

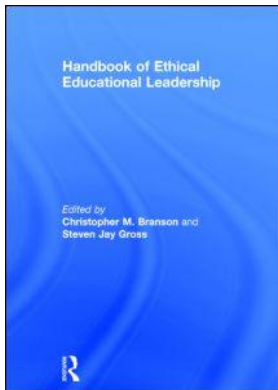
This article was downloaded by: 10.2.97.136

On: 28 Nov 2023

Access details: *subscription number*

Publisher: *Routledge*

Informa Ltd Registered in England and Wales Registered Number: 1072954 Registered office: 5 Howick Place, London SW1P 1WG, UK



## **Handbook of Ethical Educational Leadership**

Christopher M. Branson, Steven Jay Gross

### **The Prevalence of Silence**

Publication details

<https://test.routledgehandbooks.com/doi/10.4324/9780203747582.ch10>

Kjersti Lien Holte

**Published online on: 16 May 2014**

**How to cite :-** Kjersti Lien Holte. 16 May 2014, *The Prevalence of Silence from: Handbook of Ethical Educational Leadership* Routledge

Accessed on: 28 Nov 2023

<https://test.routledgehandbooks.com/doi/10.4324/9780203747582.ch10>

**PLEASE SCROLL DOWN FOR DOCUMENT**

Full terms and conditions of use: <https://test.routledgehandbooks.com/legal-notices/terms>

This Document PDF may be used for research, teaching and private study purposes. Any substantial or systematic reproductions, re-distribution, re-selling, loan or sub-licensing, systematic supply or distribution in any form to anyone is expressly forbidden.

The publisher does not give any warranty express or implied or make any representation that the contents will be complete or accurate or up to date. The publisher shall not be liable for an loss, actions, claims, proceedings, demand or costs or damages whatsoever or howsoever caused arising directly or indirectly in connection with or arising out of the use of this material.

# 10

## THE PREVALENCE OF SILENCE

KJERSTI LIEN HOLTE

Professional reflection on unethical or negative organizational issues is absolutely essential in a strategy for the development of ethical leadership. For several reasons, it is difficult for leaders to have important critical conversations with employees in regard to the perceived quality of their performance. It can, therefore, be difficult to build a solid base for ethical decision making so that important meetings supporting moral learning do not take place. Some people blame these communication difficulties on organizational structure or the personality of the leader. Another perspective on the problem is that there are hidden mechanisms within the organization that prevent transparency about difficult issues. The fact that these mechanisms are hidden makes it difficult for leaders to expose them.

My aim in this chapter is to expose the presence of hidden mechanisms of silence that may surround unethical practices already happening in schools by answering the following questions: Why does silence about ethical and negative issues exist in schools? How can a school leader facilitate open and honest communication so as to encourage ethical reflection and action with school staff? This is a theoretical study where existing theories are used to answer these questions. I present three main reasons why an aura of ethical silence may exist in schools and four different motives that influence teachers and others to maintain their silence when they are confronted with unethical issues. The reasons for the existence of ethical silence are: exclusion and inclusion rituals, forms of employment, and cultural characteristics. Embedded within these reasons are the different motivational behaviors of prosocial behavior, indulgence behavior, defensive behavior, and passive aggressive behavior. Hence, this chapter argues that educational leaders seeking to instill and maintain high ethical standards need to engage with the potential presence of hidden silencing mechanisms in their schools in order to facilitate honest communication, ethical reflection, and, ultimately, moral behavior.

## THE PREVALENCE OF SILENCE

Silence is a pivotal problem for the practice of ethical educational leadership because the complexity of the school community can camouflage its perceived requirement or hide its essential objective. According to Argyris and Schön (1978), for organizational learning and development to occur, the organization needs to follow a cycle of discovery, invention, production, and evaluation. Thus, if school leaders not only wish to personally practice but also to promote ethical behavior, they need to be able to discover where unethical behaviors are occurring, invent a means for redressing this behavior, ensure that the new ethical behavior is produced by the intervention, and then, later, evaluate the whole process to ensure that what is desired is actually occurring.

Assumed within this understanding is that an openness to acknowledging the presence of such unethical behavior in the school community will occur automatically. Indeed, openness based upon honesty and forthrightness is crucial in all of these phases of organizational learning if the school is to truly come to know, learn, and thereby improve itself (Kraman & Hamm, 1999). If a school community is to really discover some of its unethical problems, then school leaders need to ensure that they can come to know what and where unethical practices are happening currently. Inventing solutions necessitates communication about what is the actual core dysfunctionality and naming the unethical behavior if it exists.

In order to achieve this, school leaders are dependent on honest communication with other school personnel if the leaders are to invent or find solutions to produce alternative ethical behaviors. Also, to then be able to authentically and comprehensively evaluate this solution to ensure that it is producing ethical behaviors, school leaders need each and every person associated with the situation to be willing and open when communicating their impressions and experiences following the intervention.

However, for several reasons, it is difficult for school leaders to have important critical conversations with other school personnel in regard to the perceived existence of unethical practices. It can, therefore, be difficult to build a solid base for ethical decision making, which means that important meetings supporting moral learning and the development of alternative ethical practices do not take place. In reality, there are hidden mechanisms within many school communities that prevent honesty and transparency about unethical behaviors. The fact that, by and large, these mechanisms are hidden makes it difficult for school leaders to expose and redress such practices.

Moreover, the fidelity of the assumption that the presence of unethical practices will be automatically and openly acknowledged is further eroded if the school leader is perceived to be personally culpable. School leaders are subjected to a variety of situations that involve value choices and ethical considerations. They have to deal with the distribution of benefits, the prioritizing of principles, and subjective interpretations of situations (Strand, 2001). Often school leaders face dilemmas where there is no clearly right or wrong choice. Sometimes they have to compromise and temporarily disregard particular problems despite their personal reluctance to do so. Such choices and compromises are founded upon personal beliefs and values,

rather than facts and predictable outcomes, which means that errors of judgment and mistakes are possible. Furthermore, given that personal beliefs and values are influential in the school leaders' decision-making processes, self-interest is ever-present (Popper, 1986). Personal preferences and biases are never far from the school leader's interpretation of a given situation. In this way, the school leader's approach to resolving dilemmas is inherently an ethical decision. Moreover, this circumstance makes the school leader prone to acting unethically on occasions. As is the case for leaders in many other contexts, school leaders can be tempted to hide or rationalize their unethical decisions and/or practices through either denial or justification based upon false moral grounds (Habermas, 1999).

Swedish researchers (Hedin, Månsson, & Tikkanen, 2008) have identified the following six areas where unethical behavior can arise within a school community (pp. 46–47):

1. Downsizing and reorganizations that have consequences for members of the school community
2. Impractical or unjust work methods
3. Suppressing or silencing reports or information
4. Financial disorder
5. Harassment and discrimination
6. Inappropriate leadership and an unhealthy working environment

In many ways, these areas for potential unethical behavior seem so publicly observable that one could falsely assume that they would be readily and promptly addressed. However, many employees report that they do not dare speak up or complain about such unethical practices (Aronsson & Gustafsson, 1999; Jensen, 2004; Skivenes & Trygstad, 2005). More specifically, Aronsson and Gustafsson (p. 202) emphasize that the results within the school system are particularly alarming, with some 40% of the teachers in their research reporting that they met resistance from the school leader if they raised questions about ethical issues. It would seem that silence, rather than speaking out, about unethical practices is far too common. The question is, therefore: Why does silence about unethical issues exist in school communities?

## **DEVELOPING A WAY TO OVERCOME THE PREVALENCE OF SILENCE**

The empirical evidence that is available on employee silence in ethical matters shows that employees fail to speak out for a number of different reasons. Some studies explain it by focusing on the organization and its leadership (Hennestad, 1990; Roethlisberger & Dickson, 1939/1964; Tourish & Robson, 2006; Vakola & Bouradas, 2005), while other studies have focused on group relationships and employee differences (Bowen & Blackmon, 2003; Premeaux & Bedeian, 2003; Van Dyne, Soon, & Botero, 2003), on learning perspectives (Berlinger, 2003; Bryant, 2003; Milliken, Morrison, & Hewlin, 2003), or on normative relationships (Hirschman, 1970). These explanations touch upon some central factors but are often somewhat deficient

because they emphasize some elements more than others or because investigations tend to focus on one particular perspective only. Several of these earlier explanations mention hidden, informal, and unofficial learning processes. A common aspect of these studies is that these learning processes are only partially described and analyzed. However, Holte (2009) presents a theory of the hidden curriculum of silence based on qualitative interviews with teachers. The data from the participating teachers were compared with answers from nurses at a nursing home and workers in a factory in the process industry. Hence, this silence theory is based on both empirical and theoretical data and provides an answer to the question: Why does silence about unethical issues exist in school communities?

Within her research, Holte (2009) identified a hidden curriculum of silence in schools with respect to acknowledging and addressing unethical practices. She refers to this phenomenon as the “curriculum silentium,” and claims that it influences the ethical judgments made by school employees to the point of encouraging them to remain silent when observing unethical situations because speaking out is considered far too risky. Furthermore, Holte posits that this influential curriculum silentium process that leads to such employee silence comprises five phases. First, the awareness phase occurs when the employee, through observation or personal experience, develops an opinion that certain practices by an individual or a group are unethical. The second phase is that of the employee’s reaction in which he or she considers what alternative forms of action to take based on the perceived seriousness of the situation. Should the employee speak out, remain silent, or leave the organization? The third phase is referred to as the “voice-loop” phase, where the employee decides to try to speak out or protest but gains no apparent beneficial result and so becomes inclined to suppress his or her judgment and remain silent. During this phase, the school employee may experience negative sanctions or may simply be ignored. For some school employees, this phase may last a long time, while others may never enter it because they choose not to ever make their negative point of view known to others. Instead, they go directly to the fourth phase: deliberate silence. In this phase, all criticism is stifled. In reality, some determined school employees might choose to return to the voice-loop phase after periods of silence because they are not yet willing to give up. Others, in contrast, will move on toward the fifth phase, the phase of redirected attention. They redirect their attention from the concern that is troubling them by, for example, avoiding exposure to the unethical practice or by rationalizing why silence is the best option for them.

The curriculum silentium is a hidden or subconscious force, yet it has its genesis in very explicit elements such as organizational goals, content, learning situations, information dissemination strategies, organizational culture, leadership style, and employee motivation. It is a hidden or subconscious force because people are seldom aware of their own involvement in the learning and practice of the elements that constitute the curriculum silentium. Furthermore, both leaders and employees can adopt and promote these elements. However, given the structural limitations of this chapter, I will be able to describe only the influence of employee motivation, organizational culture, and leadership style in contributing to the presence of ethical silence within an organization.

### *Employee Motivation*

There are four different employee motives for choosing to remain silent about unethical issues in an organization. These motives are: prosociality, indulgence, defensiveness, and passive aggression. The strength of each of these motives may fluctuate depending on the situational circumstances, and they are seldom found alone.

In the case of *prosociality* as a motive for maintaining silence, the priority is to strengthen their relationships with colleagues rather than to speak out about a perceived unethical situation. Moreover, it has been found (Van Dyne et al., 2003) that such ethical inaction is self-justified based on the awareness that we can all make mistakes in our professional practice, and so we require mutual dependency with our colleagues, who not only understand our human limitations but also will not judge and condemn us, just as we will not judge and condemn them. Underlying this mutual dependency is the belief that a good colleague is a workplace friend who will overlook another's imperfections and weaknesses no matter the consequences. What is considered "the right thing to do" is, therefore, to safeguard the social bond and to ignore the ethical implications. Furthermore, this prosocial motive may be grounded in misplaced courtesy, gratitude, and fellowship among employees. If someone has helped you in a difficult situation, you then feel obliged to return the favor. Silence about an unethical practice can be one way of fulfilling this obligation.

Moreover, this acceptance of the need for mutual dependency within an organization can further undermine the establishment of ethical practices because it also makes honest conversations difficult to initiate. To initiate a conversation that challenges another's ethics is seen as an act of disloyalty. In Scandinavian communities, in particular, there exists an informal law called the Jante law, which describes a pattern of group behavior toward any individual who seeks to portray the actions of another as unworthy and inappropriate (Sandemose, 1933). In light of the Jante law, it can be considered rude, or even unacceptable, to protest something one finds unethical about another person.

Hence the purpose of prosocial silence is to achieve and maintain good relationships in the workplace (Holte, 2009). Good social relationships among colleagues are considered to be far more important than countering unethical practices.

The second type of employee motivation for maintaining silence in the face of perceived unethical behavior in an organization is *indulgence*. Silence motivated by indulgence comes from the person's experience of being powerless or submissive when confronted with widely accepted and supported traditional practices, cultural codes, and/or organizational structures (Van Dyne et al., 2003). If an unethical practice is seen as being the inevitable result of widely accepted organizational structure, culture, or traditions, then most people believe it is far too difficult to change. Why participate in a conversation about ethical issues when the chances for change are small? Rather than question such a seemingly entrenched and immutable practice, most choose to tolerate or overlook the situation.

The third type of employee motivation for maintaining silence in the face of perceived unethical behavior in an organization can be described as *defensiveness*. In this case, silence is motivated by the need to protect oneself against the negative

consequences of exposing unethical practices (Van Dyne et al., 2003). For many within an organization, the more negative the anticipated consequences from an open and honest conversation about perceived unethical practices, the stronger the defensive motive is likely to be. If a person has previously observed the social and/or organizational exclusion of another employee, who had spoken up about a perceived unethical or negative condition in the organization, then he or she is far less likely to personally risk the same outcome. In the extreme case of exclusion, a violation of the expected social code to maintain silence might mean losing one's job. Naturally, most people want to protect both themselves and others against such a possibility. Even in far less extreme circumstances, the perception can be that simply talking to someone in authority about a possible unethical situation involves too much work and effort, particularly if there is no explicit evidence, with no guarantee of success. Raising questions about the possibility of unethical practices is considered to be a high-risk action. In this situation, it seems more beneficial to say nothing and maintain current workplace relationships than to speak out, only to be engulfed in organizational tension, disunity, and isolation.

The final type of employee motivation for maintaining silence in the face of perceived unethical behavior in an organization is that of *passive aggressive* inaction. A person is said to be motivated by such passive aggressive inaction if he or she is fully aware of unethical practices in the organization but deliberately chooses to not participate in discussions or conversations about the topic because the person is hoping for more serious consequences for the perpetrator of the unethical behavior (Nelson, Patearnack, & Van Nuys, 2005). In the mind of such people, a conversation about certain unethical behaviors might stop these from happening and thereby protect the "bad" leader or "underperforming" colleagues and prevent them from losing their jobs, which is the nonpreferred outcome from the perspective of the passive aggressive person. Hence, instead of telling the leader about unethical practices in the organization, these people allow it to happen in the hope that it will eventually reveal itself in the form of a scandal, to the career detriment of the perpetrator.

### *Organizational Culture*

The second influence contributing to the presence of ethical silence within an organization is organizational culture. The tendency for school employees to remain silent when they either observe or experience unethical behavior can be reinforced by the culture of the organization. Although it is seldom possible to identify a particular organizational culture as being homogeneous, as there are not only numerous different types of organizational cultures but also the likelihood of subcultures (Schein, 2004), there are particular cultural characteristics that tend to induce curriculum silentium (Holte, 2009). These characteristics include those of a threatening, an ignoring, or a feel-good culture.

In a threatening culture, the employee is intimidated to remain silent through direct or indirect threats. Indirect threats are often presented as narratives that are not necessarily specific to the particular organization (Bryant, 2003). Regardless of

the particular details described in the narrative, its intention is to provide a message, or an impression, about why it is important to ignore the unethical deeds of others and what might happen if this advice is not adhered to. Direct threats can be an instruction or directive to remain silent, with sanctions or unpleasant consequences for anyone who chooses to not adhere to this instruction or direction.

Regardless of its nature, a threatening culture builds up fear and anxiety within employees as they struggle to overcome their tense feelings caused not only by their reaction to the unethical situation but also by their inner conflict over whether to speak out or keep silent and having to confront their own level of ethical conviction if influenced by self-interest when their decision to remain silent is based on avoiding negative personal consequences (Athern & McDonald, 2002; Hedin et al., 2008; Skivenes & Trygstad, 2005). Thus, it can be seen how a threatening organizational culture primarily enhances defensive silence among employees because it enhances prosocial motives as it places an emphasis on the primary importance of protecting social relations and securing personal safety and security. Also, the irrationality of a threatening organizational culture can reinforce a passive aggressive motive for silence among employees as it encourages individuals to concentrate on their own safety and security at the expense of others.

On the other hand, the *ignoring* organizational culture establishes a commitment to silence about unethical behavior because it signals to each employee that such behavior can be overlooked or ignored, that openness about such matters is not realistic or intolerable, and that the opinions of employees are unwelcome or do not count. This culture enhances silence because the employees believe they have no influence on the situation. This can happen if the employees have previously tried to take up a sensitive issue but experienced discouragement or failure. In ignoring cultures, ethical opinions and contributions from employees will be cast aside or treated in a superficial way. Deliberately slowing down an ethical review process can also have a silencing effect. In such a situation, it appears to the employee who has spoken out about a perceived unethical situation that the leader is responding so slowly to his or her complaint that the issue will never be suitably redressed and so it is better to ignore the issue. This can lead to experiences of powerlessness and indulgence and enhance forbearing silence. An ignoring culture can also cause frustration and anger and therefore enhance passive aggressive silence as well.

Finally, a feel-good organizational culture is one in which the protection of positive and harmonious feelings is given a higher priority than a commitment to ethical behavior. Being enthusiastic, thinking positively, acting supportively, and being nice, happy, and engaged are all deemed to be important social outcomes. Moreover, it is accepted that an effective way to protect and maintain this feel-good culture is to not talk about potential problems or mistakes or unethical practice. Any attempt to initiate a discussion about something thought to be unethical practice is understood as being disrespectful, acting unnecessarily, and bad for the organization as a whole. This culture enhances prosocial and defensive silence, since it encourages strategies that not only values employee relationships as the pivotal cultural characteristic but also protects, strengthens, and normalizes the existing relationships.



### Leadership Style

The third and final influence contributing to the presence of ethical silence within an organization is leadership style. One essential insight that should be gained from all of the previous discussion is that the presence of curriculum silentium is widespread and can readily occur in any school community. With or without the direct involvement of the school leader, curriculum silentium can easily become an unwanted facet of a school's culture and thereby undermine the achievement of ethical behavior within the school. Thus, the attainment of ethical educational leadership relies upon the school leader being vigilant in eradicating any hint of curriculum silentium from the school's culture.

To this end, the most important action school leaders can initiate is to establish processes that will enable the school community to suitably gain and share knowledge about perceived unethical behavior and/or erroneous beliefs about the need for ethical silence. This will open up more options for actions that can lead the school community toward the desired ethical outcome. The knowledge should be shared with the employees so it can build a foundation for honest, open, and supportive communication. This will show to each and every person that they can trust the school, and especially the school leader, to listen to their concerns and to sincerely investigate the situation.

When it comes to reviewing the school's culture as a potential unintended source of promoting curriculum silentium, it is important for the school leader to stridently ask questions about the present state of the organization: What can be done to facilitate an open discussion about ethical issues? What is ethical behavior? How do we recognize unethical behavior? How should a person react when observing unethical behavior? Why is ethical behavior important in our school community? Is it important that each and every person in our school community acts ethically? Do we feel anxious when raising concerns about the ethical behavior of others in the school community and, if so, why? What do we ignore that might be an ethical issue and why? Are we aware of what we ignore, or is it out of ignorance?

When conducting such a cultural review as this, it is important not to overlook critiquing the traditional, taken-for-granted rituals that are often considered to be fundamental to defining the school's uniqueness and distinctiveness. Rituals are "fostered activities [that] provide opportunities for people to identify with others" in the school community so as to "provide [the] people in a school with a sense of belonging and hope" (O'Mahoney, Barnett, & Matthews, 2006, p. 12). It is possible that these benefits can also hide unwanted explicit practices and unhelpful implicit messages. Thus, it is important for the school leader to seek knowledge about these rituals, which may well be excluding or hurting certain individuals in the school community. If the rituals send a different ethical message than that desired by the school community, then it could be extremely difficult to achieve ethical leadership.

To assist in this process, Holte (2009) introduces a process called *critical didactic relations analysis*, which can be used in school communities to reveal "sacred cows" and "blind spots" when it comes to ethical issues. Sacred cows are those widely accepted practices that have widespread superficial appeal but have hidden unwanted consequences, whereas blind spots are those parts of the culture deliberately, or

unintentionally, avoided or ignored during formal review or critique processes. A substantial contribution of this analytical method is that it can be used to improve the ethical decision-making process. It is a process that can lead to more sincere openness about hidden unwanted phenomena in the school community. Such an analysis can also engender a more critical awareness of how the school community's understanding of itself actually contributes to unfortunate behavioral tendencies. It is in the nature of hidden processes that often people are not consciously aware of their own contribution to unwanted outcomes. Using the critical didactic relations analysis process can provide people with a chance to relate in a different, more responsible, and agentic fashion to situations that initially seemed to lie outside of their input or control.

The critical didactic relations analysis process comprises three steps:

1. The identification of a gap between a formal and an experienced policy
2. The analytic construction of the hidden policy, as if it were a planned policy, using didactic categories applicable to organizations
3. The analysis of the relationships among the didactic categories

The first step forms the point of departure for the ethical investigation of the particular situation. Differences among the ideological, formal, perceived, operationalized, and experienced policies/processes/actions show that there is a gap between the intention and the reality, which indicates that there are ongoing unofficial, partially hidden learning processes inherent in the school culture in general and/or the common practices associated with the situation in particular. The second step involves the analytical construction of a policy or a detailed outline of a process that would achieve the unwanted reality as it is currently experienced. In other words, treat the current practice as though it were the outcome of a planned policy or desired process but create the policy or process based on what is happening using the didactic categories applicable to organizations. These didactic categories are: goals, content, dissemination strategies, and the motivation of all participants. The third and final step in the critical didactic relations analysis process involves the analysis of each of the didactic categories within this newly created policy or process in order to explain the inherent motives, beliefs, assumptions, and values within this commonly accepted practice that, in fact, legitimate unethical practice.

The relationships among the different categories is central to the completion of a coherent and comprehensive understanding of the implied ethical imperatives associated with this situation. It is essential to realize this because, ultimately, this analysis provides the school leader with insight into what aspects of each category needs to change so as to remove the unethical features of the situation. However, changes in one of the categories are likely to affect the others and vice versa. None of the categories is dominant, and this, in many ways, explains their functionality in the analysis of the hidden learning. Empirical insights connected to changing one category can help the school leader to interpret and predict adjustments required to other categories, as these can be seen to be logical consequences because they can be both outcomes from or catalysts for the implemented change.

Theoretically, this critical didactic relations analysis process is a new contribution to the mix of ways in which a school leader can redress unofficial or hidden unethical practices in the school community. Arguably, such actions have been previously directed by more diffuse, unsystematic guidelines or have been avoided completely. A critical didactic relations analysis process makes it easier to employ a truly multidisciplinary perspective on how to redress complex ethical issues.

The most important contribution of the critical didactic relations analysis is that it enables the school leader to create analytic constructions of relationships that are difficult to grasp otherwise. In this way, one can identify hypotheses and thematic areas that have perhaps previously not been queried. Let us say, for example, that a hidden policy exists that leads to discrimination of dyslexic pupils in a school. In this instance, a critical didactic relations analysis would immediately lead us to ask the following questions: What is the goal of such a policy? What content is disseminated through the policy? How is it disseminated? Which dissemination strategies and learning situations are prominent? How are teachers and pupils motivated by the goals of such a policy, and to what ends? This could help structure the collection and analysis of data in the work with ethical issues. Such questions would also apply, for example, to studies of school resistance and different types of racism and discrimination. The reciprocal nature of the didactic categories simplifies the work involved in discovering what is often hidden.

## SUMMARY

In this chapter I have exposed the presence of hidden mechanisms of silence that may surround unethical practices already happening in schools. Often, hidden mechanisms of silence within the school community prevent transparency about unethical issues and make it difficult to carry out ethical leadership. I have described these mechanisms as the curriculum of silence because they teach employees to remain silent about difficult issues. Specifically, I have presented three main reasons for the existence of this “curriculum silentium” and four different motives that influence teachers and others to maintain their silence when they are confronted with unethical issues. The three reasons for the existence of a curriculum of silence were presented as: employee motivation, organizational culture, and leadership style. Embedded within these reasons were the four different motivational behaviors of: prosocial behavior, indulgence behavior, defensive behavior, and passive aggressive behavior. Prosocial behavior illustrates how people remain silent to show gratitude or secure good relations with colleagues or their leader. Indulgence behavior describes how often people do not see themselves as qualified to judge the ethicalness of a situation or in a position to make any difference to unethical practices. Defensive behavior occurs when people protect themselves, colleagues, or their leader from potential negative consequences by not revealing the presence of unethical issues. Losing one’s job seems to be a main concern. Passive aggressive behavior exists when people remain silent, hoping for more serious consequences to eventually result for those causing the unethical action. Also, I have argued that threatening, ignoring, and feel-good organizational cultures are conducive to the establishment and continuance of a curriculum of silence.

Hence, this chapter argues that educational leaders seeking to instill and maintain high ethical standards need to engage with the potential presence of these hidden silencing mechanisms in their school in order to facilitate honest communication, ethical reflection, and, ultimately, moral behavior. To assist the facilitation of open and honest communication, it has been suggested that a process called critical didactic relation analysis can be employed. This process can readily reveal the existence of sacred cows and/or blind spots of unethical practice in schools. Critical didactical relation analysis comprises three steps. First, a gap between the expected outcomes from a formal policy with the real outcomes experienced has to be identified. Second, using the real outcomes as a guide, the staff and the school leader construct a policy that would actually produce these unwanted outcomes. Some didactic categories have been provided so as to assist in this analytical construction of this fictitious policy. Finally, an in-depth analysis of this fictitious policy with respect to its inherent values, beliefs, and assumptions precipitates an awareness of the previously hidden unethical principles at play in the everyday activities and practices of the school staff. Now the school leader and staff are in a position to change these activities and practices so that the desired ethical outcomes are achieved. These three steps make it possible to find better ways to change unwanted into desirable ethical practices.

However, the most significant message provided by this chapter is that silence rather than conviction can be the greatest obstacle to the achievement of ethical educational leadership. It is all very well to want to be an ethical educational leader, but if unethical behavior is being ignored, overlooked, or condoned because no one is willing to publicly acknowledge its existence, then any conviction toward the establishment of ethical educational leadership is idealistic at best, if not exacerbating and demoralizing at worst. Thus, it can be seen that the development of authentic ethical educational leadership is both an individualistic and a cultural phenomenon. The establishment of ethical educational leadership demands that school leaders strive to ensure that not only their own behavior is ethical but also that their schools' culture supports and promotes a commitment to ethical practices by all. Employee silence in regard to the possible existence of unethical behavior is not necessarily a source of comfort and confidence to an intuitive and diligent ethical educational leader.

## REFERENCES

- Argyris, C., & Schön, D. (1978). *Organizational learning*. Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley.
- Aronsson, G., & Gustafsson, K. (1999). *Kritik eller tystnad.—En studie av arbetsmarknads- och anställningsförhållandens betydelse för arbetsmiljökritik* [Criticism or silence: A study of the labor and employment relationship, the importance of occupational criticism]. *Labour & Working*, 5(3), 189–206.
- Athern, K., & McDonald, M. C. (2002). The beliefs of nurses who were involved in a whistleblower event. *Journal of Advanced Nursing*, 38(3), 303–309.
- Berlinger, N. (2003). *What is meant by telling the truth: Bonhoeffer on the ethics of disclosure*. London: Continuum.
- Bowen, F., & Blackmon, K. (2003). Spirals of silence: The dynamic effects of diversity on organizational voice. *Journal of Management Studies*, 40(6), 1393.
- Bryant, M. (2003). Persistence and silence: A narrative analysis of employee responses to organisational change. *Sociological Research Online*, 8(4). Retrieved from [www.socresonline.org.uk/8/4/bryant.html](http://www.socresonline.org.uk/8/4/bryant.html)
- Habermas, J. (1999). Between facts and norms: An author's reflections. *Denver University Law Review*, 76(4), 937–942.

- Hedin, U. C., Månsson, S. A., & Tikkanen, R. (2008). *När man måste säga ifrån. Om kritik och whistleblowing i offentliga organisationer.* [When one has to tell. About criticism and whistleblowing in public organizations.] Stockholm: Natur og kultur.
- Hennestad, B. (1990). The symbolic impact of double bind leadership: Double bind and the dynamics of organization culture. *Journal of Management Studies*, 27(3), 265–280.
- Hirschman, A. O. (1970). *Exit, voice, and loyalty: Responses to decline in firms, organizations, and states.* Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Holte, K. L. (2009). *Hysj. En kritisk didaktisk relasjonsanalyse av Curriculum Silentium; den skjulte policyen for taushet om arbeidsrelatert kritikk hos ansatte.* [Shhh! A Critical Didactic Relations Analysis of the Curriculum Silentium. The Hidden Policy of Silence Regarding Work Related Criticism from Employees.] Karlstad, Sweden: Karlstad University Press.
- Jensen, A. (2004). *Frimodige ytringer ere enhver tilladte.* [Free Speech is everyone allowed.] Oslo: Rapport fra norsk redaktørforening.
- Kraman, S. S., & Hamm, G. (1999). Risk management: Extreme honesty may be the best policy. *Annals of Internal Medicine*, 131, 963–967.
- Milliken, F. J., Morrison, E. W., & Hewlin, P. F. (2003). An exploratory study of employee silence: Issues that employees don't communicate upward and why. *Journal of Management Studies*, 40(6), 1453–1476.
- Nelson, G. L., Pasteernack, B. A., & Van Nuys, K. E. (2005, October). The passive aggressive organization. *Harvard Business Review*.
- O'Mahoney, G., Barnett, B., & Matthews, R. (2006). *Building culture: A framework for school improvement.* Heatherton, Victoria, Australia: Hawker Brownlow Education.
- Popper, K. (1986). *Unended quest. An intellectual autobiography.* Glasgow: Flamingo.
- Premeaux, S. F., & Bedeian, A. G. (2003). Breaking the silence: The moderating effects of self monitoring in predicting speaking up in the work place. *Journal of Management Studies*, 40(6), 1359–1392.
- Roethlisberger F. J., & Dickson W. J. (1939/1964). *Management and the worker: An account of a research program conducted by the Western Electric company, Hawthorn Works, Chicago.* Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Sandemose, A. (1933). *En flyktning krysser sitt spor.* [A refugee crosses his tracks.] Oslo: Aschehoug.
- Schein, E. H. (2004). *Organizational culture and leadership* (3rd ed.). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Skivenes, M., & Trygstad, S. (2005). *Varslere: en bok om arbeidstakere som sier ifra!* [Whistleblowers: A book about employees who use their voice.] Oslo: Gyldendal Akademisk.
- Strand, T. (2001). *Ledelse organisasjon og kultur.* [Leadership, Organization and Culture.] Bergen, Norway: Fagbokforlaget.
- Tourish, D., & Robson, P. (2006). Sense making and the distortion of critical upward communication in organizations. *Journal of Management Studies*, 4(6), 711–730.
- Vakola, M., & Bouradas, D. (2005). Antecedents and consequences of organisational silence: An empirical investigation. *Employee Relations*, 27(5), 441–458.
- Van Dyne, L., Soon A., & Botero, I. C. (2003). Conceptualizing employee silence and employee voice as multidimensional constructs. *Journal of Management Studies*, 40(6), 1359–1392.