The Development of the Personal and Professional Values-Integrated Framework as an Aid to Ethical Decision Making

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Abstract
The process of developing a new framework, such as the personal and professional values-integrated framework, helps to explain the dynamics of the ethical decision making required of adaptive leaders for appreciating divergent perspectives. Ethical analysis frameworks can help to identify the ethical dimensions in academic disciplines and provide a method for justifying ethical decisions. Published frameworks, however, have some limitations to easy, practical use. The purpose of this paper is to use the five sources of ethical standards identified by the Markkula Center for Applied Ethics [21] 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. On this basis, 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 that are less easily accommodated by these ethical frameworks. The idea of Will as described by 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, behavior, values


1. Introduction

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 [1]. Research about the process by which individuals behave unethically has provided inconclusive results [22,23,26,37]. It has been argued that no existing framework is robust enough to explain the complexity of the human ethical decision-making process [8,26]. 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” ([10], p. 102).

Ametrano [1] described becoming an ethical professional as a developmental process [24] that involves movement from memorizing standards toward learning to integrate professional ethics with personal values [14]. 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.

K. D. Walker and Donlevy [36] 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 [17] 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 [33] 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 [3] 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, as cited in Huppets, 2003) 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 [16].

Chinese philosopher Mencius (371-289 BC) drew attention to the innate goodness of human nature; the chief constituent of human nature is the Will, the outer acting nature through which appetites arise, develop, and are fulfilled. According to Rowe [31], Socrates acknowledged the role of ‘appetites and passions’ as affecting human behavior (p. 310). Reshotko [29] noted that appetites are like sense impressions: they are phenomena that help people form judgments, but they do not interact with judgments that have already been formed. Mencius suggested that ethical behavior maintained a firm Will without doing violence to the passionate nature of individuals [20]. What Mencius pointed out is important for understanding ethical behavior in education. According to Rowe [31], Brickhouse and Smith in 2010 noted that Socrates holds that “passions such as pride, humiliation and anger [and also ‘nonrational desires’ like hunger, thirst, or sexual passion] explain nothing about how human beings behave except perhaps as sources of information” (p. 310) used by reason in order to determine its view of what is best.

In this study, an integrated ethical decision-making (EDM) model, which was reviewed by Crossan, Mazutis, and Seijts [9] will be used. The importance of developing an integrated EDM model has been widely recognized [30]. The model includes the steps decision makers must consider with respect to personal values and/or their beliefs about the ethical principles of autonomy, awareness, beneficence, justice, and judgment. Ethical decision making is a process constituted in all the stages an individual has to go through from the moment a moral problem arises until he or she engages in a given behavior. In this study, the task of ethical reasoning (norms or moral evaluation) and the basic problem of the level of reflection typically labeled as “normative” are reviewed. Recognition of the ethical issue and the implications of decisions with respect to a dilemma are necessary steps in the process of ethical decision making. Dzuranin et al. [10] described how the program Building Ethical Leaders Using an Integrated Ethics Framework (BELIEF) was introduced in 2006 at the Northern Illinois University College of Business. BELIEF is the result of the Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business’s (AACSB) requirements, is based on previous research about ethics education, and is a response to the Board of Executive Advisors’ encouragement. This study illustrates different attitudes with which to seek to clarify “the why” of moral phenomenon, following a classification based on the distinction between empiricism (related to consequentialism) and a priorism (at some point linked with deontologism). Knowing how to make ethical decisions that are aligned with legal parameters and specific school policies might enhance understanding of the meaning of educational ethics, and using ethical decision-making models to understand educational ethics might offer insight into how to make ethically sound decisions in the educational context.

In making the case for ethical decision-making in relation to the education field leadership, this study adopted a consequentialist and deontologist perspective on ethics. Consequentialism and deontology developed from dissatisfaction with the notions of duty and obligation and their central roles in understanding morality [7]. It also grew out of an objection to the use of rigid moral rules and principles and their application to diverse and different moral situations. As this study will argue, this is an appropriate approach to ethics when considering the education field, given that the expectations leaders initiate are judged by the moral reasoning they associated with ‘reflective’ and ‘perceptual’ moral attentiveness. In particular, this study focuses on utilitarian approaches. This study argues that leadership and ethical decision making cannot achieve informed and responsible decisions for the education field unless they act in an ethical implications and adopt a compliance-reactive approaches to collaboration that meet not only their own individual new needs, but also produce utilitarian outcomes in terms of the net benefits and costs to all stakeholders on an individual level. This study argues that leadership and ethical decision making must be clear regarding their own ethical implications and the ethical principles of the approaches they adopt to practice. It also follows that those who develop and promote normative approaches to cost–benefit equations (consequentialists) and cost–benefit analysis (deontologists) must be explicit about the ethical strengths and weaknesses of such approaches [9].

Therefore, the aims of this study are to show that
1. Educational ethics and leadership ability are inextricably integrated professional ethics with personal values in achieving normative outcomes with respect to ethical decision-making.
2. The need for ethical decision-making when evaluating approaches to educational ethics and leadership ability.

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 et al.’s [9] model applies to EDM in education, but the focus in this paper is on EDM
to promote the integrity of subtle ethical choices in education. According to Crossan et al., some examples of EDM as applied to education in the context of leadership and ethics include Rest’s [30] four-component (moral awareness, moral judgement, moral intent, and moral behavior) psychological process of EDM, Kohlberg's [19] theory of cognitive moral development, and Jean Piaget's [28] study of moral development in children [4,34].

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. As Crossan et al. [9] noted that

The word “consequentialism” identifies a general approach to moral reasoning within which there are several somewhat similar moral theories, each with variations [18]. Grayson [12] 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” ([32], p.79). In the Encyclopedia Britannica [6], 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.”

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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.

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 ([3], p. 52). Deontologism is duty ethics. Deontologism is a rights approach, in so much as rights imply particular duties. According to Grierer [13], 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” [35]. 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, [11], p. 3).

6. Conclusion

As Ametrano [1] noted, conflicts between personal and professional values from recent legal cases (e.g., Keeton v. Anderson-Wiley, 2010; Ward v. 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. [9] pointed out that Nyberg, in 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 [2]. The Markkula Center for Applied Ethics [21] 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 [15], 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 [27].

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 [9].

In this paper, 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 paper 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.

References


