

Chapter # 22

LEADERSHIP AND APPLIED ETHICS IN EDUCATION: A MENCIAN APPROACH

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ABSTRACT

Applied ethics is focused on issues in private or public life that are subject to ethical judgments. Based on how conflicts between personal and professional values in recent legal cases (e.g., Keeton *vs.* Anderson-Wiley, 2010; Ward *vs.* Wilbanks, 2010) have interfered with ethical decision making, a question raised in applied ethics is whether integrating personal values and professional ethics in ethical decision making affects the morality of ethical decisions. The purpose of this chapter is to use the three-part division of traditional normative ethical theories identified by researchers at Brown University for making ethical decisions to describe and explore consequentialist and deontologist forms of ethical reasoning for deciding matters of morality in education. A literature search identified published frameworks that define the components of ethical decision making. Using these frameworks, a new framework, called the personal and professional values-integrated framework, is constructed. Consideration is given to areas and practices in the guidelines or rules for the process of forming ethical reasons and variations in reasons that are less easily accommodated by conventional ethical frameworks. The description of Will by the Chinese philosopher Mencius (371-289 BC) is used to gain insight into some of the implications of ethical decisions. It is demonstrated that leadership rules in education are realized by acknowledging the reasons for an action, and ethical decision making is defined as conforming to the criteria pertaining to these considerations as well as the professional conduct expected.

Keywords: ethical decision making, applied ethics, leadership.

1. INTRODUCTION

Leaders play a critical role in groups by holding disproportionate responsibility in both setting goals and inspiring collective action to attain those goals (Hoyt & Price, 2015). The most important role of leaders, as argued in leadership studies, is to set strategic directions for their organizations and to do so even when facing difficult ethical dilemmas (Antonakis, Cianciolo, & Sternberg, 2003; Karp & Helgo, 2009). The values of a leader who provides a vision and mission for the organizational strategy are fundamental components of his or her strategic decisions (Bai, 2012). Bottery (2011) noted that educational leadership, as suggested by Ribbins and Gunter (2002, p. 359), has historically been “insulated by its characteristically pragmatic and essentially atheoretical tradition”, and Ribbins and Gunter further suggested that a research agenda needs to be built which identifies priorities within the field.

Within education ethics, the analysis of the ethical decision-making process has gained importance because a better understanding of this process may more accurately identify factors that facilitate ethical behavior (Ametrano, 2014). Research about the process by which individuals behave unethically has provided inconclusive results (Marquardt, 2010; Marquardt & Hoeger, 2009; O’Fallon & Butterfield, 2005; Watson, Berkley, & Papamarcos, 2009). It has been argued that no existing framework is robust

enough to explain the complexity of the human ethical decision-making process (Craft, 2013; O'Fallon & Butterfield, 2005). Teaching ethics might involve providing students with exposure to multiple ethics theories that can provide a framework for decision-making in order to ensure "increased awareness of ethical issues and enhanced decision-making skills" (Dzurainin, Shortridge, & Smith, 2013, p. 102).

Ametrano (2014) described becoming an ethical professional as a developmental process (Neukrug, Lovell, & Parker, 1996) that involves movement from memorizing standards toward learning to integrate professional ethics with personal values (Handelsman, Gottlieb, & Knapp, 2005). The ethical norms/incentives factor had a highly significant effect on measures of behavioral intent. Specifically, an organizational culture that emphasizes and rewards ethical behavior, and in which organizational leaders serve as positive role models, reduces the likelihood that tax practitioners will engage in overly aggressive actions.

Walker and Donlevy (2009) argued that personal conscience, relational reciprocity, common ethical principles, and professional convictions with constraints form a multi-frame analysis. They provided the facts and decisions of a Canadian legal case to demonstrate how such an ethical analysis is best suited for the attainment of personal and professional integrity amongst educational decision-makers. Joy (2007) stated that causes of wrongful convictions should be addressed rather than hoping and waiting for the existence of systemic change in legislation. Legal self-help remedies are outlined to prevent wrongful convictions. Smith (2010) noted that while there is a feeling of gratification for a conviction, representing the best ideas in making political decisions, there are dangers in assuming the rightness of one's conviction at all costs and being blind to any evidence to the contrary of that conviction. It mentions on U.S. President Woodrow Wilson's fourteen points the insisted Europe follow the end of World War I. Beckner (2004) noted that students need good leaders in education, professionals who show, through example, that they follow a system of personal and professional ethics consistent with the best social and personal convictions. Educational leaders are often faced with ethical dilemmas in the course of their daily work; they are required to make complex decisions in the best interests of their students and schools.

Bennis and Thomas (2002) pointed out that the ability to overcome adversity and learn from passion in both work and life has been linked to leadership ability in managers in various fields. The decision makers' thinking processes included vision, political astuteness, being tactical, being strategic, due diligence, and risk management; the ethical processes included respect for diverse opinions, integrity and trust, democracy, impact of policies, passion for public service, and intuition about doing the right thing (Jiwani, 2011).

2. ETHICAL DECISION MAKING AND PERSONAL AND PROFESSIONAL VALUES-INTEGRATED FRAMEWORKS

In the education field, it is important that each individual feel personally and ethically responsible. The development of ethical decision making prevents the attribution of blame to someone else or some other department for his or her own ethical transgressions, thus encouraging him or her to take responsibility of his or her decisions. Making decisions that are ethical requires the ability to make distinctions among competing choices. Ethics elucidates how a conscientious person should behave by providing a way to choose among those competing options. Crossan, Mazutis, and Seijts (2013) model applies to EDM in

education, but the focus in this chapter is on EDM to promote the integrity of subtle ethical choices in education. According to Crossan et al. (2013), some examples of EDM as applied to education in the context of leadership and ethics include Rest's (1986) four-component (moral awareness, moral judgment, moral intent, and moral behavior) psychological process of EDM, Kohlberg's (1969) theory of cognitive moral development, and Jean Piaget's (1932) study of moral development in children (Biggs, Schomberg, & Brown, 1997; Stephens & Smith 2009).

The inclusion of EDM in a new personal and professional values-integrated framework as a part of ethics education to help students to identify (ethical sensitivity) and think through ethical issues (ethical judgment) in the education field has been subject to very limited research to date (Kenny, Lincoln, & Balandin, 2010). As Crossan et al. (2013) noted that Hursthouse (2007) pointed out that a useful heuristic for the categorization of normative ethics involves three major ethical frameworks: consequentialism, deontology, and virtue ethics. The Markkula Center's five sources of ethical standards and Crossan et al.'s (2013) ethical decision making require an ethical structure. This study integrates Markkula Center's five sources and Crossan et al.'s (2013) decision-making model is used to ascertain how far the new consequentialism can approach deontology in constructing a personal and professional values-integrated framework and how difficult this expansion could be. In the context of the deontological principle of double effect, an informational approach can show that there is an unavoidable divergence between deontology and consequentialism, a disparity that shows genuine dimensions in practical reasoning.

3. ETHICAL DECISION MODEL

The Markkula Center for Applied Ethics (2009) offers one suggested model for assessing the ethical nature of a decision. Ethical decision-making should apply at least five different understandings of ethical standards. These five understandings of are the utilitarian approach, which deals with consequences; the rights approach, which implies particular duties to be fulfilled; the fairness or justice approach, in which equals should be treated equally; the common good approach, with interlocking relationships in society as the basis of ethical reasoning; and the virtue approach, which implies acting according to the highest potential of one's character and on behalf of values like truth and beauty.

4. CONSEQUENTIALISM

The word "consequentialism" identifies a general approach to moral reasoning within which there are several somewhat similar moral theories, each with variations (Keith, 2005). Grayson (2007) claimed consequentialism is about the moral rightness of acts and the embodiment of the idea that the "ends justify the means" (p. 2-2). The only attribute that determines the morality of an action is its results or consequences. Consequentialism holds that whether an act is morally right or not depends only on the consequences of that act or of something related to that act, such as the motive behind the act or a general rule pertaining to acts of the same kind. Consequentialism has its roots in the work of John Stuart Mill (1806-1873); Mill espoused the idea of utilitarianism. The permissibility of actions is determined by examining the situation's outcomes and comparing those outcomes with what would have happened if some other action had been performed.

Consequentialism holds to the utilitarian approach; it deals with consequences: “Actions, including institutions, laws and practices are to be justified only by their references to consequences” (Smart & Williams, 1973, p.79). In the *Encyclopedia Britannica* (2006), however, it is pointed out that consequentialists also differ over whether each individual action should be judged on the basis of its consequences or whether general rules of conduct should be judged in this way and individual actions judged only by whether they accord with a general rule. The former group hold to “act-utilitarianism” and the latter “rule-utilitarianism.”

4.1. The rules for consequentialism

Happiness is good in the eyes of consequentialists. For example, Jeremy Bentham’s (1748-1832) act-utilitarianism considered the quantity of pleasure as the measure of sound ethics, and Mill’s rule-utilitarianism considered the quality as well as quantity of pleasure as the foundation for sound ethics. If the act is right, it creates good consequences that are good for everyone affected. Good consequences must be impartial, in so much as oneself or family members should not count more (or less) than anyone else.

4.1.1. The Mencian approach

One variation of the consequentialism approach is known as ethical egoism, or the ethics of self-interest. In this approach, an individual uses consequentialism based on a broader conception of relatedness to produce the greatest amount of good for him or herself. Ancient Chinese philosophers, like Mencius, claimed that human nature is good (Loden, 2009), and early modern thinkers in the West, like Thomas Hobbes (1588-1679), may be considered forerunners of this approach (Bonde & Firenze, 2013). The Mencian approach to ethics is focused on the moral sentiment of the heart-mind for discerning what is good and right, thus emphasizing moral insight.

5. DEONTOLOGISM

If one subscribes to the objective approach to ethics and moral action, the system used to determine and evaluate actions is one that may be described as “non-consequential”, in other words, deontological (Beckner, 2004, p. 52). Deontologism is duty ethics. Deontologism is a rights approach, in so much as rights imply particular duties. According to Griener (2005), deontologist ethical decision-making rules may be: (a) Universal, or impose obligations on everyone, or (b) role specific, or impose obligations only on people who hold certain positions (e.g., professional). Deontology is critical of all utilitarian approaches because utilitarianism fails to recognize certain central feature(s), such as the obligation to respect the essential autonomy of all human beings.

5.1. The rules for deontologism

Deontologism is a kind of ethical theory that puts its emphasis on universal imperatives like moral laws, duties, obligations, prohibitions, and so on, and is sometimes called “imperativism” (Terravecchia, 2001). A good will is intrinsically good—good in and of itself, not just instrumentally good. Immanuel Kant’s (1724-1804) deontologism considered moral value, which depends on the will, which means the end results cannot justify the means. Morality is a system of categorical imperatives; there are no ‘ifs’ about them. Ultimately, there is just one basic law: The categorical imperative, which consists of three formulations. These are the following: (a) “Act as if the maxim of your action were to become by your will a Universal Law of Nature,” which is the “universalizability” law;

(b) “Act in such a way that you always treat humanity, whether in your own person or in the person of any other, never simply as a means, but always at the same time as an end;” and (c) “Act always on the maxim of there being such a will in us that can at the same time look upon itself as making universal law” (adapted from Field, 1996, p. 3).

6. CONCLUSION

As Ametrano (2014) noted, conflicts between personal and professional values from recent legal cases (e.g., Keeton vs. Anderson-Wiley, 2010; Ward vs. Wilbanks, 2010) seem to have interfered with ethical decision making, raising questions about whether the integration of personal values and professional ethics in sound ethical decision making makes a difference. Crossan et al. (2013) pointed out that Nyberg (2007), argued: “[T]raditional ethical theories (consequentialism and deontology) are not suitable ... since universal principles and rules leave little room for the ambiguity and [the] everydayness of situated work activities.” (p. 587). These theories pose challenges with respect to capturing complex organizational practices, especially situations with information uncertainties and ambiguities; situations that involve ethical leadership predicaments; and situations with moral dilemmas embedded in the decision-making context (Beabout 2012). The Markkula Center for Applied Ethics (2009) believes that students can become ethical leaders and has taken steps to create a culture of awareness about decision making with respect to ethical dilemmas.

Because Mencius assumes a state of nature wherein human beings have moral resources that they can voluntarily call upon at any time (Im, 2002), it would seem that having the necessary capacity to know and act on the rationale of morality organically translates into an ability to act morally. The Mencian consequentialism of the virtue ethics model identified goods, such as the goods of kinship relationships, as both intrinsically and instrumentally valuable, showing how self-cultivation leads to a transformed bodily appearance; it is an analogical kind of reasoning relying on shi (this is right; 是) and fei (is not wrong; 非) attitudes, rather than a deductive style, thus drawing on beliefs and desires that are familiar to Western models of action (Olberding, 2015). To guarantee ethical leadership, a leader is required to embark on a continuous journey of self-cultivation of morality and virtue ethics. To enable the success of educational ethics, styles of leadership should be chosen in accordance with the role and character of decision making and fairness as associated with the virtue of justice (Crossan et al., 2013).

In this chapter, ethical processes for making ethical decisions about students’ values with respect to ethics and state law as well as integrating their professional lives with their social lives were outlined in the scenarios described. The process and components discussed in this chapter can help students identify appropriate levels of accountability, think about how professional ethics can be integrated with their personal values, and provide ideas for the assessment of the rightness/wrongness of behavior.

In this study, a review of the context of leadership and ethics literature has demonstrated the symbiotic relationship between professional and personal ethics. In addition, by relating the literature on ethics to leadership and ethics, it has shown that professional and personal ethics are underpinned by ethical values that influence the outcomes of professional and personal processes. In short, more effort is required in the field of education to develop a deeper understanding of both ethical leadership and Mencian intuitionism and their interface with applied ethics.

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