of management and leadership in any sector; however, they are not alone in this quest.

In her book entitled, *Wear Clean Underwear: Business Wisdom from Mom*, Rhonda Abrams offers examples of private companies that excel by embracing what she terms as Mom’s timeless values. Many of these are good examples of stewardship.

One of these examples is the approach to leadership used by Zingerman’s Deli in Ann Arbor, Michigan. Co-owners Paul Saginaw and Ari Weinzweig view their company’s obligations in the following manner (Abrams, 1999):

“You’re not dropped down onto the earth with this given right to have as much as you can possibly get... You have a responsibility to pass it on to the next generation in better shape than it is now. That means thinking of success – personal success or business success – not as what you’re going to gain or accomplish for yourself, but what you’re

going to contribute. Whether that's to your employee, your organization, or your community. If you do that, then it's a lot easier to see yourself as successful. You're working with what you believe in, you're connected on a very deep, personal level to your humanness, and so it puts a lot more meaning in what you're doing."

Yvon Chouinard, founder of Patagonia, an outdoor clothing manufacturer, is known for his environmental stewardship. From the time Patagonia began to make a profit, Chouinard "tithed" a percentage of the company's gross sales to fund environmental concerns. In addition, Patagonia puts its values at the center of all its business decisions and actions. The emphasis is on how and why they do business and not just financial results. The company does things just because "it's the right thing to do" (Abrams, 1999).

It is true that all private sector organizations are not moving in the same direction as these specific examples. However, it is clear that the private sector has placed a value on this approach to management and leadership. Therefore, it would not be unheard of for the public sector to advocate such an approach.

How do we teach stewardship?

This is truly difficult to determine. Teaching stewardship is a lot like teaching ethics. Some students obviously come to public administration programs with a greater measure of

ethics than do others. The same is likely true with stewardship. Some students will embrace this approach much more readily than others. Simply put by a colleague, “Can stewardship be built through training or is it something that is more hard wired or learned early in life?”

One approach to teaching stewardship is to emphasize the concept in ethics courses. Make stewardship the basis from which ethical decisions are made, or at least focus on the importance of stewardship as one consideration to be used in decision making. Each ethical dilemma should be presented to students in such a way that they must use the principles of stewardship in arriving at possible solutions.

A second approach, which is the preferred approach, is to embrace the stewardship model and incorporate it into each of the classes that make up the core curriculum in an MPA program. The material for each subject would be taught with the added emphasis of stewardship. For example, the basic principles of quality management would be taught, as well as the application of stewardship to those principles. Each theory and corresponding application would reflect the presence of stewardship.

In teaching the stewardship model, instructors will need to emphasize the importance of individual decision making by public administrators. All too often the course curriculum teaches managers how to be rule-followers. Laws, policies, procedures and the like are taught and memorized as are the circumstances and protocols

for their use. However, the practice of stewardship is not governed by a distinct set of rules that is written in a policy manual and quoted in times of difficulty. Genuine steward leadership is a way of life that develops through the conscious application of proactive decision making for reasons not stated in some manual.

Based on the works of Peter Block, Robert Greenleaf and Larry Spears, Nebraska Cooperative Extension Specialists (Barbuto, Jr. and Wheeler, 2002) have identified a series of questions to assist aspiring leaders in the development of stewardship characteristics, as well as the articulation of some practical concerns related to such.

- Do people believe that you are willing to sacrifice your own self-interest for the good of the group?
- Do people believe that you want to hear their ideas and will value them?
- Do people believe that you will understand what is happening in their lives and how it affects them?
- Do people come to you when the chips are down or when something traumatic has happened in their lives?
- Do others believe that you have a strong awareness for what is going on?
- Do others follow your requests because they want to as opposed to because they have to?

- Do others communicate their ideas and vision for the organization when you are around?
- Do others have confidence in your ability to anticipate the future and its consequences?
- Do others believe you are preparing the organization to make a positive difference in the world?
- Do people believe that you are committed to helping them develop and grow?
- Do people feel a strong sense of community in the organization that you lead?

These questions can be used as a basis for initial evaluation, discussion, development of strategies and goals, and ongoing practical evaluation.

Conclusion

Public administration is not the most glamorous nor the most lucrative career choice available for graduate students today, and the demands placed on public managers continue to grow as the public wants more and better services at less expense. The impacts of good public administration can be infinite. Public administrators must be prepared to meet these challenges.

No longer can we allow public administrators to approach their daily work with the attitude, "I'll just do my job for today and let

someone else deal with the fall out long after I'm gone." As teachers, we must instill a higher level of responsibility and sense of accountability in those future public administrators who come to us for education.

The practice of stewardship has been around as long as the existence of human beings. There is a place for it in our modern society. Many professionals are longing for "something more." Steward leadership provides something more than just doing the job. Stewardship in the public sector also provides the public with something more than just typical interaction with their government.

No longer is "business as usual" simply filling the needs of those seeking service or those providing it. And it won't be enough in the future. Public administrators must practice and provide something more. Steward leadership is that something more.

Notes

1. <http://www.patnaude.com>

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