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Dimensions of Educational Leadership: Cultural, Ethical, and Moral

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Given the current state of affairs in the school districts of America, almost any observer could proclaim that a change in policy and leadership is urgently needed. The national pundits and politicians continue to blame the usual suspects: entrenched school cultures, teacher unions, shortened school years, and administrative bloat, to name a few. National educational leadership organizations (NCPEA, UCEA, and AASA) are hard at work defining a Knowledge Base (KB) for the training of educational leaders of the future.

While this author certainly applauds the efforts of these professional organizations, there are some things that university professors can do within leader preparation programs across America. As will be discussed in this article, universities can begin to prepare new and current leaders in the key dimensions of leadership. Training in administration science, e.g. finance, law, human resources, facilities management, and technology are necessary and should be required. However, the key leadership dimensions of ethical, moral and cultural leadership are and remain, critical to the success of the school leader and the organization.

To the credit of the universities now embarking on the rollout of the new doctorate of education (Ed.D.) programs, these critical key dimensions are being taught and applied in the educational setting. The California State University System is currently including coursework in new Ed.D. Programs that focus on leading change through cultural and ethical leadership. Perhaps the lessons of Enron and World.com are instrumental. However, given the budgetary and financial checks and balances placed
upon school districts, money fraud has never been the critical issue. The failure of
students, drop outs, and widening minority student achievement gaps are the bottom line.
Simply stated, that is our reason for existence!

Ford Motor Company builds cars; education builds and prepares future citizens of
America. The focus necessarily centers on how moral and ethical leaders can lead
cultural change that results in learning for all students, regardless of cultural markers or
identifiers.

Unfortunately, some of the principal preparation programs still lack an emphasis
on training and application of key dimensions of educational leadership. Giving credit to
the work of NASSP and NAESP with principal preparation, universities can and should
provide the cultural and ethical training. Think back to your master’s preparation for your
first administrative credential. Did you receive any training about ethics, moral purpose,
or cultural competence? Perhaps you were allowed to select an elective and maybe one
of the aforementioned was taught as a survey course with little or no application to the
schooling environment. A typical offering in many programs was, and perhaps still is
today, Cultural Diversity in America. Of course, this was required by the university
board of regents and was designed to prepare the administrator for the cultural issues
soon to be encountered upon graduation.

Given the competitive nature of area administrator preparation programs and
national online programs, most universities have streamlined/reduced the typical program
to 30 to 33 semester hours, including the practicum/internship/fieldwork. One institution
in the California State University System of 23 campuses, offers an MA in Educational
Leadership with the Tier 1 credential (principal) in one year!
Both leadership theory and practice can be taught within the preparation program for principals, even with the shortened curriculum. Again, as suggested earlier in this paper, it is not a matter of just teaching about the need for a personal code of ethics. Being exposed to the Code of Ethics of AASA, NAESP and NAESP is certainly assistive in building the ethics repertoire. This author, based on 35 years in K-12 education, would argue strongly for integrating cultural and ethical decision-making in all coursework using the models and approaches within this article. The remainder of this paper discusses some of the notable approaches in teaching the key dimensions of educational leadership.

*A Brief Comparison of Three Multicultural/Diversity Models*

As mentioned in the abstract of this paper, the works of Lindsey et al. (2005) Nieto (2004) and Banks (2004) are certainly informative works done by highly respected multicultural scholars. While each approach is different and uses different terms, each has a very similar outcome: the desire to move people from a monoculture belief system to a cross-cultural system of literacy or proficiency.

All three models, Lindsey et al. (2005), Nieto (2004) and Banks (2004) have stages of development, beginning with a lack of awareness of the moral urgency and ending with an affirmation of multicultural competence or proficiency. In addition, each of the three models addresses individual attitudes, behaviors, and practices and to a varying degree, how the organization and the educational system are impacted at specific stages or levels.

It is possible for individuals and organizations to celebrate and train for diversity, understand the historic distrust present through studies of poverty and racism (Ogbu &
Simons, 1998), develop skills for cross-cultural communication (Banks, 2004; Senge, 2005), and learn to live harmoniously with other cultural groups. As Schein (1985) reminds the organizational leadership, if they are not conscious of the cultures in which they are embedded, those cultures will manage them. Cultural analysis is especially valuable for dealing with aspects of organizations that seem irrational, frustrating and intractable (Banks, 2004). Paying attention to issues of organizational culture (Schein, 1985) alone will not prepare leaders in the intractable diversity-driven issues of the school (Banks, 2004). Knowledge of both is critical to the educational leader.

Nieto (2004) proposes a multicultural model that has five levels of multicultural education: monocultural education, tolerance, acceptance, respect and affirmation, solidarity, and critique. Each level is examined through the seven characteristics of multicultural education: antiracist/discriminatory, basic, pervasive, important for all students, education for social justice, process, and critical pedagogy. For example, if all levels and characteristics were arrayed in a 5 X 7 theoretical matrix, the level of acceptance would reflect basic characteristics through a diversity of lifestyles and values other than just those of the dominant group. Further, Nieto (2004) acknowledges that cultural components include the same elements as Lindsey et al. (2005). According to Nieto (2003), multicultural education needs to be about much more than ethnic tidbits and cultural sensitivity.

The Banks (2001, 2004) model is a typology addressing the six stages of cultural development: cultural psychology captivity, cultural encapsulation, cultural identity clarification, biculturalism, multiculturalism and reflective nationalism, and globalism and global competency. The model focuses primarily on race, ethnicity, class, gender,
and to some extent, religion and culture. Through cultural development at each stage, students clarify cultural, national and global identifications. Students move from exposure to own culture (Stage 1); to clarifying attitudes and cultural identity (Stage 3); to an ability to function within cultures globally through reflective and clarified national and global identifications (Stage 6).

The process/model of Cultural Proficiency (Lindsey, et al. 2003, 2005) as adapted from the Cross (1989) cultural competence model is becoming more popular with schools and organizations searching for methods to respond to cultural diversity and the widening minority achievement gap as researched by D’Amico (2001). Lindsey, Nuri Robins, & Terrell (2003) adapted the Cross (1989) model to schools and other community organizations as a process to address the differences in schools. The focus is on behaviors, practices, and policies that can be applied to both the individual and the organization.

The Cultural Proficiency process is notably different than most diversity or multicultural training programs currently being used in diverse environments. The typical diversity training begins with learning about the nature of diversity and then to more in-depth studies of race or ethnicity. Perhaps some additional elements are added such as language or culture.

Cultural Proficiency (Lindsey, et al. 2003) is an inside-out approach that begins with the individual or organization examining behaviors, practices, policies and belief system. It is not an off-the-shelf program with quick fixes and recipes for success. If becoming culturally proficient were easy, we would all be proficient. Further, Cultural Proficiency will look different in each environment, as individuals and organizations
apply the tools and measure their success along the continuum of proficiency. Simply stated, cultural competence is behavior that is aligned with standards designed to gain cultural proficiency. Four tools have been identified for developing individual and organizational cultural competence (Lindsey et al. 2003).

The Guiding Principles: Underlying values of the approach.

The Continuum: Provides terms that identify productive and non-productive policies, practices, and behaviors.

The Essential Elements: Five identified standards measuring growth to proficiency along the continuum.

The Barriers: Three caveats in resistance to change: 1) presumption of entitlement, 2) unawareness of the need to adapt, and 3) systems of oppression.

Unfortunately, most school and central office administrators unless recently trained, have not been exposed to the work of Lindsey et al. (2003, 2005), Nieto (2004) or Banks (2004). Given the current national dialogue regarding the Knowledge Base (KB) in Educational Administration, our universities can also focus on diversity programs that meet the ELCC standards. As Achilles (2005) reminds us, until we know and use the Knowledge Base related to school outcomes we cannot expect educational excellence to happen.

All three models have much to offer organizations and individuals interested in gaining an understanding of working with the diverse cultures of the 21st century. However, the Cultural Proficiency model as adapted for schools by Lindsey et al. (2003, 2005) holds great promise for schools of the future. It begins with an inside-out process which forces the participants to question their assumptions and beliefs held not only
about their culture, but the cultures of those who are different from their culture.
Moreover, because it is not an off-the-shelf program it will look different in every
organization. What will remain firm are the essential elements and the guiding principles
of Cultural Proficiency. These are the lenses by which individuals and organizations
examine the continuum and determine their journey along the continuum to Cultural
Proficiency.

Gregory and Hoffmeyer (2006) studied the effects of training Texas preservice
principals in the use and reflections of the cultural proficiency model. Students were
exposed to the tools of the Cultural Proficiency (CP) model throughout the semester.
Means and standard deviations of pre and post training were computed and the
differences between the means were analyzed using the t test for correlated samples. The
mean and standard deviation measures on the pre score were 85.29 and 8.86 respectively.
The mean and standard deviation measures on the post score were 93.66 and 6.91. The
standard deviation had decreased while the mean increased 8.37 points with the post
score analysis, yielding a significant difference in the means, p < .01. While not
scientific evidence, this initial, directional evidence shows clearly that students respond
more positively to the questions on the scaled instrument after exposure to the CP model.

Moral and Ethical Considerations in Administrator Preparation

While a number of cultural competence teaching approaches (Banks, 2004; Nieto,
2004; Lindsey et al. 2005) are well-researched and deployed in various school districts,
there still seems to be something missing at the center of the cultural change approach.
The educational leadership literature of the last fifteen years discusses the need for multi-
faceted change approaches. Fullan (2003) asserts that while many aspects of the school
principalship do not pertain to moral issues, moral purpose must be the driver above all other leader capacities. Sergiovanni (1992) offers that, while moral authority is practiced by many school leaders it is not acknowledged as a form of leadership. While both authors believe that moral purpose and authority are of significant importance to school leaders, there is no clear nexus in how moral leadership is practiced in schools today.

Strike, Haller, and Soltis (1998) ask why administrative ethics coursework is only offered at a few universities. Strike, et al. (1998) opines that perhaps this situation is due to administration being a science and not dealing with values and value judgments. Further, Strike, et al. (1998) believes that value judgments are moral judgments and should be at the heart of the school administrators’ job.

Johnson (2001) approaches the question of ethics through a metaphor he calls “Casting light or shadow.” We can cast light by building ethical capacity in our future and present leaders with clear ethical outcomes (sound ethical reasoning, strong character, follow-through, ethical climate, ethical decision making, and others) in the workplace. Leaders also can cast shadows in the workplace through abuse of power and privilege, deceit, disloyalty, and inconsistency, among others.

Research and practice of decision-making formats (Cooper, 1998; Kidder, 1995; Nash, 1989) clearly show that principals and educational leaders can be trained to make ethical decisions. However, in order to learn and practice the decision-making formats one must first know and understand basic ethical principles. This takes training time for new leaders to practice in an actual case study environment with time for relevant discussion. Ideally then, principal preparation can and should require a specific course
on ethics. If we wait until the doctoral level, we have missed the opportunity to impact the learning environment in each of our schools.

The typical university principal preparation curriculum is usually heavy on administration science. While specific tests such as Praxis address acting in an ethical manner, pre-service leaders need instruction and practice in ethical applications in the schooling environment. Universities can begin with ensuring that a block of ethics instruction and practice is included in the basic leadership course. By teaching the normative leadership styles of transformational and stewardship/servant theory, in concert with clarifying personal values (Kouzes & Posner, 2007; Rokeach, 1973), and basic ethical principles that can be applied in the decision-making formats, preparation programs can make a difference in the learning environment. It really doesn’t matter how well the beginning principal knows school finance and business operations, school law or human resource management; without the theory and practice of ethical, moral and cultural dimensions that build leader character, the school will fail because the leader failed.

While there are other models of transformational leadership, the Kouzes and Posner (2007) five exemplary practices model is evidence-based, drawing best leadership data from six continents, through extensive survey and interview data. One of the behaviors in the Kouzes and Posner model requires the leader to clarify personal values. This author, like Kouzes and Posner believes this is a beginning essential in finding your voice and gaining credibility. One can hardly act ethically or moral if they have not first identified their core values. The very essences of transformational leadership involve motivating followers to act ethically, focusing on instrumental and terminal values.
(Rokeach, 1973), and inspiring all to higher levels of morality. At the core of transformational leadership are the foundations of ethical principles such as altruism and communitarianism.

In servant leadership (Greenleaf & Spears, 2002) combine the fit of ethical principles and the transformational leadership practice. Again, leaders pay attention to the needs of followers, relying on persuasion rather than coercion, and employing foresight and vision to enhance the growth of individuals and organizations.

Of course, leaders will need to employ more leadership styles and practices than just transformational and servant styles. As with ethical principles and decision-making formats, which we will discuss next, there will be times when situational, transactional and even autocratic styles will be needed to save the day. However, by combining servant and transformational leadership practices, one will be able to act ethically, with moral purpose, to transform the diverse cultural environments present in most school communities of the 21st century.

Ethical Principles and Decision-making Formats

Having discussed briefly the leadership styles best fit with acting ethically, a discussion of the moral and ethical dimensions of leadership through the principles and the ethical decision-making formats is next. Most people have had initial exposure to the ethical principles at some time in their lives. Most have heard of the Golden Rule for individual relationships and experienced group decisions that were “made for the good of all.” Carried to the next level, however, the application level, few people have worked with practicing the principles and using one, two or even three to help make an ethical decision.
In teaching my contemporary leadership course of masters’ students, I spend about three hours teaching the ethical principles and three decision-making formats. This includes a PowerPoint presentation and case study analysis employing the principles within an ethical decision-making format. The principles used are 1) utilitarian, 2) Kant’s categorical imperative, 3) altruism, and, 4) communitarianism. Not much detail is needed to explain each principle. The details within the PowerPoint slide prompting discussion are replicated for the reader here.

- **Utilitarian**- Do what is best for the greatest number of people
- **Kant’s Categorical Imperative**- Do what is right no matter what the cost!
- **Altruism**- Do to others what you would like them to do to you (golden rule)
- **Communitarianism**- Shoulder your responsibilities, seek the common good!

As the class discussion progresses, it is obvious that most students have experienced the principles at some point in their lives. Not much time is needed here and we move on to the discussion of the decision-making formats. This will take most of the time in class as students experience for the first time, the decision-making formats of Kidder (1995), Nash (1989), and Cooper (1998).

The intent of using ethical guidelines or formats is to employ moral reasoning and, hopefully, gain congruence with personal values that were identified and clarified during the earlier discussions. In addition this gives one an organized, rational, approach to solving a moral issue. A brief discussion of each ethical decision-making process is provided for the reader. Some comparative analysis is offered by the author.

*Kidder’s Nine Checkpoints* (Kidder, 1995)
Ethicist Rushworth Kidder (1995) developed this approach to help people deal with ethical issues beginning with defining the dilemma to following up after the decision is made. What is particularly strong with the approach is the attention paid to making decisions between two good or right issues. Kidder gives the practitioner effective language in dealing with an issue of moral consequences. Kidder (1995) believes the decision ultimately requires courage and practitioners learn from the lessons each time they use the approach, gaining insight into the next moral issue that will surface. The approach uses nine steps and seems to be thorough and efficient in time required.

Step 1- Recognize that there is a moral problem and not just an issue of manners or social convention.

Step 2- Determine the Actor. Kidder (1995) opines that we are all involved in moral issues and we must determine the players in each instance.

Step 3- Gather the Relevant Facts bearing on the moral dilemma.

Step 4- Test for Right vs. Wrong Issues. This is a three-part test involving 1) the gut-level or stench test, 2) the front page of the newspaper test, and 3) what would my family or mother think of me when making this decision?

Step 5- Test for right versus right issues. For example: truth v. loyalty, self v. community, short-term v. long term and justice v. mercy. These are the hard decisions!

Step 6- Apply the appropriate ethical principle for resolution, e.g. utilitarian, altruism, categorical imperative, communitarianism or a combination thereof.

Step 7- Is there a third way through this dilemma?
Step 8- Make the decision. Obvious but sometimes overlooked! Here is where the tired leader must now summon the moral courage to make the decision.

Step 9- Revisit and reflect on the decision. Did I learn anything from this process and did new ethical issues surface?

*Nash’s 12 Questions* (Nash, 1989)

Ethics consultant Laura Nash (1989) proposes a 12 questions approach to help individuals and organizations identify the responsibilities of dealing with moral choices. Nash argues that even if the decision is not reached, the process is useful in surfacing ethical concerns that may have remained hidden. Nash’s approach focuses heavily on gathering facts which can slow down the process of getting to the decision. Moreover, the process of getting to the decision or surfacing the ethical issue is extremely time-consuming. The approach follows with each of the 12 questions and some comparative discussion points with the Kidder (1995) approach.

1) Have you identified the problem accurately? Assemble the facts. This question is similar to step 3 of the Kidder approach.

2) How would you define the problem if you stood on other side of the fence? This Step encompasses both steps 2 and 7 in the Kidder approach.

3) How did this situation occur in the first place? This question is quite similar to Step 1 in Kidder as one determines the issue background.

4) To whom and to what do you give your loyalties as a person or group and as a member to the organization? The issue of loyalty relates closely with the test for right versus right in Kidder approach at Step 5.
5) What is your intention in making this decision? Identify your intention and connect this with the consequences in question 6, following.

6) How does this intention compare with the likely results? What are the likely consequences of the decision?

7) Whom could your decision or action injure? Try in advance, to determine harmful consequences.

8) Can you engage the affected parties in a discussion of the problem before you make your decision? If possible, engage in a conversation with the affected parties to understand how your actions will affect them. (This is the time-consuming part of the model)

9) Are you confident that your position will be as valid for a long period as it seems now? Will the decision stand the test of time? Do not make a choice that will not be justifiable now and months from now.

10) Could you disclose without qualm your decision or action to your boss, your colleagues, your family, or society as a whole? This question is almost identical to the right versus wrong three-part test in Step 4 of the Kidder approach.

11) What is the symbolic potential of your action if understood? Misunderstood? What you intend may not be what the public perceives.

12) Under what conditions would you allow exceptions to your stand? Moral consistency is critical, but is there any basis for making an exception?

Cooper’s Active Process (1998)

The Cooper Active Process (1998) model was developed primarily for use by public administrators. It utilizes four levels of analysis including level 1- expressive,
level 2- moral rules, level 3- ethical analysis and, level 4- post ethical. Cooper (1998) believes that we move between all levels when we analyze a moral issue. This may begin with a gut-level, emotional response, then a search for moral reasons, and on to analysis in some manner.

Cooper (1998) opines that while people are still venting and expressing frustrations, they are probably not ready to apply moral rules or principles. Cooper offers four additional steps of analysis for administrators to move them beyond the emotions and frustration into in-depth analysis.

1) Examining the ethical issue. At this step it is important to recognize the ethical dilemma and not just accept the issue as a practice issue.

2) Identifying alternative courses of action. At this step brainstorming options are important so as not to fall into the either/or analysis of two options.

3) Projecting the probable consequences. As with the Nash model, the attempt is made to project the positive and negative outcomes of the decision.

4) Finding a fit. This step acknowledges that there will be no perfect solution. One selects the best fit based on determination of the moral rules in play, and justification and defense of the decision in public.

All three decision-making processes are somewhat different in the way each approaches the ethical dilemma. The intent of providing choice to students in systematic processes is important in administrator preparation. It gives the future school administrator an improved skills and tool set in solving the difficult moral issues faced daily in the school community.
Moral dilemmas involving cultural competence and diversity will increase the difficulty of ethical decisions. The understanding of how cultural issues become a matter of moral reasoning and ethics are of paramount importance to the educational leader. Without this knowledge base and practice, it will be nearly impossible to impact the learning environment in the school community. Moreover, by employing the ethical principles in an appropriate, systematic decision-making process, and combining cultural knowledge, there can be an opportunity for improved decisions, based on knowledge and practice.

We all want to believe that ethical decisions are made on the basis of right versus wrong. Some are that easy, but most are decisions between right versus right and sometimes people are harmed by the decision. Additionally, educational leaders can find themselves in situations involving conflicts of interest. Therefore, it strengthens the leader when s/he knows the correct principles to consider and employs them within a decision-making format to resolve the dilemma. Not all will view the principles and formats in the same manner. That is not the issue here. What we should be emphasizing with our students is the need to use constant, unchanging principles in an organized manner to determine an outcome. If we do not give practicing leaders this vital knowledge and practice, we will continue to see the ethical relativism, devoid of standards and common principles, that surface daily in our culture.
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