

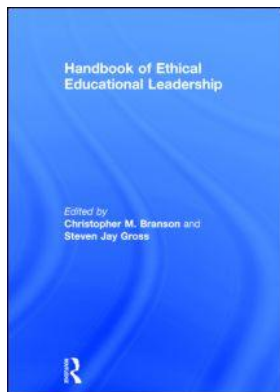
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Handbook of Ethical Educational Leadership

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Introduction: Why Ethical Educational Leadership?

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INTRODUCTION: WHY ETHICAL EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP?

CHRISTOPHER M. BRANSON AND STEVEN JAY GROSS

Clearly the 2008 global financial crisis brought the concept of ethical leadership into the international spotlight. Now, after 5 years, has the world really recovered from the physical and psychological devastation caused by the unethical practices of a few individuals and institutions within the banking and investment world? In reality, this incident was only one of a growing number of very serious unethical activities in the political, industrial, religious, media, and education spheres. Within the political sphere there appears to be a growing number of coalition governments as voters become disillusioned and skeptical about whom to support. On the industrial scene, shortsighted leadership decisions are thought to be behind the catastrophic oil pollution incident in the Gulf of Mexico and mining disaster in New Zealand that led to the death of 39 miners. Religious leaders can be seen as civil militia leaders in Ireland, the Middle East, and North Africa or to have concealed unacceptable behavior by some of their ministers. England has witnessed alleged phone hacking by media leaders. Educational leaders have been found to have deliberately mismanaged formal student assessment procedures, while others have misappropriated their institution's financial and/or physical resources. Unethical leadership has no boundaries. Indeed, the responsibility of leadership is a double-edged sword because it not only provides the opportunity for doing good but also simultaneously provides the opportunity and temptation for advancing one's own needs, most often at the expense of the needs of others.

WHAT MAKES LEADERSHIP ETHICAL?

Thus, it is understandable why our more contemporary definitions of leadership include a responsibility for achieving an outcome that meets the needs of all. Rost (1993) argues that leadership is "an influence relationship among leaders and collaborators who intend real changes that reflect their mutual purposes" (p. 99). Similarly,

Burns (1978, 2010) proposes that “leaders address themselves to followers’ wants, needs, and other motivations, as well as their own, and thus they serve as an *independent force in changing the makeup of the followers’ motive base through gratifying their motives*” (p. 20, italics in original). Hamel (2007) extends this view by positing that “leadership is not defined by the exercise of power, but by the capacity to increase the sense of power among those who are led. The most essential work of a leader is to create more leaders” (p. 186). Together, these views draw attention to the fundamentally distinguishing feature of leadership as being leaders’ concern for the best interests of those they are leading. Was this the case with the financial leaders at the heart of the global financial crisis?

Today, while the US economy appears to be recovering from the effects of the 2008 financial catastrophe, the same cannot be said for many other countries, such as Ireland, Greece, Iceland, Spain, and Italy, to name but a few. Moreover, although national economies may have recovered, the same cannot be said for the millions of individuals and families who lost their homes during this crisis. It is far too simplistic to look at the mega-picture of national or international economics and feel comfortable and pleased—but the micro-picture of individual and family financial circumstances for millions of people still looks bleak and miserable.

Even more regrettable is the knowledge that the unethical practices that caused the global financial crisis were essentially the same that were used in the downfall of Enron in 2001. However, in that case the devastation was largely restricted to the US. What this repeated experience shows, though, is that corporate compliance policies and laws do not seem to be having the desired influence on eradicating unethical leadership. The US designed new financial policies and practices following the Enron collapse, yet these new rules and laws did not prevent the same practices being used prior to the global financial crisis. Moreover, other than in Iceland, no leading financier or politician was held legally accountable for his or her unscrupulous role in causing the economic collapse that saw millions of people around the world lose their homes, employment, lifestyle, and dignity.

Thus, it is not surprising to read that public trust in organizations is now at an all-time low. Today, perhaps more so than ever before, people want leaders with ethical codes that are deep, innate, and instinctive, so that they will not lose direction in the face of uncertainty or external pressure. There is now a clear expectation that our leaders will always act justly and rightly and will promote good and not harm. Today our leaders are expected to demonstrate ethical judgment by being accountable to those they serve and to begin to restore social trust.

THERE’S MORE TO ETHICAL LEADERSHIP THAN GOOD INTENTIONS

What is apparent also from the very limited impact of these new rules and regulations is that the desire for ethical leadership does not translate, necessarily, into actually having ethical leadership. Ethical leadership is an achievement and not a given. A leader has to strive to become an ethical leader, as it is unlikely to happen automatically. Ethical behavior is not a natural outcome, particularly for leaders, even

under the threat of punitive accountabilities. Leaders need to learn how to be ethical and to become diligently committed to acting ethically. Such action emanates from the very being of the leader and not from legislation or from a role statement or from policy guidelines.

EDUCATION AND ETHICAL LEADERSHIP

But, really, *is the practice of ethical leadership an issue for educational leaders?* Certainly, the need for educational leaders to abide by legal obligations and proper fiscal practices is unequivocal, and it is only on very few occasions that individual school principals have not met this mandatory expectation. But, is there more to the practice of ethical leadership by an educational leader than these obligatory expectations? The very thought of entertaining such a simplistic perspective emphasizes the critically important need to see the fundamental place of ethical leadership in the role of today's school principal.

As more and more is being asked of educational leaders, choosing what to attend to and what to put off or overlook is an ethical decision. Each person can be influenced by personal preferences, and our minds are very adept at defending these perspectives. Thus, any choice by an educational leader about where to concentrate his or her interests and energy must be based on common good and not self-interest—it must be an ethical choice and not for personal benefit.

Also, the learning environment within an educational setting must be in the best interests of each student's future and not what maintains, necessarily, the professional and personal interests and comfort of the teachers. This means that change is a constant companion for everyone working in an educational organization. We all know that leading change, which begins in the role of the leader, is fraught with difficult challenges. But to ignore the future needs of the students, or to ignore the need to change because of their challenges, is an unethical leadership decision.

Into these ethical dilemmas for the educational leader, add issues associated with the need for an authentic commitment to properly attending to cultural needs, family needs, and local community needs within the educational setting. There is also the need by educational leaders to lead their educational communities to appropriately respond to political initiatives that may or may not benefit the students and the organization.

Not least, of course, is the need for educational leaders to ensure that they make proper choices about their own life balance, whereby neither work nor family/leisure gain an inappropriate hold or prominence on their lifestyle.

Every choice an educational leader makes is based on values that are either known or unknown, acknowledged or unacknowledged, by them. The less known or acknowledged the values that direct a choice, the more likely is it that an unethical decision will be made, particularly in very unusual, complex, and challenging situations. More and more today, educational leaders are being regularly confronted by unusual, complex, and challenging situations, which demand that they make choices. Indeed, ethical leadership is part and parcel of educational leadership today. Perhaps the most important choice that an educational leader has to make is to answer the question *Do I want to be an ethical leader?*

WHY A HANDBOOK FOR ETHICAL EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP?

Hence, this handbook is a practical and philosophical response to this crucially important situation that now confronts every educational leader. But while it is a tangible response to a very contemporary issue, it is a response that has been a long time in the making. This handbook of ethical educational leadership draws upon an array of literature from authors directly or indirectly associated with the Center for the Study of Leadership and Ethics (CSLE), which is a program center affiliated with the University Council for Educational Administration (UCEA). Consequently, it is only proper to wholeheartedly and unreservedly acknowledge that the capacity to collate this handbook and, thereby, to be able to provide a coherent and comprehensive overview of the nature and practice of ethical educational leadership is due in no small way to the work and inspiration of Dr. Paul Begley, who established the CSLE in June 1996 and served as its executive director until his retirement in June 2011.

At the time of its establishment, the CSLE was housed in the Department of Theory and Policy Studies at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education at the University of Toronto. During the early years, the CSLE was operated in partnership with the University of Virginia. From 1996 to 2001, Paul Begley and Margaret Grogan (now dean at Claremont Graduate School in California) codirected the Center. In 2003, the CSLE was relocated to Penn State University, and the University of Virginia ceased its formal involvement as a sponsor of the center. However, Professor Eric Bredo of the University of Virginia continued on as a member of the Center's board of trustees.

Specific to the publication of this handbook was the tireless work and invaluable contribution of Paul Begley toward the ongoing development of academic research, knowledge, and practices associated with the role of ethics and values in leadership. Through building on the foundational principles of Emeritus Professor Christopher Hodgkinson, Paul Begley established a wide network of highly credible, unquestionably dedicated, and eminently enthusiastic protagonists. Together, these ethical leadership pioneers established the annual Values and Leadership International Conference, as well as the journals *Values and Ethics in Educational Administration* and the *Journal of Authentic Leadership in Education*. Each of these initiatives not only has provided a unique avenue for sharing and, thereby, advancing knowledge and understanding about ethical leadership, but has also attracted the attention of many more international researchers and writers to the study of ethical leadership.

In early 2009, a proposal was tabled at a business meeting of the board of trustees to reorganize the governance structure of the Center in anticipation of Paul Begley's return to Canada and appointment to the faculty of Nipissing University. The intent of the new governance structure was to ensure the continuation of the Center's work, reconfirm Paul Begley as executive director for a term of 3 years, and formally incorporate within the CSLE seven research centers located at universities in five countries: Australia, Canada, Hong Kong, Sweden, and the United States. Faculty and students associated with each of these institutions had been long-standing and active contributors to the CSLE for many years, and in many respects the new governance

structure formally recognized their critical role as associates of the CSLE. In June 2011, upon the retirement of Paul Begley, Dr. Christopher Branson was elected by the board of trustees as executive director and took the duties of executive director to the University of Waikato in Hamilton, New Zealand.

Specific to the genesis of this handbook were the editors' experiences and perceptions during the 2011 UCEA convention in Pittsburgh. Here it was noted by both editors that there was an unexpectedly high number of presenters concerned with the issue of ethical leadership. However, many appeared unfamiliar with the range and extent of available research-informed literature that had already been generated through the CSLE. Consequently, the ethical leadership research being undertaken was not as well developed as it could otherwise have been. From these observations, the crucial need to more widely distribute the breadth of existing ethical leadership literature, as captured in this handbook, became obvious.

AN OVERVIEW OF THE HANDBOOK

Part I

To this end, this handbook is organized into three parts. Simply stated, the first part, "Issues and Perspectives," describes *why* ethical leadership has become a critically important component of contemporary educational leadership. Each chapter in this part focuses on comprehensively describing a specific issue inherent within educational leadership today and extends this description to show how this issue mandates a commitment to the practice of authentic ethical leadership. Moreover, these Part I writers confront foundational questions surrounding ethical educational leadership. These include explorations into the nature of our profession and its connection to leadership and to ethics (Kristinsson, Shields, Starratt), contextual questions that impact ethical educational leadership (Gross, Bottery, McNae), and dispositions needed in leadership that aims to be ethical (Walker & Qian; Kuusilehto-Awale, Holte).

Part II

Having solidly and unequivocally established the philosophical and professional reasons that ethics must be an integral part of contemporary educational leadership, Part II, "Developing Ethical Educational Leadership," describes *how* ethical educational leadership can be developed by any leader with a willingness to learn. The prevalence of unethical leadership across diverse contexts clearly indicates that the development of ethical educational leadership is not an automatic outcome for every leader. Indeed, as you will read in this handbook, the literature suggests quite the contrary—consistent and deliberate ethical leadership is more often the exception than the norm. People, generally, struggle with trying to act ethically, and becoming a leader does not, in itself, change this natural propensity. Thus, it is nonsensical to raise the expectation that educational leaders need to be ethical without providing a clear means for helping each leader to achieve this desirable outcome. Part II addresses this essential responsibility because it turns our attention toward personal

qualities and skills needed for ethical educational leadership. Overall, this essential responsibility is informed by Nancy Tuana's widely acclaimed framework for the development of ethical leadership, which is substantially described in the first chapter of Part II. Then, each subsequent chapter focuses on a particular component of Tuana's framework so as to not only deepen the reader's understanding of it but also provide research-informed practical ways for personally developing the component. Here will be found practical ways for developing ethical sensitivity by reflecting on one's values (Notman, Branson), for further refining techniques and skills in ethical decision making (Shapiro, Stefkovich, & Gutierrez; Cranston, Ehrich, & Kimber; Gross; Branson), and for examining the nature and practice of ethical motivation (Bezzina & Tuana, Branson).

Part III

Putting the ideal into reality can be problematic and therefore off-putting when one first tries something new, and this is a likely outcome for something as challenging and demanding as striving to establish ethical educational leadership. Thus Part III, "Examples From the Field," offers readers examples of *what* has already been achieved in this regard. In this way, this part of the handbook seeks to afford both clarity and inspiration. Simply, Part III connects theory to practice. Leading with moral purpose is explored (Leonard, Schilling, & Normore; Burford & Bezzina), along with the imperative of having to understand the implications of a leader's integrity (Frick & Covalleskie). Leadership preparation and its implications in Canada (Langlois & Lapointe), Turkey (Aksu & Kasalak), and the increasingly multicultural world of Swedish schools (Johansson & Norberg) provide specific descriptions of approaches to the development of ethical leadership within very different settings. Finally we explore a direction that one group has taken when their ethical code requires them to act in opposition to current educational policy (Gross & Shapiro).

SUMMARY

Although each chapter, and each part, provides important and unequalled theoretical and practical insight into the phenomenon of ethical educational leadership, it is the compilation of all of these chapters and parts that provides the essential learning. In a real sense, this handbook has deconstructed the totality of the phenomenon. In order to provide a never-seen-before insight into the nature and practice of ethical educational leadership, this handbook has differentiated the phenomenon into its distinguishable imperatives, components, and practicalities. But the comprehensive manner by which this has been achieved is both a benefit and a bane. Each chapter and each part can be read and treated in isolation and separated from the rest of the handbook. While such an approach may well provide some good, it won't necessarily lead to authentic ethical leadership. It is only when all imperatives, components, and practicalities provided throughout the handbook are considered and embraced that it becomes most likely that ethical educational leadership will eventuate. As you

will discover as you read this handbook, ethical educational leadership is a complex, multifaceted, and demanding activity, which requires a holistic, and not a differential, commitment to be truly employed.

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