

Enhancing Moral and Ethical Judgment through the Use of Case Histories: An Ethics Course for Pre-service Teachers¹

Fomentar el Criterio Moral y Ético mediante el Uso de Estudio de Casos: Un Curso de Ética para Maestros en Formación

Mary Anne Mc Danel de García^{2*}

Institución Universitaria Colombo Americana, ÚNICA, Colombia

Abstract

This article refers to an action research project involving pre-service teachers. The purpose of this study was to determine if specific learning outcomes could be successfully employed as objectives for an ethics course for pre-service teacher preparation. Real life case histories were used by students to identify and reflect upon moral and ethical issues. Data was collected through questionnaires, interviews, written reflection, and teacher's observations. Findings revealed that the set objectives were attainable and apparently achieved by all of the participants. The use of case histories and a color rubric facilitated the development of the students' moral awareness, reflection and motivation.

Key words: moral/ethical awareness, reasoning/reflection skills, motivation, conviction, implementation, case histories

Resumen

Este artículo hace referencia a un proyecto de investigación acción que contó con la participación de docentes en formación. La finalidad de este estudio fue determinar si los resultados específicos de aprendizaje podrían ser implementados exitosamente como objetivos para un curso de ética para la formación de maestros de inglés. El estudio de casos de la vida real fue utilizado por los estudiantes para identificar y reflexionar sobre problemas morales

93

¹ Received: August 6, 2013 / Accepted: October 1, 2013

² Email: dir.academica@unica.edu.co

y éticos. Los datos fueron recogidos mediante cuestionarios, entrevistas, reflexiones escritas, y observaciones del profesor. Los resultados revelaron que los objetivos propuestos fueron alcanzados y aparentemente logrados por todos los participantes. El uso de estudio de casos y una rúbrica con convenciones de colores facilitó el desarrollo de la conciencia moral de los estudiantes, la reflexión y la motivación.

Palabras clave: conciencia ética/ moral, razonamiento, capacidad de reflexión, motivación, convicción, implementación, estudio de casos.

Resumo

Este artigo faz referência a um projeto de pesquisa ação que contou com a participação de docentes em formação. A finalidade deste estudo foi determinar se os resultados específicos de aprendizagem poderiam ser implantados com êxito como objetivos para um curso de ética para a formação de maestros de inglês. O estudo de casos da vida real foi utilizado pelos estudantes para identificar e refletir sobre problemas morais e éticos. Os dados foram coletados mediante questionários, entrevistas, reflexões escritas e observações do professor. Os resultados revelaram que os objetivos propostos foram alcançados e aparentemente conseguidos por todos os participantes. O uso de estudo de casos e uma rubrica com convenções de cores facilitou o desenvolvimento da consciência moral dos estudantes, a reflexão e a motivação.

Palavras chave: consciência ética/ moral, razoamento, capacidade de reflexão, motivação, convicção, implantação, estudo de casos

Introduction

The purpose of this action research project was to verify if moral or ethical judgment could be enhanced through the study of case histories, in pursuit of Ozar's four desired outcomes for an ethics course (2001). These outcomes include the following: Awareness, Reasoning and Reflecting Skills, Motivation/Conviction, and Implementation.

The use of case histories is advocated as a major tool for the teaching of ethics, along with a variety of classroom techniques. Students involved in this research studied a set of real life situations to help them reach higher levels of awareness of the impact that a particular moral or ethical issue might have on students, their well-being, learning, the reputation of a person, the profession, and the institution, as well as the resulting disciplinary consequences. Students used role play, comic strips, posters, along with open discussion to analyze the cases, and made use of a color rubric to identify the seriousness of the moral and

ethical implications. The teacher served as guide and facilitator rather than lecturer.

Data collection was carried out through questionnaires, interviews, written responses, and the teacher's field notes. An analysis was made of how students broadened their capacity for moral and ethical judgment beyond a conventional basic standard by means of studying case histories. The findings determined a course of action to be used in future ethics courses, and led to the development of a teacher's manual for an ethics course for pre-service teachers.

The site of this investigation was an institution dedicated to the formation of bilingual teachers, who will face the task set for them by John Dewey (1897), "that he (or she) is a social servant set apart for the maintenance of proper social order and the securing of the right social growth" (p.11). As Campbell (2003) points out, "Much of the current literature in the field reinforces the importance of regarding teaching as an inherently moral endeavor. By extension, it supports a belief that teachers primarily carry out their professional work without being fully aware of the moral and ethical implications of their actions" (p. 1). Tibbitts and Torney-Purta (1999) refer to the need for adequate teacher preparation at the pre-service level. "To this end, well designed training experiences are essential, and those organized at the pre-service level are especially important" (p. 2). In order to meet these demands, the teacher must have preparation at the pre-service level that will provide him or her with the knowledge and judgmental skills needed to address moral and ethical situations with students, parents, and others (Goodlad et al., as cited in Yost, 1997). Campbell (2003) identifies three concerns: (a) that a teacher must accept and understand that he/she is a moral agent; (b) that moral dilemmas and complexities are challenges that teachers must face daily; and (c) that teacher professionalism, school cultures and teacher education need renewal in order to confront these concerns.

It is the belief of this author that these three concerns are not only valid but urgent. Anyone who has dealt first hand with a myriad of difficult situations involving teachers in school settings and found these incidents exploding into near catastrophic proportions understands that if a conscientious adult can be accustomed to consider the extended consequences of their actions, many of these unsavory situations could be avoided or at least diminished. The genuine consciousness of the moral agency required of teachers is not as easily achieved in today's world as it once may have been, because of the lack of clear guidelines. It is important that those in charge of the task of providing orientation in teacher ethics strive to direct student discussion not only of extreme

cases of ethical failure but more importantly of everyday situations that contain ethical dilemmas, as these are not only more frequently encountered but also can be very complex. All teacher educators should strive to project and implement a modernized focus concerning moral and ethical decisions and judgments.

Literature Review

Ethics

In ethics, just what it is that we hope to “teach,” or better prompt the development of, is abstract and difficult to define. Many documents exist concerning ethical practice in almost every profession; however, the ethics involved in the teaching profession is understandably more delicate. Surprisingly enough, there are not as many precisely teacher related documents to facilitate orientation for pre-service teachers, or practicing teachers for that matter, as one might expect.

It is not easy to define just what the term “moral” or “ethical” refers to, but in the broadest sense it has to do with doing what is correct according to our sense of what is right and what is wrong. However, it is no easy matter to define what is right or wrong in terms of moral or ethical correctness, as this will depend on a variety of factors which must be considered and which are often in conflict. Carter (2010) lists six such factors that may make a difference when analyzing a situation. The factor of *justice* evaluates the equal distribution of benefits that may result from an action or actions to the persons involved. Decision making often takes into account the fundamental *rights* of a person regarding respect and the manner in which he or she is treated. Another factor to be considered involves the basic *virtues* such as integrity, honesty, and trust. The *utilitarian* aspect involves evaluating which conduct will produce more benefit than harm. What will produce the *common good* for the most people must be considered. Finally, *social relativism* refers to the variation in the values of different cultures which create discrepancies in the basis for judgment.

96 It is logical to presume that the discussion of specific situations in teaching will at least create awareness of the extension that the ethical decisions of teachers might have, based upon the principal that practice helps to develop a pattern of behavior. Aristotle pointed out that everything at which we strive to be excellent requires practice, and that this includes behaving in an ethical manner.

We become just by the practice of just actions, self-controlled by exercising self-control, and courageous by performing acts of courage.

Hence, it is no small matter whether one habit or another is inculcated in us from early childhood; on the contrary, it makes...all the difference. (as cited in Benninga, 2003, p. 3)

Benninga also mentions that the Ethics program developed by the University of Minnesota is based upon the Four-Component Model of Moral Maturity: (a) moral sensitivity, or the awareness of how our actions affect other people; (b) moral judgment, based on the theories of Piaget and Kohlberg; (c) moral motivation in which having moral values is seen as a priority over personal values; and (d) moral character where individuals act on moral conviction (Benninga, 2003, pp. 2-3).

Moral and Ethical Development

Laurence Kohlberg (1971) refines and restructures the theory of Piaget outlining six stages for moral and ethical development. Crain (1985) outlines these stages very comprehensively. Level One is called Pre-conventional Morality and consists of Stage One, Obedience and Punishment Orientation in which young children base moral judgment on rules and punishment resulting from bad behavior. At Stage Two, Individualism and Exchange, different individuals have different points of view and punishment should be avoided. Level Two, referred to as Conventional Morality, includes Stage Three, Good Interpersonal Relationships. At this stage, it is assumed that people should meet the expectations of their immediate community. Stage Four, Maintaining the Social Order, concerns society, and one should act in accordance with social order. Level Three, called Post-conventional Morality, consists of Stage Five, Social Contract and Individual Rights, in which the rights and values that a society should exemplify, society being a social contract where all work for the common good, based upon rights and democratic procedures. Stage Six, Universal Principles, involves treating the interests of all parties in an impartial manner and with equal respect, the universal principle of justice.

Teaching Ethics

The most influential document in this study is David Ozar's article (2001), in which he builds upon developmental psychologist James Rest's four aspects of moral life. It sets forth the objectives that an ethics course for pre-service teachers might find worthwhile to strive for:

1. Awareness or sensitivity to what is morally or ethically at stake in a situation;

2. Reasoning and Reflection Skills, leading to judgments about what ought to be done in a situation by considering what is morally or ethically at stake;
3. Motivation/Conviction, the person's conscious affirmation of values, principles and ideals, and patterns of living habitually according to his or her moral and ethical judgments; and
4. Implementation, the practical and emotional ability to carry out the course of action that a person has judged correct and is motivated to do. (Ozar, 2001, p. 4)

Ozar uses the terms “ethical” and “moral” interchangeably, and defines them as “a question in which we are concerned with what someone ought to do because someone's well-being or virtue or rights or duties are at issue or at stake” (Ozar, 2001, p. 6). Ozar uses Rest's four aspects as the baseline for the average student (young adult) entering a course and projects in general terms what he considers to be the ideal outcomes for an ethics course. He states that the average student brings to the course awareness of personally relevant values, principles and ideals, such as honesty and integrity among others, and some social-relational ones. Throughout the course, students should develop an articulate awareness of these values, and recognize additional values needed to engage in moral and ethical reflection in both private and social and public situations in relationship to what is transcendent and or sympathetic to others' needs. This can be stimulated by having students share hypothetical cases or events from their own lives, thus allowing them to demonstrate their awareness through discussion (Ozar, 2001, pp. 5-6).

Ozar points out that the average college student “reasons logically on simple moral/ethical issues,” but is generally unable to grasp “the elements and patterned contents of the different modes of moral/ethical reflection” or “to speak in detail of their effort” to do so. Therefore, students should develop the ability to give articulate judgment, based upon “logical...clear... careful’ moral reflection. ‘The most direct means of assessing students’ reasoning/reflective skills is by means of case-based discussions and written assignments, whether the cases are hypothetical or drawn from current events or the student's own lives.” He also emphasizes that students should learn several conceptual tools developed by scholars of moral/ethical reflection (Ozar, 2001, pp. 5-6).

As for motivation/conviction, Ozar feels that the average student does not frequently think about reasons for having the values, principles or ideals that they hold, and that these are very often habitual rather than

“decision and choice-based.” They must become more appreciative of these in others, and demonstrate them by “embodying them concretely in their lives and work” so that others see and are motivated to follow the example set, or “are repelled by the lack of values/principles/ideals that they admire” (Ozar, 2001, p. 7).

Finally, regarding implementation, students generally have limited experience with “situation specific challenges other than family, school and limited social or work environments” (Ozar, 2001, p. 8). They must be made aware of their abilities and prompted to be more conscious and articulate in order to give solutions to practical and emotional situations they will eventually encounter. They should know the limits of their own skills and be able to refer to available resources for resolving a problematic situation.

Ozar suggests some teaching strategies for an undergraduate ethics course. He advocates guided discussion rather than lecture and suggests that “the use of cases to make the issues concrete is almost always helpful and often essential...Assessment in this area is carried out most efficiently through class discussions and written assignments about typical cases” (2001, p. 8). Such an interactive environment enhances awareness and reasoning and reflection. Students should analyze cases in writing and give judgment and reasons for their conclusions. It is also useful to employ a particular set of conceptual tools and give students the opportunity to practice with them during class discussions (Ozar, 2001).

Chubbuck, Burant, and Whipp (2001) point out that pre-service teachers have moral orientation and sensibilities which provide a basis for profound participation in an ethics course. Davis and Davey (2007) stress the importance of treating students with respect during discussion because people cannot be forced to have the same values. They do not come to the course without values, and they may also have values they have not yet examined. Further, people may still need to develop reasoning skills and the confidence needed to act according to their values. Chubbuck et al. (2001) argue the following:

Vivid stories about practicing teachers provided the grist for grappling with moral concerns. And throughout discussions among peers in teacher education classes or with other college students on campus brought the moral dimension into focus, helping pre-service teachers extend their ideas and consider wider perspectives. Our participants’ fusion of thought and emotion in these interpersonal sites seemed to spark stronger engagement with the moral dimension, and along with that the program content. (p. 127)

In agreement with Socrates and Aristotle that ethics is knowing what should be done, and that this can be taught, Tripathy, Chavan and Jain (2007) in their study concerning the development of a code of ethics in the field of education involving college teachers effectively used ten case histories. They mention that dramatic change can occur in terms of the basic problem-solving strategies used to deal with ethical issues by young adults in their 20s and 30s. The questions students answered were based upon recognizing the issue, getting the facts, evaluating the alternative actions from various moral perspectives, making a decision, and learning from the case. (Brooke (2008) is also a great advocate of the use of case histories both in the classroom and on line. She considers that Socratic dialogue resulting from the analysis of concrete situations promotes higher order thinking skills and stimulates students to think about how to respond to a particular situation.

Fleischmann, Robbins and Wallace (2009) are concerned with information professionals; nonetheless, the findings are very relevant. They discuss the use of pedagogically structured case histories, in which students make multiple interdependent decisions while doing role play, and answering open-ended questions. After discussion, the teacher provided students with the results of the cases, taking into account the students' conclusions. The findings support the use of developing and evaluating case histories as beneficial. Students were reported to have considered the values of others, particularly on an intercultural basis, which indicates that they had increased their level of "motivation/conviction" as formulated by Ozar (2001).

Carter (2010) deals with both the challenges and limitations in the implementation of training and program development for teaching ethics. He argues that using case studies helps to contextualize discussion and provide a space to contrast different values and positions. Carter identifies three main components in ethical decision making: relationships amongst individuals, laws, rules, regulations, and codes of conduct, and values and cultural influence. He indicates that case studies promote professional dialogue and that "these cases must contain uncertainties because teaching is full of uncertainties" (p. 5-7). He also concludes that the use of a code of conduct provides guidance. Davis and Davey (2007) discuss curriculum and instructional methods for teaching ethics. They conclude that the consistent use of case histories, role play and other methodologies used to teach ethics and ethical reasoning facilitated thinking, discussing, supporting beliefs and considering the consequences of actions.

Methodology

Research Design

The aim of this action research project was to determine whether tenth semester pre-service teachers were able to reach a higher level of clear, logical and careful judgment (Rest, 1984) of ethical and moral issues as proposed by Ozar (2001) through the study of case histories. The project also hoped to evaluate if the methodology used in the course was effective. Instruments for collecting data were developed and implemented during the duration of the semester. At the end of the course, data was compared, contrasted, and interpreted, and findings were established as reliable. The findings indicated a course of action to be pursued in future ethics courses, and in other applications as well.

The research questions guiding the project were the following:

- *To what extent do tenth semester pre-service teachers reach a higher level of moral/ethical judgment as outlined by Ozar by using case histories?*
- *To what extent do students learn to identify the extended consequences of a particular occurrence?*
- *What kinds of case histories help bring students up to the level of demonstrating moral/ethical judgment in educational situations?*
- *How does the use of a rubric help students to analyze situations presented in case histories?*

Context and Participants

This study was carried out in a 36-hour ethics course during the second semester of 2011 in the Bilingual Education program of a teaching college in Bogotá, Colombia. The participants consisted of eight tenth semester students, three men and five women, between the ages of 21 and 33. Students were enrolled in the course while simultaneously engaged in student teaching in both public and private schools in the city. They arrived to class after a full day's work and a long commute. Two of the participants also had experience in private tutoring and two had experience teaching in language institutes.

101

Data Collection Instruments

Qualitative data collection techniques were used throughout the course. Information was obtained through questionnaires, essays

involving written analysis of case histories, interviews with the students, and teacher observation. The first survey identified students' expectations of the ethics course according to the established research questions for the study. The second survey determined if students' expectations had been fulfilled. Individual written reflections containing students' responses measured the increase in each student's awareness of the moral and ethical issues presented in particular cases. Student interviews were carried out and recorded on an interview format, thus providing candid direct quotes which served as evaluation of the effectiveness of the methodology used. The teacher consigned observations for each class in a field note format and recorded information about students' participation and interaction.

Students responded to the preliminary questionnaire during the second session of the course. There were seven questions related to the objectives Ozar (2001) outlines as the levels of moral and ethical judgment for the average college student and the proposed outcomes for the course. Students were not required to give their names. Interviews were used to record students' responses to the course during the final marking period. They evaluated the methodology and usefulness of the course. These responses were recorded by the teacher, after which they were read and approved by the students. During classes the professor took field notes regarding student responses and involvement in different activities. The teacher was an observer and facilitator rather than the leader. These observations allowed the professor to evaluate the growth of the students' level of awareness as well as reasoning and reflection.

Pedagogical Intervention

During this project students studied 23 true-life situations drawn from the experience of the researcher. Information which might permit identification of individuals, institutions or communities was carefully avoided. The situations were the kind that teachers might find themselves in during their careers. The cases fell into three categories: daily procedure, severe misconduct and personal problems. Students were given the cases to read and analyze before discussion. They worked individually, in pairs or in groups, and took part in role play, or illustrated the cases in comic strips or posters. Some cases were given for homework, and discussed in the next class. Students determined the repercussions on the extended community, suggested alternative courses of action, and possible disciplinary consequence. Periodically, students were asked to write their reactions to a case. These were evaluated by the teacher and later discussed in the group.

Case histories were used in the following ways: (a) read and discussed in class; (b) read in class in groups, presented, and discussed; (c) read for homework and discussed in the next class; (d) prepared and presented in role play by groups who then led the others in discussion; (e) prepared in pairs and presented and discussed; and (f) illustrated in comic strips or posters by groups and presented to the class. According to teacher observations, the students responded well when the teacher was an observer rather than a lecturer. Students often volunteered their own experiences, and when this occurred, the teacher would allow time for adequate interaction. Students were enthusiastic when asked to take the parts of the characters. They would assign characters and rehearse their presentation, present it, then lead a discussion with the rest of the class. The use of a comic strip presentation was also effective. Groups would be given different cases, paper and markers. They would illustrate the case in drawings, then present the sequence of drawings to the class, explain, and lead reflective discussion.

Students applied a rubric after discussing the cases. The rubric was established considering aspects outlined by the National Education Association's (NEA) Code of Ethics of the Education Profession (1975, revised 2010) and the Connecticut Code of Professional Responsibility for Teachers (2009), the NEA Code being more general and the Connecticut Code being very specific. Both recognize two main categories of responsibility: responsibility and commitment to the student and responsibility and commitment to the profession. The Connecticut Code also includes responsibility to the community and responsibility to the student's family. The points included in these two codes coincide with many of the principles of the ethical framework, including responsibilities and unacceptable conduct, consigned in local codes of the Secretary of Education of Bogotá (2002). The rubric used in the course was composed of five categories: blue, green, orange, yellow, and red; blue being the least serious and red being the most serious. The following criteria are used for each color: (a) school rules or code of conduct; (b) student involvement; (c) students at risk; (d) impact on learning; (e) danger to the reputation of colleagues, the profession or the institution; and (f) required disciplinary action (See Appendix 1).

Results

Results indicate that the use of case histories was highly effective in helping students reach higher levels of moral and ethical judgment over the course of the semester. These areas of judgment are outlined by Ozar's criteria of awareness and sensitivity, reasoning and reflection

skills, motivation / conviction, and implementation (Ozar, 2001, p. 4). The data indicates that students are also able to learn to identify the extended consequences of a particular occurrence although students responded differently to different types of situations. The use of a rubric was helpful for participants when analyzing different situations. The rubric was also quite effective in measuring students' understanding of and responses to cases over time.

In terms of the ability to reach a higher level of moral and ethical judgment using case histories, students affirm that they were able to increase their skills and felt better prepared to deal with future situations. This ability was developed over time. For example, students' responses to the first questionnaire revealed that all but one of them felt that they were not logical, clear or careful in discussing ethical issues with others:

I have some knowledge, but I do not feel I have enough to be able to discuss these topics with another party.

None of the participants felt secure about voicing their opinion. Two expressed fear, and three said that they preferred not to get involved:

Sometimes I feel scared of saying something that may become a problem.

When asked if they were able to explain their reasons for adhering to their moral or ethical values, six felt that they could if necessary and one felt that it would be difficult. When asked if they considered themselves able to discern their limitations and direct others to seek support or advice, five responded no and two yes.

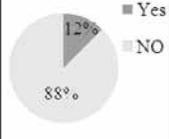
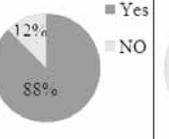
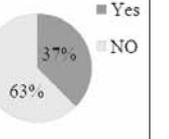
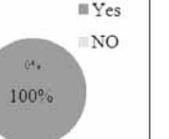
After working with the case histories throughout the semester, in the final questionnaire, participants were asked whether they had achieved a higher awareness of ethical and moral issues as a result of the course, and also if they had enhanced their ability to respond to such issues. One hundred percent of the students felt that the class had fulfilled their expectations. In terms of being able to be logical, clear and careful in discussing moral or ethical issues, responses were unanimously affirmative. Responses include the following:

104

The cases that we talked about in class let me know many things that I should pay attention to and put into practice in my conduct and discourse.

With each case we had the opportunity to analyze it, discuss it and give a possible solution. Although at the beginning it was difficult to analyze, since we did not have any experience, but later it was easy.

Table 1. Students' perception of their skills – Preliminary and final questionnaires

Skill	Able to judge and express clearly, logically and carefully	Reason, reflect and voice opinion on moral / ethical issues with security	Affirm and consistently demonstrate convictions	Carry out a course of action and recognize limitations
Questionnaire 1	 <p>■ Yes ■ NO</p>	 <p>■ Yes ■ NO</p>	 <p>■ Yes ■ NO</p>	 <p>■ Yes ■ NO</p>
Questionnaire 2	 <p>■ Yes ■ NO</p>	 <p>■ Yes ■ NO</p>	 <p>■ Yes ■ NO</p>	 <p>■ Yes ■ NO</p>

In terms of work with the case histories, at the beginning it was obvious that some of the students were reluctant to take a stand when discussing the cases. Others were quick to give a judgment, but giving reasons for their opinions was not as easy. The teacher noted that each of the three grading periods marked an increase in logic and spontaneity in the class discussion of the cases. Even the more timid students were open and eager to give their opinions and reasons for their positions as the course progressed. It is important to note that students began to seek a consensus concerning the seriousness of the case and the resulting consequences. Important team work and problem solving skill seemed to evolve and were evidenced by the written responses done in each marking period.

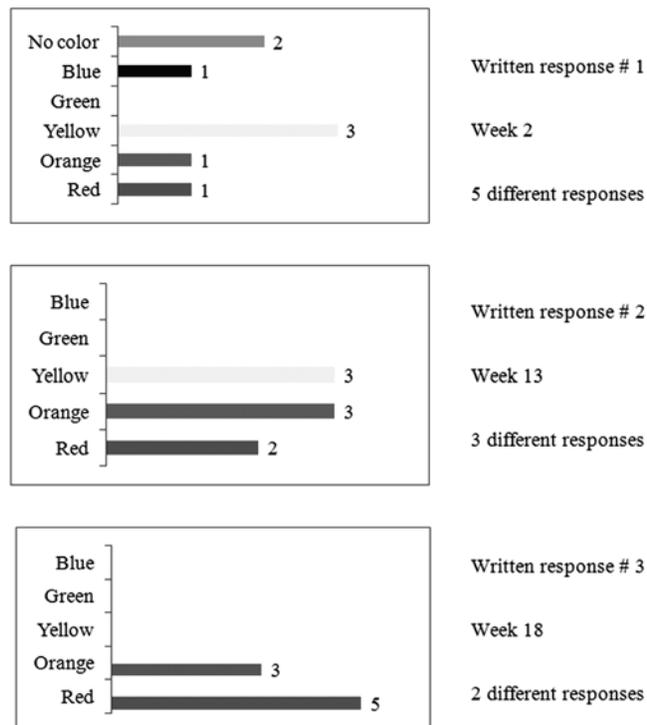
In students' first written response to the case histories, completed at the end of the second week, a wide range of results and a high degree of subjectivity were evident. The papers revealed contradictory statements indicating the students' lack of security in trusting their own judgment. The first case analyzed involved two teachers with personal problems. Using the color rubric, the students' responses varied greatly in terms of the seriousness of the situation and the response required. This indicates, as did Davis and Davy (2007), that the students bring with them an adult standard of personal judgment, which is in accordance

with what Ozar (2001) determined to be the average level for the typical college student.

Another written response, taken at the end of the second marking period, concerned a group of teachers involved in severe misconduct. The case was difficult, and designed to put the students' judgment to test. The papers indicated a marked improvement in concrete judgment and unification of criteria. This time, all felt that the case was serious. All in all, the answers exemplified maturity and thorough analysis even though students were still not confident offering their judgments.

The last written response was done in the final class. The case in question concerned daily procedure. Students showed less confusion, more confidence, objectivity, and less dependency on the color rubric. They considered the points of view of all of the people involved in the case, and offered solutions. The ability to offer analysis and judgment had improved. A breakdown of the results of the written responses can be seen in Table 2.

Table 2. Students' responses to case histories at Weeks 2, and 13 and 18



In terms of the degree to which students can learn to identify the extended consequences of a particular occurrence, at the onset of the course, six of the pre-service teachers felt that they could distinguish when values were in conflict in a concrete situation. All but one person felt that they were aware of the perspectives of the multiple parties involved in a situation. All felt that they took into account the consequences of moral and ethical issues on learning, on students and the extended community, and on the institution. Nonetheless as the course progressed the students recognized that they were becoming even more alert as to what might result from a situation.

The final questionnaire revealed that the students coincided in that they had increased awareness of the perspectives of multiple parties. One student said the following:

When we discuss a situation in the class, we get the point that other parties, such as students, teachers, parents and directives are affected either positively or negatively with the decisions we take.

All of the students considered that they had learned to consider the consequences of acts, the points of view of others, and the reputation of people, the profession, and the educational institutions:

Sometimes we think of ourselves but not in others or the students' safety and learning.

This was really useful. Sometimes we don't think about a reputation being damaged.

I also had an experience in my student teaching where someone told me about a problem. I knew that I probably wasn't qualified to give the advice the person needed and I recommended professional counseling, rather than try to give advice myself.

In terms of the kinds of case histories which were most effective, the use of case histories as an instrument to improve moral and ethical judgment was effective, and was accepted unanimously as an excellent resource to develop higher thinking skills. In an interview with the teacher, some of the students expressed their opinions on the use of case histories:

I liked all the cases. I thought that some of the things that occurred in the cases could never happen, but now I realize that they can.

I liked the tricky cases because they aren't what they seem at first, and you have to think before you decide how serious they are.

The questionnaire filled out on the last day of class is the prime indicator in evaluating the types of case histories used in the course. Teacher observation also provided criteria for evaluation, as did the individual written responses of the students. The cases used in the course were based upon daily procedure in teaching, extreme misconduct, and personal problems. All of the students found all types of cases useful and interesting; however, three people felt that the cases about daily procedure were the most useful because, as one person put it, “These are the cases that we are going to face every day.” Three students preferred those cases in which extreme disciplinary measurements were in order. All agreed that these cases were easier to judge than the cases in which the moral or ethical matters were not so obvious. Two people felt that the cases concerning teachers with personal problems were most useful. As one student said, “These cases in which personal problems are involved demand higher thinking and reflection.”

Teacher observations indicate that cases concerning daily procedure in teaching were often harder for the students to identify the problem, as Campbell (2008) quoting Hansen points out “... not everything that teachers do necessarily has moral significance, but any action a teacher takes can have moral import” (p. 22). Cases of daily procedure (e.g. borrowing equipment from students, responding to parental pressure, classroom management, combining personal business with school time, not doing duties etc.), spurred prolonged discussion about the level of the teacher’s guilt and what the consequence should be.

The cases involving extreme misconduct (e.g. teacher involvement with a student, spreading damaging rumors, etc.) were easily identified as totally unacceptable and requiring immediate drastic consequences. Typically, the discussion time needed for these cases was less than that needed for the other cases, and the consequences suggested were always extreme. It was sometimes difficult for students to understand why the teacher was not fired immediately or, on the other hand, why he/she had been so severely punished. This helped students to understand the delicate matter of protecting the reputation of the institution. Cases where personal problems were discussed, (e.g. addictions, personal hygiene, etc.) often led to prolonged discussion, usually with the students wanting the teacher in the case fired immediately.

The written responses provide an interesting indicator of the difficulty students encountered in analyzing the cases. The amount of writing consigned in discussing the first case, which concerned a personal problem, averaged two complete pages. The answers were sometimes contradictory or uncertain. The wide range of colors assigned to the

case (see Table 2) testifies to this. The second case, which concerned severe conduct, required only one and a half pages, and the answers were direct and conclusive, indicating that individually students did not find it difficult to identify the problem. The third case, which was about daily procedure, also required only an average of one and a half pages. The answers indicated that, although they demonstrated a high degree of critical thinking, the students were not hesitant or insecure. All of the cases were valuable, as is indicated by the unanimous positive response on the final questionnaire. It was suggested that the percentage of cases concerning daily procedure should probably be higher in the collection.

In terms of the rubric as a tool to facilitate the classification of the cases, findings in the final questionnaire, field notes, and student interviews were unanimous in the appreciation of the rubric as an effective tool, not only to rate the cases, but also to appreciate the extended consequences of a particular moral or ethical issue. The teacher-researcher noted that the students not only consulted the color rubric, but also referred to it in their conversations concerning cases when working in groups.

Conclusion

It must be acknowledged that the study would have been optimized if there had been more students to work with. None the less, the results were clear indicators that the specific objectives for an Ethics course for teachers as proposed by Ozar (2001) are adequate and largely attainable when case histories are used as the major instrument in the methodology. Their continued use is advisable for the Ethics course at the institution where the study took place. Case histories, as indicated by Benninga (2003), Ozar (2001), Chubbuck, Burant, and Whipp (2001), Tripathy (2007), Fleischmann, Robbins and Wallace (2009), and Davis and Davey (2007), and as demonstrated in this action research project, are an excellent tool for the development of higher moral and ethical judgment. The follow up to the study will be to revise and edit the case histories that were used for the course. These cases will be compiled into a formal document or manual for use in future ethics classes. They will be accompanied by discussion questions and suggested activities that might be employed in the class, as well as a diagnostic commentary.

This study shows that the type of cases used during the course (daily procedure, personal problems, and severe misconduct) are all useful for pre-service teachers. Students indicated that those cases concerning daily procedure would probably be the most frequently encountered in their careers.

The methodology applied in the course was adequate. We can conclude that interactive strategies, with the teacher as facilitator and observer, should be implemented. These include role play, individual presentations, sharing personal experiences, drawing comic strip and poster interpretations, among others. This does not exclude the exploration of theory and the use of lecture.

The color rubric is useful in helping pre-service teachers relate to the impact of a moral/ethical issue regarding the rules of an institution, impact on learning, student involvement, students at risk, the reputations of all involved, and adequate consequences. This original document merits its continued use and inclusion in the proposed manual.

Acknowledgements

Carlo Erwin Granados Beltran MA and Mónica Rodriguez Bonce PhD(c) were fundamental to the realization of the action research carried out and of this article. I am grateful for their comments, suggestions and the learning experience they facilitated. A special thanks to Alejandro Rativa Murillo, my student research assistant, for his dedication and technological expertise, and Josephine Taylor for her commentaries and editorial skills.

References

- Benninga, J. S. (2003). Moral and Ethical Issues in Teacher Education. ERIC Digest. ED482699 2003-10-00 ERIC Clearinghouse on Teaching and Teacher Education. 1-7. Retrieved from: <http://www.ericdigests.org/2004-4/moral.htm>
- Brooke, S. L. (2008). The case method and collaborative learning. In K. L. Orvis & A. L. R. Lassiter (Eds.), *Computer-supported collaborative learning: Best practices and principles for instructors* (pp. 66-88). Henry, PA: Information Science Publishing.
- Campbell, E. (2003). *The ethical teacher*. Maidenhead: Open University Press.
- Campbell, E. (2008). Teaching ethically as a moral condition of professionalism. In D. Narváez & L. Nucci (Eds). *The International Handbook of Moral and Character Education*. (pp. 601-617). New York: Routledge.

- Carter, M. (2010). *Professional ethics in teaching: The training and development challenge*. Retrieved from: <http://es.scribd.com/doc/38492247/Professional-Ethics-in-Teaching>
- Chubbuck, S. M., Burant, T., & Whipp, J. (2001). The presence and possibility of moral sensibility in beginning pre-service teachers. *Ethics and Education*, 2(2), 109-130.
- Connecticut State Department of Education (2003). *Connecticut code of professional responsibility for teachers*. Retrieved from: http://www.sde.ct.gov/sde/lib/sde/pdf/cert/ethics/code_teachers.pdf
- Crain, W. C. (1985). *Theories of development*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall.
- Davis, H. B. & Davey, B. T. (2007). Teaching Teachers Ethics: An Analysis of Instructional Methods, Key Concepts and Effects on Teachers. A workshop for teachers. 1-4. Retrieved from: <http://www.docstoc.com/docs/2413045/Teaching-Teachers-Ethics-An-Analysis-of-Instructional-Methods>
- Dewey, J. (1897). *My pedagogic creed*. *School Journal* 54. 77-80. Retrieved from: <http://dewey.pragmatism.org/creed.htm>
- Fleischmann, K. R., Robbins, R. W., & Wallace, W. A. (2009). Designing educational cases for intercultural information ethics: The importance of diversity, perspectives, values, and pluralism. *Journal of Education in Library and Information Science* 50(1). Retrieved from: <http://jelis.org/?p=784>
- Hansen, D. T. (1993). From role to person: The moral layeredness of classroom teaching. *American Educational Research Journal* 30(4), 651-674.
- Kohlberg, L. & Turiel, E. (1971). *Moral development and moral education*. In G. Lesser, (Ed.), *Psychology and educational practice*. Scott Foresman.
- Mills, G.E. (2003). *Action research: A guide for the teacher researcher* (2nd Ed.). Upper Saddle River, NJ: Merrill Prentice Hall.
- National Education Association (1975, amended 2010). *Code of ethics of the education profession*. Retrieved from: <http://www.nea.org/home/30442.htm>
- Ozar, D. (2001) Learning outcomes for ethics across the curriculum programs. *Ethics Journal* 2(1), 1-27. Retrieved from: <http://www.uvu.edu/ethics/seac/Learning%20Outcomes%20for%20Ethics%20Across%20the%20Curriculum%20Programs.pdf>

- School Teaching Ethics (nd). *Education Encyclopedia*. 1-5. Retrieved January 6, 2009 from <http://www.answers.com/topic/school-teaching-ethics>
- Secretaria de Educación de Bogotá, D.C. (2002) Resolución numero 2343 de 14 agosto de 2002 por lo cual se adopta el Código de Ética de la Secretaría de Educación de Bogotá, D.C. Retrieved from: http://www.sedbogota.edu.co/archivos/SECTOR_EDUCATIVO/RESOLUCIONES_SED/008/RESOLUCIONES%25202343%
- Secretaria de Educación de Bogotá, D.C. (2002) Decreto 1278, artículos 40, 41, 42, 43 del 20 de junio de 2002 por la cual se expide el Estatuto de Profesionalización Docente. Retrieved from: http://www.mineducación.gov.co/1621/articles-86102_archivo_pdf.pdf.
- Tibbitts, F., & Torney-Purta, J. (1999) *Citizenship education in Latin America: Preparing for the future*. Human Rights Education Associates. Retrieved from: http://www.hrea.org/erc/Library/display_doc.php?url=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.hrea.org%2Fpubs%2FIDB-monograph%2Fcivics.pdf&external=N
- Tripathy, K., Chavan, S., & Jain, R. (2007) *Developing and documenting a code of ethics for the professionals in the field of education*. Retrieved from: http://www.indianmba.com/Faculty_Column/FC389/fc389.html
- Yost, D. S. (1997). The moral dimensions of teaching and pre-service teachers: Can moral dispositions be influenced? *Journal of Teacher Education* 48(4). Retrieved from: <http://www.questia.com/googleScholar.qst?docId=5000551431>

Author

***Mary Anne Mc Danel de Garcia** is presently Academic Dean at the *Institución Universitaria Colombo Americano, ÚNICA*, where she teaches Professional Ethics, Education Administration I and II and British Literature. She holds a BA in English from the Saint Francis University and has special training in Principal Leadership, Strategic Planning and ECIS accreditation for which she has served as a visiting team member. She has 26 years of experience as an IB teacher and has served as guidance counselor, high school and middle school principal and school director.

Appendix

Color rubric for analyzing case histories concerning teaching ethics

Six criteria are considered in this rubric:

- Violation of Code of Ethics or school rules (community handbook);
- student involvement;
- well-being of students at risk;
- negative impact on learning;
- risk of damage to the good name of the profession or the institution;
- the management of the situation.

These criteria are listed according to the seriousness of the incidents and described under each classification represented by a color. The colors are

- Blue (being the least serious);
- Green;
- Yellow;
- Orange;
- and Red (being the most serious).

When these criteria are considered, the result may be a combination of the colors. After considering all of the criteria, as a whole, one color can be determined to be representative of the case.

BLUE:

- There is a violation of the Code of Ethics and/or school rules.
- There is no student involvement.
- There is no risk to the well being of students.
- There is no negative impact on learning.
- There is minimal risk of damage to the good name of the profession and/or the good name of the institution.
- The situation can be easily managed but the offender should be made aware of his/her infraction.

GREEN:

- There is a violation of the Code of Ethics and/or school rules.
- There may be some student involvement.
- There is possible risk to the well being of students.
- There may be some negative impact on learning.
- There is considerable risk of damage to the good name of the profession and/or the good name of the institution.
- The situation can be managed without major difficulty but may require a formal consequence.

YELLOW:

- There is a considerable violation of the Code of Ethics and/or school rules.
- There is student involvement.
- There is some risk to the well being of students.
- There is a negative impact on learning.
- There is a high risk of damage to the good name of the profession and/or the good name of the institution.
- The situation requires prompt careful management and formal consequences.

ORANGE:

- There is a serious violation of the Code of Ethics and/or school rules.
- Students are directly involved.
- The well being of the students is at considerable risk.
- There is considerable negative impact on learning.
- The good name of the profession and/or the institution is in jeopardy.
- The situation requires prompt, cautious discreet management and significant formal consequences.

RED:

- There is severe violation of the Code of Ethics and/or school rules.
- Students are directly involved.
- The well-being of the students is at high risk.
- There is an important negative impact on learning.
- The good name of the profession and/or the institution is in great jeopardy.
- The situation requires prompt, cautious, discreet management and extreme formal consequences.