VALUES AND ETHICS IN EDUCATIONAL ADMINISTRATION

ETHICAL DECISION MAKING IN TURBULENT TIMES: BRIDGING THEORY WITH PRACTICE TO PREPARE AUTHENTIC EDUCATIONAL LEADERS

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In recent years the field of educational administration has been attacked on two fronts. On the one hand, it has been accused of being out of touch with practitioners, while, on the other hand, it has been blamed for not being strong enough in its theory development. A recent report, *Educating School Leaders* (Levine, 2005), highlights these attributions by stating that educational administration programs are "disconnected from practice" and, at the same time, "a-theoretical and immature." Many scholars, including Young, Crow, Orr, Ogawa and Creighton (2005), are disturbed by these accusations and have provided intelligent responses to these charges. Another rejoinder, to add to their suggestions, may seem simplistic at first glance; however, if it is thought through fully it can have profound ramifications. It is to merge theory with practice whenever and wherever possible in preparing educational administrators.

If educational leadership faculty offers only skills and memorization, there is no need for academic preparation. If faculty provides only theory, then each of them can easily be dismissed as irrelevant. But if academics offer something more—reflection, understandings, deep dialogue, and critique—and combine these approaches with some skills and recall, adding analysis and synthesis for good measure, then they provide the "value-added" component that educational administrators in training need and can never get with a focus strictly on practice or on theory alone.

In this paper, the emphasis will be on the bridging of theory with practice to prepare authentic educational leaders who can make difficult ethical decisions in turbulent times. To accomplish this objective, the following will be provided: a story related to the development of ethical decision making in educational leadership; an introduction to the multiple ethical paradigms and turbulence theory; a discussion of those scholars' writings who have had profound effects on ethical decision making; definitions and understandings related to preparing authentic

ethical leaders in a chaotic era; and finally, an example of how to use the multiple ethical paradigms and turbulence theory in a dilemma that deals with a genuine situation, hopefully leading to authentic learning.

A story of bridging the divide of theory and practice in ethical decision making

In their work on ethics and educational leadership, Shapiro and Stefkovich attempted to bridge the great divide between theory and practice, both in their classrooms and in their scholarship. However, as individual instructors, in their respective classrooms, the theory that they provided tended to be different. In Shapiro's teaching, the ethics of care and critique were often privileged, while Stefkovich tended to utilize the ethics of justice and the profession when analyzing ethical dilemmas. The merging of these theories with practice in their teaching brought the writing team together. Responding to different ethics and realizing that they saw the world from dissimilar perspectives led to a collaboration that has lasted well over a decade.

In the course of conversations, Stefkovich and Shapiro began to discuss not only paradigms, but also pedagogy and concrete assignments. They realized that they liked working through ethical dilemmas with their students. They also became aware that they asked these students to carry out self-reflection via the development of their personal and professional codes of ethics. Ultimately, they both requested students to write their own narratives of ethical dilemmas encountered in the field. The graduate students' educational experiences were diverse as some came from K-12 backgrounds, while others were in higher education; some were urban educators and some from the suburbs and rural areas. Over time, having written a number of exploratory articles together on pedagogy and paradigms, they turned to the idea of compiling a case book of ethical dilemmas written by their graduate students.

Why did they choose to develop a case book? One reason was that Stefkovich was a lawyer who had been trained in her profession through the use of cases, while Shapiro had been teaching a women's studies course, focusing on ethics, that used ethical dilemmas. Thus, it came naturally to them both that they should turn to dilemmas or cases.

Multiple ethical paradigms

While the writing team liked the case books that were then available, they became aware that something was lacking in most, if not all, of them. They felt that the practical aspect of the students' training could be met fairly well in the classroom through the use of

ethical dilemmas, but they asked: What about theory? In an effort to help their students, they began to read more widely and more deeply in the area of ethics.

They first turned to the ethic of justice focusing on the contemporary works (e.g., Goodlad, Soder, & Sirotnik, 1990; Kohlberg, 1981; Sergiovanni, 1992; Strike, Haller, & Soltis, 1998). They also reviewed writings on the ethic of care (e.g., Beck, 1994; Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger, & Tarule, 1986; Gilligan, 1982; Grogan, 1996; Marshall, 1995; Noddings, 1984, 1992; Sernak 1998; Shapiro & Smith-Rosenberg, 1989). In addition, they turned to the ethic of critique and read varied works (e.g., Apple, 1988; Bourdieu, 1977; Capper, 1993; Foster, 1986; Giroux, 1988; Parker & Shapiro, 1993; Shapiro & Purpel, 1993, 1998). Above all, they reviewed Starratt's (1994), *Building an Ethical School*. This book illuminated the ethics of justice, care and critique.

While the team admired Starratt's work, they felt something was still missing. They turned, then, to the ethic of the profession that was sometimes regarded as an off-shoot of the ethic of justice. However, they noted in the literature that there were numerous scholars in educational administration who had begun to treat this concept as if it were a separate ethic. In particular, they reviewed writings of appropriate scholars (e.g., Beck & Murphy, 1994, 1997; Begley, 1999; Begley & Johansson, 1998; Duke & Grogan, 1997; Greenfield, 1993; Nash, 1996; Willower, 1999).

As the collaborative work developed, Stefkovich and Shapiro felt that the ethic of the profession, as they began to call it, should not be placed off to the side, but instead, it should be central. The personal and professional codes of their students, compared with the ethical codes of various educational organizations, showed them that the ethic of the profession was a very real entity. The ISLLC Standards (1996), particularly Standard 5 that focused on ethics, made them even more aware that the ethic of the profession was important in field of educational leadership. They also noted a clash of codes as graduate students sorted out their professional beliefs. This frequently occurred when they had been trained in one profession and then moved to education. In addition, they felt that the ethic of community (Furman, 2003, 2004) was not clearly visible in the three ethics of justice, care and critique and that it fit well under the ethic of the profession. As they continued to reflect upon this ethic, they realized that the *best interests of the student* seemed to be at the heart of the decision making process. Thus, they decided, based on what they had noted in their

classrooms, in their readings, and in their deep dialogue, that there was a need for the ethic of the profession to complete the multiple ethical paradigms.

In their book, *Ethical Leadership and Decision Making in Education*: *Applying Theoretical Perspectives to Complex Dilemmas* (2001, 2005) as well as in a number of other writings (Shapiro & Stefkovich, 1997, 1998; Stefkovich & Shapiro, 1994, 2003), the team merged theory, based on the ethics of justice, care, critique and the profession, with practice. In the classroom, they asked their students to work through ethical dilemmas, written by others, using the four ethics, and then they asked them to write their own authentic ethical dilemmas and apply the multiple ethical paradigms to their cases. It turned out that these ethical dilemmas from the field resonated with the students, and theory and practice seemed to blend together in a very natural way.

Interestingly enough, it took a critical incident to alert Stefkovich and Shapiro to the importance of using authentic cases rather than fictional ones. At a University Council of Educational Administration conference, when the team presented some of their students' dilemmas, Charol Shakeshaft, a well known scholar, was in the audience. During the discussion, Shakeshaft mentioned that she liked all of the dilemmas with the exception of one of them. That dilemma just did not ring true to her. To the amazement of Stefkovich and Shapiro, Charol Shakeshaft had managed to single out the one dilemma that had been written by the authors with the help of a graduate student. Thus, one way to judge authenticity appeared to be: *Does it ring true?* Or, to put it another way, do practitioners, professors and others in the field believe that the dilemma is credible?

What is authentic leadership?

According to Starratt (2004), authenticity is an important virtue for educators to possess. Begley (2003) discusses this virtue in regards to authentic leadership "as a metaphor for professionally effective, ethically sound, and consciously reflective practices in educational administration." He goes on to write: "This is leadership that is knowledge-based, values informed, and skillfully executed" (p.1). Beyond his written definition, however, Begley has provided an even more substantial definition of authentic leadership, as well as authentic learning, through the organizing and sponsoring of annual values and leadership conferences enabling scholars and graduate students to meet together and try out their ideas in relatively safe settings. At these events, the experiences of practitioners have been regarded as important, salient and central. Begley's

respect for all enables much authentic and passionate dialogue to occur each year. During the sessions, he skillfully has merged theory with practice. In addition, he always has been aware of the "other voices" and has made certain that there is a diversity of speakers and ideas. Further, the discussions and presentations at the conferences have been shared with the greater educational communities, through the production of the proceedings on disks as well as through the numerous publications that have emanated from these meetings. Begley is an exemplar of an authentic educational leader who provides his own scholarship, combining theory with practice, as well as offers forums that have brought together practitioners with professors.

Authentic decision making

A major component of authentic leadership has to be authentic decision making. To find out what educational leaders thought about authentic decision making, Shapiro added a new component to the final assignment in her ethics course in the spring semester of 2005 at Temple University. In the past, graduate students, who were also educational leaders, created an ethical dilemma, and then introduced questions related to the ethical theoretical framework. This time she asked the students to go beyond writing questions and requested that they make a final decision in their ethical dilemmas. They then were asked to write about whether their decisions were authentic or inauthentic in light of the characters in their ethical dilemmas. What follows are three typical examples from the class:

A doctoral student, in higher education, wrote:

"Susan felt relieved. Utilizing a combination of considerations, as Nash suggests, she was able *to temper the ethic of justice with an ethic of care.* She was content with the fairness of the compromise she made. She accomplished the goals of the college's honor code while acting in the student's best interest. She enforced a reasonable penalty without imposing a punishment that would be overly harsh and severely impact the student's future. Susan's decision was authentic or "in character." As Nash (1996) explains: "to act in character is to be consistent with ones best motives, intentions and dispositions; to act out of character is to betray all that is precious to oneself for the sake of moral compromise, expedience or utility (p.72)." Susan was at peace with her decision (Saunders, 2005, p.12).

Another graduate student, working in a K-12 setting, stated:

"Ms. Spelling was obviously in tune with *the best*

interest of her students. Eventually, the ethic of the profession was applied in dealing with the students who were cheating, and Emily felt her decision was authentic because she maintained her friendships but also felt that the students who were cheating were dealt with appropriately" (Staplin, 2005, p.10).

Yet another doctoral student who was also a practitioner in a high school wrote:

 "In terms of authenticity, *this decision was split* for Dr. Lyle. His personal code indicates that teachers should have the right to engage in activities just as other people do as long as those activities do not interfere with their job, therefore, his decision was inauthentic in this case. His professional code, however, indicates that he is responsible for creating a stable and safe learning environment for all students, therefore, his decision was authentic in this case. In the end, Dr. Lyle's professional code won out, but he was very uneasy with the decision" (Little, 2005, pp.8-9).

In this last example, the character's unease was not the norm. On the whole, the decisions made in the ethical dilemmas of the twenty-five ethics students were authentic rather than inauthentic. To reach this authenticity, some mentioned balancing different ethics with each other, others talked about the best interests of the students, and still others discussed their decisions in light of their personal and professional codes. These three approaches seemed to provide the graduate students with the rationales needed to make appropriate ethical decisions for the characters in their dilemmas.

The use of ethical dilemmas and authenticity

Along with making authentic decisions, the classroom provided the safe haven where students could work through ethical dilemmas that they had yet to experience. The hope was that they would be better prepared to deal with similar problems in the future. In many ways, the underlying theory provided not only concepts, but it was also used as tools to work through the cases. In particular, the multiple ethical paradigms of the ethics of justice, critique, care and the profession as well as turbulence theory (Gross, 1998, 2004), which will be discussed in the next section of this paper, were utilized to design the questions that were placed towards the end of each dilemma. Thus, the theoretical framework was working in ways that Stefkovich and Shapiro hoped would be useful.

Despite great expectations for the use of ethical dilemmas in the classroom, Shapiro and Stefkovich well knew their limitations. In fact, Peter Knight (2001), from Lancaster University, who wrote a review of their book, expressed reservations about the use of cases this way:

But is this a good way of learning more about ethical practice? In some ways, undoubtedly. This case study method is widely used in professional training for the caring professions and in business schools as well. — What gets missed are intuition and emotion. The lived experience of being in the situation, recognizing that ethical matters are to be thought about, and working a way to something that feels as personally comfortable as possible is unavoidably lost in the writing process. — Dilemmas and case studies are not, therefore, substitutes for deliberative rationality applied to real practice.

However, despite his criticisms, Knight gave the team this final back-handed compliment: "But if ethical practice is to be a classroom subject, they are appropriate — this book, with its range of ethical perspectives, concerns and issues, is as good as classroom treatments of ethical practice gets" (pp.363-365).

Shapiro and Stefkovich have continued to work together on ethical dilemmas in completing the 2nd edition of their ethics book, adding sections on accountability versus responsibility and on religion versus culture along with some new higher education cases. However, Shapiro began another meaningful and stimulating collaboration in ethics with her colleague, Steven Jay Gross, in which this new team began to deal directly with Knight's criticisms that ethical dilemmas, taught in class, missed the intuition and emotion that occurs in real practice.

Turbulence theory

Gross has produced scholarship related to educational reform, mentoring and curriculum development. He, with Shapiro, has also introduced a concept for educational administration programs called The New DEEL (Democratic Ethical Educational Leadership) (Gross & Shapiro, 2005). However, for the purposes of this paper, the focus will be on his work on turbulence theory.

Gross came from a family of pilots; his dad flew in WWII and his father-in-law served as a pilot in the Chinese Air Force. Gross, on the other hand, tended to favor railroads. He has some family background in

this mode of transport as his grandfather worked as an engineer on the railroads. Gross' preference for rails stemmed from a difficult flight in which food flew about the cabin. During that flight, Gross turned on the pilot's radio station and heard that the turbulence level was severe. Harkening back to that distressing experience, the levels of turbulence became a metaphor for explaining some of his work on school reform. He designed a gauge to illustrate the emotional climate in schools undergoing change using the pilot's levels of light, moderate, severe and extreme.

In his book, *Staying Centered: Curriculum Leadership in a Turbulent Era*, Gross (1998) found that sites that had developed curriculum, instructional and assessment innovations for several years, all experienced some degree of turbulence or volatile conditions. Further, he discovered that the degree of turbulence at the ten schools and districts he had studied could be divided into the four levels, used by pilots, that he later refined in a follow-up book, *Promises Kept: Sustaining School District Leadership in a Turbulent Era (2004).*

What follows is a generic Turbulence Gauge that Gross created:

DEGREES AND GENERAL DEFINITIONS OF TURBULENCE FOUND IN EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS	
Degree of Turbulence:	**General Definition**
Light	Associated with ongoing issues, little or no disruption in normal work environment, subtle signs of stress
Moderate	Widespread awareness of the issue, specific origins
Severe	Fear for the entire enterprise, possibility of large-scale community demonstrations, a feeling of crisis
Extreme	Structural damage to the institution's normal operation is occurring. Collapse of the reform seems likely.

According to Gross, turbulence theory gives individuals an enhanced ability to calibrate the severity of the issue at hand. It further aids them in their attempt to contextualize a given problem as they construct strategies to move to less troubled waters.

The work of Shapiro and Stefkovich, on the whole, was very rational. As Gross and Shapiro discussed turbulence, they began to see a connection with the multiple ethical paradigms offering the missing emotional or intuitive piece. This led to an attempt to merge the two concepts. Shapiro and Gross have been

doing this for the past three years with graduate students. As Gross refined his theory, the modifications were presented to the students who appeared to welcome, for example, such concepts as positionality. This idea emerged as Gross began to realize that all people in an institution may not feel the same level of turbulence at the same time. It might depend on their position in the organization or in the dilemma itself. This was just one change that Gross added to his model over time.

This new team has started writing together (e.g., Gross & Shapiro, 2004a, 2004b; Shapiro & Gross, 2003). Most recently, with the help of outstanding graduate students who have provided authentic ethical dilemmas, they have been developing a book that will be entitled, *Ethical Educational Leadership in Turbulent Times,* and will be published by Erlbaum. This book will use the multiple ethical paradigms and turbulence theory to assist in making ethical decisions.

An example of the use of the multiple ethical paradigms and turbulence theory

In this section of the paper, a portion of an ethical dilemma will be presented, and it will then be discussed using the multiple ethical paradigms and turbulence theory. This case was authored by Susan H. Shapiro (2003), an advanced doctoral student at New York University in Educational Administration. The case illustrates the kinds of turbulence that educators face in this complex and chaotic era. This ethical dilemma was presented at the 8th Annual Values and Leadership Conference at The Pennsylvania State University, and is entitled, *It Was A Tuesday Morning*.

It was a Tuesday morning, September 11, 2001. Aida Rodriguez was a daycare director of a private preschool in lower Manhattan. It was a new teacher's first day. The staff was having a welcome breakfast for her. They ordered bagels and coffee and invited the parents to come to the room. It was a really bright and sunny day, and only a few parents had shown up for breakfast. Aida and the staff were joking around about how no one wanted to welcome the new teacher and they all wanted to soak up the sunshine instead.

That's when it began. Two teachers ran into the room crying. They said a plane had hit the World Trade Center (WTC). At first Aida thought that it must be an accident. She even felt a little annoyed that these teachers were being so unprofessional. It was obviously some terrible accident, but nothing that required such emotional behavior. Aida turned on the radio and the announcer said that another plane had hit the WTC. By then, everyone realized

that this was no accident. Some of the parents in the room decided to go out and see. Aida said that they should go ahead because she knew she needed to stay in the school as she was in charge. Aida tried to keep things as normal as possible.

Then the first of the parents started coming in covered in soot. One parent appeared at the door and looked like he was in shock. He walked into the classroom and silently took his child away. One of the parents suggested that Aida go see what was going on outside. She went and saw the two large buildings on fire. It started to dawn on her that they were under attack. While she watched the buildings burn, she could see things, small shapes pouring down from the top floors. Those on the street said they were people falling. At that point, Aida knew it was not business as usual. She felt that she had to get back into the school and protect the children.

When Aida returned, it was chaos. Parents were crying and lined up to use the phones. Children were hysterical. Aida then walked into the baby room where they were all listening to the radio. There were reports that the White House was hit and the Pentagon. She suddenly thought, "Oh my God, we are all going to die." At that time, she made a decision that if she was going to die, she was going to make it as calm as she could for the children and her staff. She felt it essential to reassure everyone it was all going to be o.k.

Aida got back to work. She called in one representative from each classroom into her office. She told them to turn off all the radios, except for the one in the baby room. She told them she would keep them informed as she found out information. She told them to tell the children that they were safe and something bad was happening, but it was a grown up problem. She told them that if the children asked questions, they should make the answers as simple and as truthful as possible. Aida also let the teachers know if they had to cry, they should leave the room and come into her office or the kitchen. Armed with new directives, the teachers went back to their rooms.

Throughout the day, decisions were made and carried out by Aida Rodriguez and her staff. Together they managed to reach almost all the parents by phone or cell phone and let them know that they should come pick up their children as the school and the city were closing.

Turning to the ethic of justice as it affects this ethical dilemma, Ms. Rodriguez was well aware of the laws regarding her childcare facility. However, she put in new directives because of the unusual circumstances. For example, she felt it was important for parents to calm down before having their children released to their care. Normally, she was required to hand over children to their parents immediately; but on this day, she would not give them their children until they had visited her office, vented for a little while, and quieted down. She was determined that no child would be dropped on her watch.

Regarding the ethic of critique, all standard laws and rules vanished, as she and her staff created new ways to cope and keep the Center as calm as possible, while still making progress towards returning all children to their families.

The ethic of care was particularly complex on this day. The daycare director constantly thought of the children in the Center. However, she also had to consider the requests of her staff, some of whom had families of their own, who needed care. Additionally, she had to consider the needs of the parents, who were acting in very emotional and unstable ways. Throughout the dilemma, the director was the one who had to care about her entire school community. Their needs were varied, and she had to be ready to meet them, if at all possible. In some cases, she had to put one group's needs above another. This was especially true when members of her staff requested to leave to look after their own children.

Throughout the case, the daycare director tried to maintain her professionalism. She also focused on the bottom-line—the physical and emotional safety of the children. She tried to do the same for her staff and for the parents. For example, towards the end of this harrowing day, when only a few children and staff remained, while worrying that some of the parents would not arrive to pick up their children, particularly as a number worked in the World Trade Center, she put all of the staff and children in one room and showed a movie. Interestingly enough, the one new teacher waited it out for the last two parents to arrive—one of whom worked in a blood bank and the other who was an ER nurse. Only after they appeared, did the director, with the new teacher, leave the building knowing at last that all of the children had someone to care for them.

Regarding turbulence theory, the overall level for this case was severe bordering at times on extreme. However, as the day progressed, the childcare director issued mandates that lowered the turbulence level. Turning off the news in all but one room decreased the level of anxiety for the youngsters as did the rule for

teachers to leave the room to cry and not do so in front of the children. Despite these new mandates, for Aida, the parents and the staff, this was indeed a time of severe to extreme turbulence. As for the children the turbulence level was questionable. Those in charge tried to maintain it at a moderate level to keep the children calm. In particular**,** quieting down the parents proved to be essential to bring down the turbulence level. Thus, in this case, there was positionality, which meant that feelings were different depending upon one's position in the organization. The intent, however, was to manage the turbulence level so that the children would be physically and emotionally safe.

Despite all that was accomplished on this day, Aida Rodriguez was faced with many unanswered questions. One in particular was: Being a director is a job, isn't it? — Just because this job involves leadership, does it mean that you must remain a leader even in the face of death? Aida also asked: Was I correct in keeping the teachers on duty even when some of them felt they needed to be with their families during an attack? Were the needs of the school community more important than the needs of the teachers and their children?

Conclusions

The merging of theory with practice is quite a balancing act. The use of ethical dilemmas is one way to accomplish that balance. Hopefully, by using authentic teaching materials combined with paradigms and concepts, theory and practice can be beneficial and help to remove educational administration programs from the charge of being Ivory Towers. It should also assist in making them into learning communities that are relevant, critical and thought-provoking. In addition, it should foster moral decision making, and hopefully, in so doing, help to develop authentic and inspiring educational leaders for the future.

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