

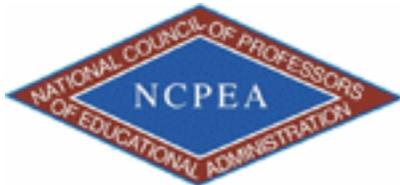
SOCIAL JUSTICE: A MODEL FOR UNRAVELING THE ETHICS OF ADMINISTRATIVE DISCOURSE*

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Abstract

This article attempts to capitalize on the current efforts to examine the traditional discourse, to consider one that focuses on ethics, to examine resistance to alternative discourses, and to provide a tentative educational administration curriculum model that reflects ethics at the core of everything that is taught in educational administration preparation programs. We begin with an examination of the administrative narrative as it informs current discourse. We discuss the roles of administrative condescension and educator complicity in perpetuating the narrative. Finally, we present an educational administration curricular model using Phenix's (1964) Realms of Meaning in an attempt to satisfy the requirement that ethics move to the center of the educational administrative narrative.



NOTE: This module has been peer-reviewed, accepted, and sanctioned by the National Council of the Professors of Educational Administration (NCPEA) as a scholarly contribution to the knowledge base in educational administration.

Social Justice: A Model for Unraveling the Ethics of Administrative Discourse

A discourse that effectively curtails the full participation of many women and some men, and especially men and women of color, must be disrupted (Grogan, 1996, 192)

This call to disrupt the traditional discourse in educational administration has received some attention in the educational literature of late (Brunner, 2000; 2002; Grogan, 2000; Laible, 2000; Marshall 2000; Shakeshaft, 1989; 1998; Young & Laible, 2000). In addition to the call for reexamining the traditional exclusionary discourse that informs educational administration, there has been a parallel examination of ethics in educational administration (Beck & Murphy, 1994; Hodgkinson, 1991; Foster, 1986; Fazzaro, Walters, & McKerrow, 1994; McKerrow, 1997; Noddings, 1984; 1992; Purpel, 1989; Raywid, 1986; Strike, Haller, & Soltis, 1988). Implicit in both of these trends in the literature is the idea that those who teach educational

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administrators have a fundamental impact on the way school administrators think and practice. The work of professors in educational administration has profound moral bearing on the field, intended or not. Indeed, as Raywid (1986) points out, “[E]ven the decision not to intend them—i.e., to exclude moral considerations from one’s thinking is in itself a decision of profound moral bearing” (p. 162).

This article attempts to capitalize on the current efforts to examine the traditional discourse, to consider one that focuses on ethics, to examine resistance to alternative discourses, and to provide a tentative educational administration curriculum model that reflects ethics at the core of everything that is taught in educational administration preparation programs. We begin with an examination of the administrative narrative as it informs current discourse. We discuss the roles of administrative condescension and educator complicity in perpetuating the narrative. Finally, we present an educational administration curricular model using Phenix’s (1964) Realms of Meaning in an attempt to satisfy the requirement that ethics move to the center of the educational administrative narrative.

1 Educational Administrative Narrative

There is an assumption that educational administration has a unique and idiosyncratic knowledge base that is somehow more useful than others (i.e., teachers’ knowledge base) in understanding educational organizations. This pretension to a generalized knowledge base (Bredeson, 2002; Donmoyer, 1999) allows administrators to be socialized by beliefs and values built on a hierarchical framework of leadership detached from teaching and learning. The knowledge base constitutes a particular way of thinking about administration that is reinforced by administration courses, professional jargon, assessment, certification guidelines, and codes of ethics. It also gives administrators a significant source of personal and professional power.

The administrative narrative is reflected in academia and the research that emerges from it. This research updates the courses, makes administrative jargon current, guides assessment and certification practices, and informs codes of ethics. This sense-making, recursive element of narrative also makes it resistant to change (Lyotard, 1979). Historically, administration has been limited to men, mostly white, whose sense of administration seldom included the perspectives of those who did not look like them. If women or minorities were given any consideration, they were usually marginalized as simply reflecting another point of view. Current appeals to disrupt the discourse forecast the necessity for change and the resistance that will surely emerge.

Condescension

Condescension toward teaching, learning, and alternative viewpoints embedded within the administrative narrative provides insight into how resistance ultimately plays out to sustain the traditional discourse. Donmoyer (1999) calls this subtle form of resistance the “big tent.” That is, traditional discourses do not deny the existence of alternative points of view and even include them under the “big tent” of administrative literature. Even so, there is no attempt to connect that work to the traditional work of administration. Detached from learning, teaching, and alternative points of view the traditional discourse is condescending and unhelpful.

Foster (1986) provides one way to thwart resistance to change. He proposes a three-tiered model for administration featuring empirical study, investigation of individual constructions and interpretations of reality, and critical inquiry as a reflective process that includes dialogue for democratic participation. Without democratic participation, inclusive dialogue, as well as an appreciation for individual constructions and interpretations of reality, administrative theory and practice will continue to privilege a particular point of view and the practitioners and academics who hold it. Foster’s view is framed by an ethic of concern for social justice and his model is specifically designed to thwart exclusion or privilege. Thus, democratic participation and critical inquiry are especially helpful in constructing a curriculum for educational administration.

Complicity

Teachers, parents, students, and administrators alike have accepted a singular vision of administration that excludes teaching, learning, and alternative points of view. Academics have ignored the resistance to alternative ways of knowing by writing texts that reflect a narrowly focused, essentialist vision of educational administration. All have too frequently failed to challenge not only the traditional discourse but also their

own role in its perpetuation. This complicity occurs in silence, is often unrecognized, and ultimately leads to hegemony. The hegemony of the administrative narrative plays out in the roles of administrators and teachers. Under the current, hierarchical, bureaucratic, narrative, the administrator's primary responsibility is to maintain control of the organization and those in it (Cusick, 1992). In response to the research on organizational culture in the 1980s and the heightened sensitivity to human resources, educational administration cannot appear to serve the purposes of scientific management. Currently, a variety of administrative constructions exist to mask the hegemony, not the least of which is something referred to as "cooling the mark out" (Goffman, 1952, p. 451)

Administrators have developed a subtle cooling function so teachers do not inveigh against the system that guarantees their failure (Andrews, Lee, & James, 2002; Clark, 1960; Goffman, 1952; Parker, 1995). For example, when schools do not make adequate yearly progress (AYP) as mandated by No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (U.S. Department of Education, 2002), administrators add professional development activities, carve out weeks of teaching for test preparation, or set up incentive programs for students and teachers. What they do not do is stop the testing, confront any potential damage that is being done to students and teachers, or lead the way toward more just assessment techniques. Much of the literature in educational administration capitalizes on this administrative hegemony and much of the professional development for administrators is focused on ways to mollify teachers and students.

Teachers accept being cooled out rather than challenge the wholesale usurpation of their pedagogical authority by administrative functionaries. Teachers are expected to defer to administration even if that obedience is dysfunctional (McKerrow, 2002). Academics, for the most part, remain silent on the issues of teacher representation and voice when they intersect with administration. Many do not confront the serious lack of emphasis on teaching and learning in the educational administration curriculum they develop and teach to preservice administrators. Instead, they promote a higher education curriculum of such idiosyncratic particulars as law and finance that are unrelated to learning and teaching, the fundamental mission of elementary and secondary schools.

Consequently, teachers, administrators, and academics alike end up compromising some fundamental ideas about education and administration. First, the educational mission must drive the administrative narrative not the other way around. Second, education and administration are highly contextual but driven by one common good, namely, free, appropriate, public education for all (Bredeson, 2002). The common good requires that educators be taught to react and reflect, act, and advocate. And this requires some understanding of what is worth reflecting upon, that is, moral ethical choices. Third, the work emerging from higher education institutions must benefit the schools not just contribute to theoretical development. Academics must act in the service of the schools. These ideas all necessitate an understanding of teaching and learning, an ethical and moral sensitivity to serve all students, and a disposition toward advocacy.

The traditional narrative fails to challenge the hegemony that leads to the reproduction of an amoral, exclusionary educational system. Rediscovering educational administration as a fundamentally ethical profession can halt the reproduction, stymie the social injustice that accrues to it, expose the cooling out functions of administrators, and minimize condescension by recentering learning and teaching as the goals of educational administration.

2 Curriculum Model for Ethical Professional Education

Education serves a moral purpose. It is a public good and necessarily centers consideration on the individual student not the organization. Ethical leadership requires a consideration of the fundamental purposes of education, the nature of schools as institutions, and the roles and responsibilities of educational leaders (Beck & Murphy, 1994). Simply put, administration cannot ignore its moral purposes and obligations because it cannot divorce itself from the teaching/learning discourse despite efforts to do so (McKerrow, 1997; Murphy, 2005; Murphy, Hawley, & Young, 2005).

Recently, the study of ethics has been introduced into some programs (Beck & Murphy, 1994; McCarthy, 1999). The problem is that ethics is seen as a separate course of study or an additive for other course content. Just as technology cannot be confined to computer courses, ethics cannot be viewed as an idiosyncratic

particular to be studied outside the context of actual practice.

It remains unclear how this recent emphasis on ethical discourse alone will disrupt the traditional exclusionary, unjust, administrative narrative (Brunner, 2002; Grogan, 1996; 2000). The model, Curricular Taxonomy for Just and Ethical Professional Education, introduced here attempts to integrate ethics into the study of educational administration. It expands upon the framework developed by Jellen (1986) for teachers of the gifted. The model identifies four key factors, namely, the Nature of the Learner, the Role of the Educator, the Needs of Society, and the Demands of Knowledge. The theoretical positions under each factor are not hierarchical or mutually exclusive. Each one is a necessary but insufficient part of the whole.

Factor I – The Nature of the Learner

Factor I — The Nature of the Learner considers three familiar constructs in education: cognitive ability, affective ability, and psychomotoric ability (see Table 1). Each of these relates to specific abilities that define the learner. Perhaps not so familiar is conative ability. Efforts to develop this particular construct are evidenced in the work of Herzberg, Mauser, and Snyderman (1959/2002) and it speaks to motivation, focused interest, and perseverance. Traditionally, most curriculum models centralize cognitive development and at least acknowledge the importance of the affective and psychomotoric domains. They essentially ignore the conative domain. In this model, the focus on social justice issues emerging from the affective and conative domains is no less important than either the cognitive or psychomotoric domains. This means that the courage and willingness to act when there is social injustice is as important as identifying it when it occurs.

Table 1

Factor I: The Nature of the Learner

Relevant Factors	Theoretical Position	Key Concepts	Practice
The Nature Of the Learner	Considering the Mind on the Whole	Framework of Multifaceted Mental Constructs	Selection and Identification Procedures
	Cognitive Ability	Intelligence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Grades • Tests • Humor scales • Critical thinking
		Imagination	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Professional Projects • Auditions • Creative problem-solving
	Affective Ability	Empathy Sensitivity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Concern for others • Appreciation for class, race, gender
	Conative Ability	Interest Motivation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cultural Interests • Academic Interest • Social Justice Interests • Motivation
	Psychomotor Ability	Physical Agility Flexibility Strength	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fitness • Strength • Endurance

Factor II — The Role of the Educator

In Factor II — Role of the Educator, the position of the educator as moral model stands equal to the role of teacher and facilitator (see Table 2). In this model, educators, including professors and administrators, must acknowledge the importance of teaching, of facilitating, of advocating, of taking a stand, and of having a point of view. While there is clear understanding of the roles teaching and even facilitating, the necessity for serving as a moral model cannot be underestimated. Each one of these elements, operating together, constitutes the educator's role. None should be ignored in the education of administrators or the teaching done by professors.

Table 2

Factor II: The Role of the Educator

Relevant Factors	Theoretical Position	Key Concepts	Practices
The Role of the Educator	Considering the Faculty	Framework of Differential Pedagogy	Academic, Personal, and Social Development
	Teacher	Differentiation Acceleration Deceleration Individualization	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transmission of concrete and abstract content • Application of Differential Contents, Method, and Evaluation • Understanding one's own voice in the context of knowledge production. • Emphasis on the cultivation of social consciousness and critique
	Facilitator	Enrichment Leadership Training	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Facilitation of Communal Resources • Supervision of internship, information access, and tutorial
	Moral Model	Social Activism	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Taking a stand or having a point of view • Theoretical Advocacy • Contextual Advocacy • Support for Student Advocacy

Factor III — The Needs of Society

Factor III — Needs of Society appreciates the necessity of including both individual rights and obligations when examining social needs (see Table 3). The call for democracy, equality, responsibility and responsiveness attest to the necessity for social justice in a free, democratic, society. Once again, there exists the tendency to emphasize one construct at the expense of the others. This should not be the case: If it is important to consider individual and collective rights, it is just as important to consider the responsibilities that accrue to them. In addition, there is a call to be responsive to those rights and obligations within the community, to

display socially responsible behavior, to get involved, to safeguard against elitist stratification, and to reject all forms of authority that restrict equality. This puts particular responsibility on both the professor and administrator to be activists who understand their unique institutional obligation to promote democracy, equity and justice.

Table 3

Factor III: The Needs of Society

Relevant Factors	Theoretical Position	Key Concepts	Practices
The Needs of Society	Concerning the Constitutionality of a Given Society	Within a Framework a Free Society	Reproduction and Reconstruction of Procedural Democracy
	Social Justice and Human Rights	Democracy Equality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Safeguard against elitist or utilitarian stratification, isolation, insulation, and/or exploitation • Accept or reject all forms of authority that hinder or advance all forms of equality.
	Social Justice and Human Obligations	Responsibility Responsiveness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Display socially responsible behavior • Get involved in school or communal problems

Factor IV— The Demands of Knowledge

Factor IV— Demands of Knowledge is the most important factor (see Table 4). Factor IV draws on the work of Phenix (1964) who identified six specific realms of meaning. These realms are used to frame the core curriculum viewed through a social justice lens. For Phenix, all meaning is situated on these particular curricular frames: 1) empirics or scientific problem-solving knowledge; 2) aesthetics or exposure to and

training in the arts; 3) symbolics or logic, mathematics, and linguistics; 4) ethics or moral thinking; 5) synnoetics or personal/social knowledge and; 6) synoptics or philosophical and historical knowledge.

Table 4

Factor IV: The Demands of Knowledge

Relevant Factors	Theoretical Position	Key Concepts	Practices
The Demands of Knowledge	Concerning Generativity in:	Within a Framework of Differentiation and Articulation	Knowledge Production in all Fields of Knowledge
	All Content Areas	CURRICULAR CORE Ethics Synnoetics Synoptics CURRICULAR ELECTIVES Empirics Esthetics Symbolics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Focus on conceptual and ideational studies in all realms of meaning in both the core and the electives Emphasis on the social justice issues that attach to EACH realm but particularly the core.
	Methodology	Discovery Interest Problem Systems Critique	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Emphasis on <u>educere</u> not <u>educare</u>. Learning to question, to apply knowledge Produce knowledge responsibly, ethically, cooperatively, and independently Critique narratives. This includes the discourse that drives education.
	Assessment Techniques	Achievement Evaluation Observation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Solutions to social justice violations. Evidence of conation affecting not only the students but community.

What is immediately obvious when considering traditional curriculum across all grade levels including higher education is the heavy emphasis placed upon empirics, symbolics and, to a lesser extent, aesthetics particularly at the elementary and secondary levels. This emphasis is also evident at the higher education level in educational administration programs despite the fact that in practice most of what administrators

do is confront moral and ethical issues. Moral leadership, which requires ethical, synnoetic, and synoptic knowledge, has been recognized as a vital role for administrators to perform in educational organizations. Moral leadership is at the core of this model, not relegated to the margins (see Table 5). While it is informative to assign particular subject matter to a certain realm of meaning, it is also possible to miss the point. The point of centering ethics, synnoetics, and synoptics in the educational administration curriculum is to avoid making any single subject the focus of study. For example, by placing theory into the realm of synoptics, one runs the risk of making the study of administrative theory an end in itself rather than a means to the cultivation of a broad synoptic view of education generally and education administration specifically.

Table 5

Recommended Educational Administration Curricular Core and Electives

Content	Definitions	Administrative Particular
Core		
Ethics	Moral meanings that stand in contrast to science, arts, and personal knowledge. Ethics has to do with behavior based upon free, responsible, deliberate decisions.	All coursework
Symnoetics	Personal knowledge and Buber's "I/Thou" relational insight and direct awareness.	Supervision Educational Psychology Human Resources School/Community Relations
Synoptics	Meanings that are integrated in nature. Include areas like history, religion, and philosophy that integrate empirical, aesthetic, and symnoetic meanings	Administrative Theory Organizational Theory Philosophy of Education Cultural Foundations
Electives		
Symbolics	Language, mathematics, non-discursive forms (i.e., rituals, gestures).	Finance Curriculum Development School Law Educational Technology
Empirics	Sciences	Educational Research Program Evaluation Personnel Evaluation
Aesthetics	Music, linear art, movement, literature, and those areas concerned with contemplative perception of particular significant things such as unique objects and ideas.	Instructional Leadership

Implications for Educational Administration

Morality or ethics in educational administration is not the result of sustained dialogue and mutual understanding between teachers and administrators in the organization, but it should be. Education generally and education administration specifically are relational and require the "will to remain in a caring relation to the other" (Noddings, 1984, p. 87). Knowledge production must be judged by ethical as well as episte-

mological ideals. The Curricular Taxonomy for Just and Ethical Professional Education establishes social justice, undominated discourse and feminist notions of connectedness as important ethical educational ideals (Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger, & Tarule, 1986). Education administration cannot ignore those ideals when constructing its narrative.

The Curricular Taxonomy for Just and Ethical Professional Education acknowledges the centrality of ethics to educational administration curriculum. It recommends that the curricular core consist of ethics, synnoetics, and synoptics (Jellen, 1986) and that specific course content be integrated into it, not the other way around. For example, rather than have finance, facilities, law or principalship courses to which are added an ethical component, the curriculum would revolve around ethics, synnoetics, and synoptics to which a finance, legal or administrative component is integrated.

Synnoetic or personal/social knowledge, such as self-interest or cowardice or confidence in decision-making, is important. Facilitating synnoetic understanding helps administrators examine the principles they operate under and the reasons they do what they do. Both altruistic and self-serving motives exist in administration so students must understand the actions and reactions of those in the organization. Synnoetics promotes an examination of where administrators stand in relation to the organization, to the people in it, and to themselves. It brings to the forefront issues of accountability, domination and dialogue and the impediments to each. It facilitates administrators' ability to take a point of view and challenges their willingness to maintain it against public and personal pressures. In other words, synnoetic knowledge acknowledges the necessity of courage and exposes the lack of it.

Synoptic or philosophical/historical knowledge should be included as part of administrative core as well. This type of knowledge is essential if one expects educational administration students to be reflective and critical. It offers a perspective of education and administration against which students can assess their own practice. Without such a perspective, students are likely to be narrowly socialized to support the very system they must necessarily critique. Without synoptic knowledge students do not have the tools to pose alternatives to the traditional narrative.

The following five questions characterize the elements in the model, its core realms of meaning (i.e., ethics, synnoetics, synoptics) and its emphasis on social justice. They transcend the other realms of meaning, empirics, aesthetics, symbolics, and provide the starting point for exploring how a particular content area might be affected by answers to it.

1. Is there a willingness to respect and honor the rights of others to freedom and to growth opportunities (Raywid, 1986)?
2. Is there a willingness to treat others as subjects not objects, agents not pawns, ends not means (Raywid, 1986)?
3. Is there a willingness to become allied with and to serve purposes beyond one's own (Raywid, 1986)?
4. Is there a willingness to critique the degree to which educators, individually and collectively, have interfered with the fidelity, loyalty, and respect that they have for students, parents, and community members?
5. Is there a willingness to pay the price to guarantee that economics, efficiency, unethical superordinates, racism, sexism, and classism will not interfere with maintaining absolute regard and equal respect for all students?

A curricular framework with ethics, synnoetics, and synoptics at the core recognizes that the basis of educational administrative practice is fundamentally moral and that programs must be more than merely a training ground for organizational functionaries (Blount, 1998). Professors who work in departments of educational administration need to make a serious attempt to reinvigorate their coursework by constantly asking fundamental moral questions about their work. The application of content areas, such as finance, to help education administration students grapple with moral questions opens up considerations beyond simple cognitive understanding of how to construct a budget. It compels the student to consider the ethical implications of budgeting, the practitioner's role in ethical budgeting, and the possibility that traditional methods just might be unjust or exclusionary or unequal.

Conclusion

There are three reasons to use the model and refocus educational administration courses to look for questions rather than answers. First, the search for ethical questions opens up the discourse and encourages voices to emerge that have been traditionally stifled, namely parents, teachers, students, women, and minorities. These silent educational partners have unique experiences and perspectives that contribute to a real understanding of the answers to complex questions. Excluding these voices distorts both the questions asked and the answers given. Second, the Curricular Taxonomy for Just and Ethical Professional Education is more dynamic than traditional models. It allows the research and practice of academics and practitioners to be as responsive and dynamic as the students, teachers, and parents they serve. This is because there is an implicit assumption that administrative practice and research are both guided by morals and ethics. Over time social systems and economic conditions change. The curriculum model responds to those changes but is always guided by an ethical core. Traditional models are based on content areas that become obsolete as the content and conditions of educational administration change. Finally, the model exposes the necessity to make the term accountability mean more than blameworthiness for failure to accomplish organizational goals. It expands the idea of accountability to include the degree of participation among those affected by decisions. This simple idea is crucial for democracy and social justice.

Educational administration should be viewed as a moral enterprise and specific content areas like law, finance, and personnel evaluation as extensions of broader moral questions. Otherwise, educational particulars are given a status they do not deserve and important ethical questions are marginalized. Of course, in schools it is often easier to avoid the moral questions and focus on the particulars. This makes Raywid's (1986) point worth repeating here: Deciding not to think about moral questions in education administration is itself a profoundly moral decision.

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