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BOOKLET THREE

Reflecting on Practice through a Case Script and a Case Scenario

Recreational Mutiny: Between a Rock and a Hard Place

The case script *Recreational Mutiny: Between a Rock and a Hard Place* was developed from a case written by an elementary school principal. The incident described, reflecting experience from practice, presented several dilemmas. The script has been used with teachers and principals and in leadership development courses.

Case Context

An elementary school principal faces a dilemma arising from an extracurricular event. The principal must act judiciously and fairly to calm and meet the needs of an irate school and parent community.

Participants:

- **Ted Martin, the school principal**
- **Anne Martin, Ted's wife**
- **Eileen Jenkins, a teacher and basketball coach at Ted's school**
- **Susan, Becky and Monica, students who play basketball**
- **Becky's mother and Susan's mother**
- **Laura Rakoff, the vice-principal**
- **Bev Cleary, the school superintendent**
- **Paul Silva, a teacher**

italic indicates stage directions

INT. TED'S HOUSE – NIGHT

Ted Martin, a school principal, is eating dinner with his wife, Anne.

TED ■ Full-day senior kindergarten is just another way for us to help our students and teachers. All we need is a couple more meetings to formalize....

ANNE ■ It sounds like everything's coming together. You've been working at that for a while.

TED ■ I have to keep finding ways to help... new ways to create community

The telephone rings. Ted and Anne look at each other. He moves to pick up the phone.

TED (Cont'd) ■ Hello?

INT. EILEEN JENKINS'S HOME – NIGHT

Eileen Jenkins, a teacher at Ted's school, is on the telephone in her sitting room. She clutches the telephone to her ear.

EILEEN ■ There will be no more girls' basketball team this year; it has been cancelled.

INT. TED'S HOUSE – NIGHT

Ted looks concerned and sits down away from the dinner table.

TED ■ Hold on...

*INT. EILEEN'S HOME – NIGHT**Eileen cuts in.***EILEEN**

- And I think that parents have too much control over what happens in our classrooms and in our extracurricular programs. They just don't understand how hard it is... how hard we work.

*INT. TED'S HOUSE – NIGHT**Ted shakes his head.***TED**

- What happened?

*INT. SCHOOL GYMNASIUM - FLASHBACK – DAY**The girls on the team are practising drills. Eileen Jenkins is coaching from the sidelines, following the girls up and down the court.***EILEEN**

- Come on, come on... Look alive, girls... Susan... pay attention.

*One of the girls, Susan, walks over to one of her teammates, Becky. Eileen notices this.***EILEEN (Cont'd)**

- Hey, you two... you aren't here for a tea party...

*Susan and Becky exchange a look. In the stands, two women slip in and sit quietly in the bleachers.**INT. SCHOOL GYMNASIUM - FLASHBACK - DAY – LATER**The girls have finished their practice and Eileen hands them their towels*

EILEEN ■ Nice job, ladies. We're almost ready for next weekend's tournament.

Susan and Becky approach Eileen tentatively.

SUSAN ■ Mrs. Jenkins...

EILEEN ■ Yes, Susan?

SUSAN ■ We don't want to play any more.

EILEEN ■ What?

BECKY ■ We decided... we don't like the way you're always yelling at us and we... don't like it.

Eileen looks up and sees that the two women are standing behind the girls.

BECKY'S MOTHER ■ You are constantly yelling at the girls whenever they make a mistake. It's not fun for the kids.

EILEEN ■ Excuse me? Are you saying that I don't know what I'm doing?

SUSAN'S MOTHER ■ That's exactly what we're saying. You shouldn't be coaching and you shouldn't even be working with kids. I feel sorry for any child that has to attend your class. Come on, Susan.

Susan's mother walks off. Susan takes a moment and looks at Eileen. She then turns and follows her mother out of the gym.

INT. EILEEN'S HOME – NIGHT

EILEEN ■ I don't have to take that... in front of the whole team.

INT. TED'S HOUSE - NIGHT

TED ■ I know, I know... please calm down. We'll talk about this in the morning.

INT. EILEEN'S HOME – NIGHT

Eileen leans into the receiver.

EILEEN ■ I've made my mind up.

She puts the telephone down.

INT. TED'S HOUSE – NIGHT

The telephone clicks off the line and Ted puts the phone back on the receiver.

ANNE ■ Who was that?

TED ■ Eileen Jenkins. She's having some trouble with the girls' basketball team.

ANNE ■ Jenkins... which one is she?

TED ■ Good teacher, but her people skills need work. That reputation has followed her from school to school. I mean, she works really hard... but sometimes that means that she tends to look down on people who don't work as hard as she does. Her reputation...

ANNE ■ I'm sure you'll sort it out tomorrow.

Ted nods, although he doesn't seem to be fully convinced.

EXT. SCHOOL – DAY

A bright, sunny day. The school buses pull up in front of the school, letting students off. The students are from 4 to 11 years old and come from a mix of cultural backgrounds.

INT. PRINCIPAL'S OFFICE – DAY

Ted's office is bustling with activity. Students are coming in with notes, and parents are holding their children's hands. Ted is coming into the office when the vice-principal, Laura Rakoff, walks up to him.

TED ■ Morning, Laura.

LAURA ■ Morning, Ted. There's been some talk in the staff room about Eileen... about last night at practice...

TED ■ I talked to her last night... but she was a little... upset. She in yet?

LAURA ■ Her husband called. Apparently she's too sick to teach but says that she might come in if we need to discuss what happened.

Ted looks at her.

LAURA ■ And... we've already had a call from the school superintendent. They want to know what you're going to do.

INT. TEACHERS' LOUNGE – DAY

Ted is standing in front of several teachers. Laura is sitting next to a woman in a formal suit, Bev Cleary, the school superintendent. Eileen Jenkins is also sitting with some teachers.

TED ■ And I've asked Laura to coach the team. They'll still compete at next weekend's tournament.

BEV ■ That seems like a fair decision, Ted.

Eileen gets up and walks out of the teachers' lounge. There is an awkward silence. One of the teachers, Paul Silva, stands up.

PAUL ■ Fair? You've completely ignored Eileen's problem. No wonder she's upset.

He follows Eileen out of the lounge. Another teacher gets up.

INT. PRINCIPAL'S OFFICE – DAY

Ted is letting Susan out of his office. Becky is sitting in the waiting area.

SUSAN ■ Mrs. Jenkins is completely unfair and unkind when she deals with us.

TED ■ I understand, but you can't go back on your decision. You resigned - we have to accept that.

SUSAN ■ We still want to play... If Mrs. Jenkins isn't...

Susan looks at Becky.

BECKY ■ My mom's so gonna hear about this.

*INT. PRINCIPAL'S OFFICE - DAY – LATER**Ted and Laura are sitting inside his office with Becky's mother.*

LAURA ■ We can't punish the other girls for Becky and Susan's decision. They've worked hard and want to participate in the tournament.

BECKY'S MOTHER ■ But what about my daughter? She's worked just as hard to compete.

TED ■ But your daughter resigned from the team.

Becky's mother stands up.

BECKY'S MOTHER ■ You haven't listened to a word I've said. I demand an apology from that Mrs. Jenkins. She just can't go around treating young girls like that. It's hurtful and dangerous. I'm going to speak to your superintendent.

Becky's mother storms out of the room. Ted looks worried.

TED ■ This is the worst day...

LAURA ■ Come on, I want to show you something, guaranteed to cheer you up.

*INT. SCHOOL GYMNASIUM – DAY**Ted is sitting in the lower bleachers of the gymnasium. In front of him, Laura is busy coaching the girls' team.*

LAURA ■ OK... now I want you to do that thing again.

MONICA ■ You mean layups?

LAURA ■ That's right. And throw the ball at each other. Practise that.

MONICA ■ Passing?

Laura nods. The girls look skeptical but start throwing the ball around. Laura walks over to Ted.

TED ■ Do you know anything about basketball?

LAURA ■ So maybe I don't have the lingo down, but I know that you're not supposed to score on your own net.

Ted laughs and watches the girls on the court, who are playing with enthusiasm.

INT. TED'S HOUSE – NIGHT

Ted is working on some papers in front of the television. Anne hands him the telephone.

ANNE ■ It's Mrs. Cleary.

TED ■ Thanks.

Ted takes the telephone.

TED ■ Bev, how can I help you?

INT. SCHOOL SUPERINTENDENT'S OFFICE – NIGHT

Bev Cleary is on the telephone.

BEV ■ Ted, you know that I hate to call you at home, but...

TED ■ It's the parents. They've been in touch, right?

BEV ■ Yes. I told them that I support your decision and will not be recommending that any apology be issued.

INT. TED'S HOUSE – NIGHT

Ted sighs.

TED ■ Thanks, Bev. I appreciate that.

BEV ■ I stood behind your decision in the meeting and I'm not going back on it. I know what a difficult school you run. It's not always easy to make decisions that might be unpopular.

TED ■ Tell me about it.

BEV ■ Just one more thing, Ted.

TED ■ What's that?

BEV ■ Good luck on Saturday with the tournament.

INT. SCHOOL GYMNASIUM – DAY

In the final seconds of the tournament, the team is busy playing. Coached by Laura, the girls are having a good time, running up and down the court. Ted and Anne sit next to some parents who are also enjoying the game, cheering. In the last seconds of the game, one of the girls gets ready for a three-point penalty shot. She takes a breath and makes the shot, missing the basket. The members of the other team run to congratulate one another. As Laura's team comes off the court, Laura smiles at the girls. She puts a reassuring hand on the shoulder of the player who missed her shot.

LAURA

■ You did a really good job today. You should be proud.

The girl smiles at Laura and waves to her parents in the stand. They wave back. Ted and Laura look at each other and smile.

INT. SCHOOL HALLWAY – DAY

Ted is putting the trophy from the girls' basketball tournament in the glass case. Laura approaches him.

TED

■ Not bad, third place. Thanks for your support...

LAURA

■ No problem, Ted.

TED

■ It's just nice to put this all behind us.

LAURA

■ Um, Ted... we've had an education officer from the ministry contact us... She says that she has to do a follow-up on two parental complaints. I guess this thing isn't going away that easily.

Ted and Laura exchange a worried look.

Group Inquiry

- What Are the Facts:**
- Who?
 - What?
 - Where?
 - When?
- Analysis & Reflections:** Analyze the problem(s) from the viewpoints of the different people in the case using the reflective questions or charts following the case as a guide to explore, extend or discover information.
- Evaluation:** Examine critically the teacher’s strategies for handling the problem(s).
- Alternative Solutions & Explanations:** Generate alternative solutions and explanations to the ones presented in the narrative. Take into consideration the risks and benefits as well as the long and short-term consequences of each proposed action.
- Principles of Practice:** Formulate some generalizations about effective practice. Remember that the standards of practice and the ethical standards are guiding principles for teacher action.
- What Is This a Case of?** Link this case to more general categories. Rich cases are by nature “of” many things.
- Changing Opinions:** Who or what has caused you to consider a new way of thinking? How strongly do you still feel about your previous assumptions?

Reflecting On the Case

1. What are the facts in the case?
2. What interests or bothers you about this case? Why?
3. Analyze the behaviour of the other actors from the perspectives of:
 - Ted, the principal
 - Eileen Jenkins, the coach
 - Becky and Susan, the girls who quit the team
 - Becky's mother and Susan's mother
 - Laura Rakoff, the vice-principal
 - Bev Cleary, the superintendent
 - Paul Silva, a teacher at the school
4. What is your impression of Eileen Jenkins? What are the implications of her actions?
5. What practical and ethical dilemmas does the principal face, and what pressure points have occurred to cause the original conflicts to become greater issues?
6. Evaluate how effectively (or not) the principal has resolved the problem. What are the ramifications of his actions? Were there other avenues that he might have followed to remedy the situation?
7. What is this a case of?

Further Inquiry

1. **Examine the standards and consider how parents might respond to them, as reflected in the actions of the people in the script.**
2. **How might the school community work together to resolve the dilemmas of this case? Which standards address this desirable outcome?**
3. **Which standards might foster leadership development for principals and teachers?**
4. **Develop a scene that might happen after this script. Which aspects of the situation will you address, and why?**
5. **How is the standard Commitment to Students and Student Learning reflected in the actions of the principal?**
6. **Which Ethical standards should be highlighted? Why?**

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