

## The Future Entering:

Reflections on and Challenges to Ethical Leadership

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*Abstract: To enter a future that waits to be born, educational leaders must continually assess their own ethical stance as well as that of the organizations they serve. Three frames form a model for examining the ethics of both individual and organization, with internal monologue and engaged conversation as the means for reflection and action.*

### Introduction

Ethics, too, are nothing but reverence for life. This is what gives me the fundamental principle of morality, namely, that good consists in maintaining, promoting, and enhancing life, and that destroying, injuring, and limiting life are evil. —Albert Schweitzer

News headlines in the United States present nearly weekly examples of “ethical lapses” of judgment on the part of K-12 and university staff, teachers or professors, administrators, and boards. These lapses range from inappropriate relationships between the educators and the students they serve to falsification of test scores in an era of high stakes accountability. Reinhartz and Beach (2004) asserted that, “With greater

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scrutiny given to the actions of leaders, especially those who hold the public trust, ethical behavior has become an area of greater focus” (p. 47). While these breaches serve to remind us that unethical and illegal behaviors happen even in the school yard in the presence of children, they can also serve to distract us from the larger matters to which we must attend. Those larger matters to which we must not become inured are those of the moral imperative to produce leaders for our schools who have both “the paradoxical blend of personal humility and professional will” (Collins as cited in Fullan, 2003, p. 10). Both within us and within those whom we serve must be that moral compass, which Fullan described as that inner voice which visits recursively the purpose for doing the work that we do.

Ethical schools and ethical leadership require ethical leaders. Bolman and Deal (2003) argued that “ethics must rest in ‘soul,’ a sense of identity that defines an individual or organization’s core beliefs and values” (p. 395). What is it that rests in the soul? I suggest two hallmarks of ethical leaders:

*Wisdom.* One of my friends often remarks that his mother’s dumb children are not around any longer. Possessing street smarts, however, is not the same as being wise. Borne of a combination of an internal moral compass and life experiences that test our mettle is wisdom. Wisdom, suggested Bolman and Deal (2001), comes from the heart. In the deepest recesses of our beings lies the inner voice that tells us what is true and helps us to connect our heads with our hearts and our spirits with our work.

*Embracing and Adhering to the Vision.* Do you do things right or do the right thing? When the path of least resistance or the path most frequented is not the path aligned with the organization’s vision, which takes precedence? Discuss and examine the detail, but do not lose sight of the landscape. If in the admonition of Beckner (2004), we are “seeing things whole,” then we recognize that that which is constitutive of that landscape is important, but it is not the *raison d’être* (p. 148). Higher test scores as a goal of schooling, just as increased profit as a goal of a corporation, lack heart and lack soul. They are not the fundamental purpose of schooling.

Wisdom and embracing and adhering to the vision are attributes by which we may assess each challenge and success that comes our way.

#### Reflections on the Authors’ Contributions

We can discover this meaning in life in three different ways:  
by doing a deed, by experiencing a value, and by suffering.

—Victor Frankl

The messages embedded within each of the articles of this year's journal are ones of deeds, of values, and of suffering. The authors' research, their analyses and syntheses, and their challenges to action reflect two principal themes. First, the authors ask us to be mindful and to consider deeply that the moral imperative of ethical leadership is the addressing of the most sensitive issues our society faces—issues of access to the basic rights of all human beings: to freedom, to justice, and to equity, but equally important, to responsibility and to duty (Beckner, 2004). Second, they ask us to recognize that by taking action, we fulfill the responsibility entrusted to us as educators: to alleviate suffering and to initiate healing within our spheres of influence.

López, Magdaleno, and Reis begin the conversation by challenging us to consider and implement new ways to attract leaders to the profession that represent the diversity of our students. They provide us with specific suggestions to tailor our programs' recruitment, design, and assessment to support this goal. Furthermore, curriculum and instruction can address teaching, strategies, and advocacy that take into account the unique needs of individuals who may come from many backgrounds. Lallas and Morgan add to the discussion by presenting a model for doctoral studies whose principal emphasis is social justice. Each strand of the program explicates a particular aspect of social justice and provides for its students experiences grounded in solid theory, but intended to be taken into practice.

Continuing the theme of bold, socially responsible leadership, Storms and Gonzales walk the talk of partnership and describe in this case study how their university's leadership program worked hand in hand with a district in crisis to build the leadership capacity of its own. The model serves as a powerful example that our K-12 counterparts need not merely consume what we create, but can build sustainable structures with us to meet their greatest needs. Using the professional case model, Muth, Bellamy, Fulmer, and Murphy offer us another practical way to support practitioners. The annual case, which describes three essential domains in the life of the school, can be introduced in leadership preparation courses as students develop a case for their own schools or programs.

Addressing the pedagogical concerns of our delivery to aspiring educational leaders, Dubin offers excerpts from his new book that present cases of actual principals in relation to a variety of leadership themes. The words of these practitioners provide a powerful view into the inner lives of individuals committed to making a difference. In a further examination of principals, Basurto, Wise, and Unruh present the results of a survey that measures their perceptions of Proposition 227. They present data that reminds us that legislation does not necessarily change either perceptions or actions on the parts of its recipients. *The Instructional*

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*Leadership Work Sample Project* which Fulmer presents provides a step-by-step strategy to help leadership students develop knowledge, skills, and dispositions that they will need to address the critical role of instructional leadership. The study of its implementation can help build a body of research addressing this essential aspect of leadership.

Our final two authors present their challenges in essays addressing the leadership of teachers and their efficacy as professionals. Who can lead? What is leading? Collay asks these questions as she challenges us to re-imagine the role teachers play in leading our schools. More than linguistic acrobatics, she suggests that deeply embedded in our notions of leadership is that there must naturally be followership, and that those followers are the teachers. If we are, however, to embrace bold and socially responsible leadership, each of us must engage in the acts of leadership. In providing us a synthesis on critical ways principals can support our teachers and the impact of *No Child Left Behind* (NCLB), Kinsey reminds us that school leaders can support teachers in substantive ways including making teacher support a priority and taking responsibility in formalizing it by committing funding and designing programs specifically tailored to their needs.

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You must give birth to your images. They are the future waiting to be born.  
Fear not the strangeness you feel. The future must enter you long before  
it happens. Just wait for the birth, for the hour of new clarity.

—Rainer Maria Rilke

The path of ethical leadership begins and ends with reflection. Amidst our own internal monologue ought to be action—conversation and deeds that eliminate stasis and engender authentic transformation. Wheatley (2005) pointed out that “the only path to creating more harmonious and effective work-places and communities is if we can turn to one another and depend on one another... We must search for human goodness” (p. 55). That search for human goodness can move beyond the vague, take shape, and become an agenda of action. Fullan (2003) argued that it is not enough to be the moral leader, the ethical leader, solely within oneself or within one’s community, but that the imperative exists to move from individual, to local, to regional, and finally to societal levels with the messages. This model of moral imperative can serve as a means by which we assess our wisdom and our adherence to the vision we hold. I invite you to consider the following means of conveying the messages of this year’s journal’s contributors.

1. *Individual Moral Imperative.* In a time when both human-made and natural events in the furthest reaches of this planet have the power to affect our lives even within the same day, the quest for the predictable and the known is no longer possible. I offer two aspects of examining the individual moral imperative: first, from the standpoint of personal leadership and second, from the standpoint of professional leadership.
  - *Personal Leadership.* Do we as leaders seek to answer for ourselves the seemingly-imponderable questions that are larger than the curriculum we teach? Do we imbue our work with these same themes so that others can touch our human kindness? Wheatley (2005) offered the following questions to consider. "How do I plan when I don't know what will happen next? How do I maintain my values when worldly temptations abound? Do I have a purpose to my life? Where can I find meaning in my life? Where can I find the courage and faith to stay the course" (p.125)?
  - *Professional Leadership.* Beyond our personal musings and meanderings, lie questions of the impact we have on and the power we wield within the organizations we guide. Schein (2003) suggested that leaders use a variety of tools "to teach their organizations how to perceive, think, feel, and behave based on their own conscious and unconscious convictions" (p. 246). The primary mechanisms about which we can question our leadership include, What do I as a leader pay attention to, measure, and control on a regular basis; how do I react to personal and organizational criticism; how do I allocate resources; how do I model, teach, and coach; how do I allocate rewards and status; and how do I recruit, select, promote, and terminate individuals from the organization (Schein). The degree to which our unconscious actions become conscious is the degree to which we can ascertain authentic congruence between our words and our deeds.
2. *Local and Regional Moral Imperative.* Within our departments, schools, colleges, and universities, much can be accomplished in the realms of leadership of both policy and programmatic formation and reformation.
  - *Policy Leadership.* Are there university-based codes of ethics? Do they include considerations of honesty, de-

pendability, courage, loyalty, and integrity (Solomon as cited in Bolman & Deal, 2003, p. 399)? In devising or reviewing policy and regulations, how are the more difficult issues of equity and access addressed? How does the policy guide the regulations and the practice of these issues? What role do stakeholders have in forming, in informing, and in adhering to the policies and regulations? How are they conveyed to those new to the organization—students, employees, or other relevant individuals?

- *Program Leadership.* At the university, do our programs reflect the ethics of excellence, caring, justice, and faith? Do we discuss leadership qualities of pride of authorship, genuine love for the other, appropriate applications of power, and the value of significance, of really mattering that correspond to those organizational ethics (Bolman & Deal, 2003)?
3. *Societal Moral Imperative.* As professors of educational leadership, we have ready-made audiences to receive our discourse. Yet, the talk is not enough. What is our commitment to authentic partnerships with the K-12 schools whose students we serve? What are our efforts with local, state, and federal agencies that keep the work of leadership on the agenda? Do we seize every opportunity to strike up a conversation, challenge a group, or question the status quo?

Some small measure of the legacy we leave as educational leaders is recorded on these pages. My colleagues sound the clarion call which says our work is not yet done. They remind us that the issues we face are not merely administrative problems, but deeper ethical questions about what is right and what is fair (Strike, Haller, & Soltis, 1998). Their words should impel us to examine what we consider that work to be and to reframe it, taking into account the imperative of ethical leadership and social responsibility. Children with vast needs, our nation's tomorrow, must be attended to and future leaders wooed and mentored, but amidst our work, let us also reflect how it was in the first place that we came to know that this was our calling.

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