MORALITY AND PRUDENCE AND HOW THEY ADDRESS THE 21ST CENTURY ETHICS PROBLEM IN EDUCATION

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Abstract

French Journalist, Chamfort, in the 17th century, suggested that education should be constructed on two bases, morality and prudence; morality in order to assist virtue, and prudence in order to defend you against the vices of others. In simple terms, the concepts of morality and prudence and values education has been viewed as potential solutions to the ethics problems that the 21st century society is currently dealing with. Higher Education in looked to regarding the delivery of these solutions. The Researcher concludes with examples of policies and practices employed in the University setting which allows students and faculty to coexist ethically within the 21st century educational framework for higher education.

Keywords: Ethics, morality, intellectual property, prudence, values, values education

Recent history will suggest, and academics will no doubt agree that there is a need for increased ethical standards in the United States today. Many people point to education as the place where the impetus must begin anew.   Thomas Jefferson was connected to the ideal that the aim of education was to produce a knowing mind and an honest heart (Miller, 2003). Aristotle observed that there is a difference between understanding good and becoming good. Aristotle felt that it is doubtful that people can become better by studying ethics (Rosenbaum, 2003).

Proponents as well as opponents line up to debate the issue of ethics which sounds an awfully lot like teaching values, a proposition that makes a great number of people nervous. A number of professionals in academia feel that this is "not our job" (Miller, 2003). DeRussy (p.B20), writing in The Chronicle of Higher Education takes the opposite approach to that of Miller when she states:

There has been plenty of blame cast, but little attention paid to one crucial factor: the role of higher education in forming those who are called upon to sustain professional standards. The issue is not only, or even mainly, what is taught in professional schools. The ethics and integrity of academe itself is crucial. (DeRussy, 2003)

1. CHAMFORT'S SUGGESTION

Chamfort, who was born Sebastien Roch Nicolas was a prize winning author, a spiritual publicity agent, and a poet. He also served in the French Academy as Librarian, and became very outspoken regarding French education with regard to what he viewed as the lack of attention that the French government paid to morality and prudence. Chamfort spoke out on the fact that it was the lack thereof of these two bases that was causing the maladies of his home country. (Chamfort, 1781)

Morality and prudence as described by Chamfort speak directly and efficiently to the concept of values education as discussed by Taylor and Halstead (2000), and would appear to demonstrate that the need of Cham-

fort's morality and prudence are as applicable today as they were in 18th century France.

Long before Chamfort's suggestion that education be constructed on two bases, the Greeks carved above their temples the phrase "know thyself". These two words implied a lifetime of investigation, of being a lifelong learner. Scholars and philosophers throughout the ages have emphasized the importance of self-knowledge as an outcome of learning. (Brown, 2002).

2. THE ETHICS PUZZLE

Research has revealed that the Internet is the greatest enabler for unethical behavior; it has created a patchwork puzzle of infractions by researchers, educators, business professionals and students. Case in point, Harvard University researchers are facing a 25 year prison sentence and a $750,000 fine for conspiring to steal intellectual property owned by the University. The majority of the medical research data was found in a lab in Texas, where incidentally one of the researchers had worked after leaving Harvard (Lawler, 2002).

Intellectual property has always been a tightly guarded commodity as in the past they belonged to the person who produced them. Scott, writing in the May/June 1998 issue of Academe, detected an interesting trend that was happening on university campuses (p.22), "Recently universities have begun to act like corporations, attempting to claim ownership of professors' ideas in order to market them" (Scott, 1998). The reason pointed to was that due to downsizing, corporate America no longer had the research and development abilities that they had begun building after World War II, so they turned to higher education to provide the research. The very lucrative monetary encouragements that industry was bestowing on research universities by way of annual membership fees, and the funding of "chairs", and the building of buildings, in exchange for nonproprietary unrestricted research placed all of higher education in an ethical dilemma as the late 1990's approached (Streharsky, 1993; Scott, 1998).

Alan Beyer, a professor at Virginia Polytechnic Institute is concerned that the business atmosphere of selling one's research to the highest bidder can result in and will likely result in cases of alleged professional misconduct. This challenge to the ethical underpinnings of the professionals of academe will be and will continue to be severely tested (Bayer, 2003).

It was reported in the Journal of College Student Development that between 40% and 70% of all college students engage in some form of academic dishonesty (Lester & Diekhoff, 2002). In an article published very recently in USA Today, it was reported that in a National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) completed in 2003, 87% of the students surveyed said that "their peers at least sometimes copy and paste information from the Web without citing the source (Marklein, 2003). A study conducted in New York City discovered that 94% of students access the Internet for research by the time they are 17, and 71% state that it serves as their main source of information (Dutilloy, 2003).

Lester and Diekhoff in their research which consisted of a convenience sample at only one university concluded that there is a significant attitudinal difference regarding cheating or plagiarism with students that use the Internet. An Internet user was almost three times less likely to turn in a peer who was observed cheating, and the researchers concluded that an Internet cheater was much less likely to resent someone else cheating as well, that it was most likely a defense mechanism used to justify their actions (Lester & Diekhoff, 2002).

This multifaceted issue of ethics is brought forth upon higher education, the values that are seemingly important from a logical standpoint for students to make well informed decisions, and to practice said choices also fall upon the educational professional (Miller, 2003).

3. MORALITY DEFINED

Not to be redundant, but rather to make sure that it is recognized that higher education does have a role to play in the defining of ethics and morality, moral reasoning of college students is of concern. The demographics previously reported demonstrate the problem of unethical behavior, and for our society to continue to function, ways must be found to positively impact the moral

and ethical behavior of our citizens (Smith, Strand, & Bunting, 2002).

According to Verhoef and Michel (1997), morals are rules set by a given culture, and that each culture will set its own ethical code and moral behavior. "The caps, gowns, and diplomas may look the same, but the groves of academe have changed radically over the past quarter century. Most fundamentally, perhaps, the people who learn and work at American universities and colleges are very different today."

People of many colors, people of many races, people from many countries, people from many cultures, people with many different moral viewpoints, this is the makeup of American colleges and universities today, the task of finding a working definition for morals is quite difficult, this could certainly be the reason that Haydon asks the question whether it would be better not to talk about morality in schools (Haydon, 2000).

4. PRUDENCE DEFINED

Aristotle referred to prudence as practical wisdom and a habitual way of acting that promotes human excellence and a happy life (Morgan, 2003). Chamfort suggested that prudence was to be used as a defense against the vices of others (Chamfort, 1781

Placing a working definition on prudence that will be agreeable to all is difficult. From a teacher's perspective, they alone know their local conditions; they alone know the kind of students that they are dealing with, and the conditions under which one must complete their work (Straughan, 2000).

5. THE BASE OF MORALITY

Forty-five years ago, educational theorist and one time Harvard Professor; Lawrence Kohlberg published the six stages of moral development. His background included being a developmental psychologist prior to moving into the field of moral education.

The Kohlberg theory on moral development centers on the concept that the moral reasoning of people progresses through six stages encapsulated within three levels of development. The first level (Pre-conventional level) of moral thinking is what one would expect to find at the elementary school level, it exhibits the concepts of obe-

dience and punishment based on a set of social norms. The early stages of morals are given to us by an authority figure, and the threats of punishment based on being disobedient to these norms are real (Barger, 2000).

Figure 1: Moral Development as per Kohlberg

Level	Stage	Social Orientation
Pre-conventional	1 2	Obedience and Punishment Individualism, Instrumentalism, and Exchange
Conventional	3 4	"Good boy/girl" Law and Order
Post-conventional	5 6	Social Contract Principled Conscience

Stage two of the first level demonstrates the fact that all humans view morals as a behavior that includes acting in one's own best interest. According to Sue Ellen Henry of Bucknell University (p. 261), "Kohlberg held the belief that school was a child's first formal introduction into society at large and important locations for the socialization of children" (Henry, 2001). The statement by Henry is further supported by Barger (2000) when he states that the second level of moral thinking (conventional level) is the thinking that is most prevalent in society, the idea of being a good boy or girl, of being law abiding. Barger and Henry both agree with Kohlberg that few people continue on to the Post-conventional level, and even fewer ever make it to the sixth and final stage de-

scribed by Kohlberg as a principled conscience.

Olafson & Field (2003) conducted a two year ethnography relating to the phenomenon of resistance in middle school aged students. They spent in excess of 500 hours in the classroom and in the home life of the participants (seventh grade students) over two years. They postulated as follows (p 140): "At times, we felt these forms of student resistance were desirable and appropriate; and at others, unwarranted and destructive. Sometimes, the resistance filled us with hope, at other times; we despaired over rude, disrespectful, and mean spirited behaviors" (Olafson & Field, 2003).

Kohlberg believed that moral development could best be promoted through formal education and that through social interaction in the school setting that students could and would progress through the stages of development (Barger, 2000).

6. THE BASE OF PRUDENCE

Kohlberg recognized prudence as an outcome of morals education, and the ability to progress through his moral development stages. Without a habitual lifestyle, as promoted by formal education, how will the person know to progress past the stage of individualism (Barger, 2000)?

Morgan extolled the beliefs of St. Thomas Aquinas with regard to prudence by noting that according to Aquinas, prudence as a virtue itself directs the moral virtues that make us choose well. As choices are made, and as they become good choices, they become a habit, they become a prudent action, and every prudent action eases the action process of making subsequent decisions, whether the action is physical or mental (Morgan, 2003).

To Kohlberg, the "ends" would be construed as being a predetermined outcome based on the universal concept that his theory prescribed for any particular circumstance encountered. Kohlberg's position that prudence will result in the same decision and same outcome is not a base that is widely accepted. Much more widely accepted in this area is the theory of pragmatism, which means that the "ends" will be created within the context of the situation, that it is an act

of consciousness, not of habit (Henry, 2001).

7. ETHICS PROBLEMS IN EDUCATION

As pointed out by Candice Shelby, the Executive Director of the Center for Ethics and Community at the University of Colorado at Denver, "Discussion of ethics in education continues in terms of curriculum to be directed toward students, and, specifically, curriculum focused on either applying principles to cases, or on developing familiarity with, and encouraging the exhibition of, certain values" (Shelby, 2003, p 337).

This is not a new problem facing education, in Blacksburg, VA, officials of Virginia Tech; the largest university in the state has acknowledged that by the mid 1990's that computer-aided cheating by students was growing. The personal computer has made stealing someone else's work almost effortless with the simple point and click abilities of a mouse (Zack, 1998). "The proliferation of Web pages and electronic publications makes plagiarism easier to accomplish and harder to recognize" stated Julie J.C.H. Ryan an information security consultant at George Washington University. (Ryan, 1998)

In their July 2002 article printed in the Journal of Business Ethics, Solymossy and Masters shed light on the idea of cognitive moral development (CMD) pointing out that an individual's level of CMD is key to determining moral judgment. In theory, individuals will make different choices on a given issue when they are at different stages of moral development (Kohlberg's Stages of Moral Development). The concept is that as an individual matures, they will pass from stages one through six of moral development (see figure 1). The early stages are grounded in the concepts of personal consequences, rewards, and punishment. The middle stages see a shift to conformity within society, and the final stages are found to be overachieving in their ethical principles (Solymossy & Masters, 2002).

It is Shelby's position with regard to the inability of students to move through the stages of moral development that the rewards and punishments awarded for both good and bad behavior are not sufficient to eliminate the action. Efforts should be placed in assisting the students' behavior in to ac-

quiring intellectual power that will develop a behavior model that is more enlightened and more consistent (Shelby, 2003).

The Digital Millennium Copyright Act (DMCA) was enacted in 1998 in an attempt to balance the interest of creators and users of intellectual property (Euben, 2002). Shortly after this law was promulgated, the American Association of University Professors (AAUP) established a policy called its Statement on Copyright (Smith, M., 2001). This statement was a direct result of legal challenges to the DMCA, and tried to clarify the role that faculty members have as both creators and users of intellectual property.

Proper use of intellectual property is at the crux of the ethical dilemma being faced by education professionals. It is deemed that these issues are more complex in higher education, to further address these concerns, the AAUP through its subcommittee on Intellectual Property Rights authored a report and included the following points relative to copyright issues:

1. Colleges and universities are at once major suppliers and consumers of intellectual property

2. The intellectual property created within colleges and universities is often the product of multiple creators who share other important relationships

3. Both the creation and use of intellectual property within the academy are carried out by a diverse array of individuals

4. Creative activity within colleges and universities us supported by a variety of sources

5. The creation and use of intellectual property within colleges and universities are intrinsically related to the core activities of those institutions-teaching, research, scholarship, and service-and to the values essential to those activities (Cate, Gumport, Hauser, Richardson, et al, 1998).

The courts are struggling to apply free speech, academic freedom, and copyright principles in areas of emerging technology, particularly the Internet. This has created an atmosphere in which the academic community must closely monitor the legal challenges to the DMCA. Challenges to present laws may have an adverse effect on how higher education handles free speech, academic freedom, and a reasonable access to information all in the name of education (Euben, 2002).

8. RESPONSIBILITIES OF EDUCATORS

Dr. Robert Hauptman, Professor of Learning Resources and Technology, at St. Cloud State University in St. Cloud, Minnesota states that the responsibility of educators is the discovery, propagation, and dissemination of truth. If a person has dedicated themselves to the life of the mind, then tangible rewards such as honors, profit, and patents while important are meaningless when compared to ascertaining the truth and sharing it with their students (Hauptman, 2002).

The statement by Hauptman starkly contrasts with the philosophical theory called egoism. Beauchamp and Bowie (2001) discuss the topic of egoism, and separate this principal into psychological egoism and ethical egoism. Psychological egoism is the view that all people are motivated to act for their own perceived best interest, while ethical egoism is theoretically saying that the only valid standard of conduct is to be self-serving (Beauchamp & Bowie, 2001).

Hauptman strikes directly at the issue of egoism that is ongoing regarding the ethics of university faculty when he states that (p. 39) "…academics are sometimes charlatans and frauds: they masquerade as something they are not; they dissimulate; they distort their credentials; they accept bribes; they steal; they plagiarize; they fabricate; and they fudge, cook, trim, republish, and they destroy data." (Hauptman, 2002)

Herein lies the ethical quandary that education, and perhaps even more importantly higher education finds itself embroiled in. College students are our country's future leaders; moral reasoning of these students must be a concern. If our society is going to continue to function in a socially responsible fashion, ways must be found to positively impact the moral and ethical behavior of the citizenry (Smith, Strand, & Bunting, 2002).

Monica J. Taylor of the National Foundation of Educational Research, along with J. Mark

Halstead of the University of Plymouth has been researching the concept of values for almost a decade. Together they have coined the phrase of "Values Education". The term is used to refer to the principles that act as general guidelines in what is judged to be good or desirable behaviors specifically in the education of civic and moral values (Halstead, & Taylor, 2000).

Concluding thoughts by Hauptman on the topic of the responsibilities of educators may best be delivered with this quote: "What we do know about the future is that its inhabitants will look back upon the past and judge it in terms of veracity and integrity. There is no place for dishonesty in the academy" (Hauptman, 2002).

9. UNIVERSITY ACTIONS

Dakota State University (DSU), an institution specializing in technology infused undergraduate and graduate academic programs, is one of six members of the South Dakota System of Higher Education. By law the programs administered by DSU are to be technology-infused and promote excellence in teaching and learning. Many practices, procedures and policies have been implemented in an effort to address the responsibility of higher education toward creating a more ethical learning environment. All undergraduate students attending DSU are issued a convertible tablet notebook. In addition, DSU is entirely wireless with Internet access in every building on campus. Truly the faculty and student population has 24/7 accessibility to the Internet. As previously discussed, this does not always have to be a good situation given that the Internet is the greatest enabler for unethical behavior.

As noted, several policies and procedures have been enacted to act as a guide for what is considered ethical computing behavior, and hopefully this will equate to overall ethical behavior by the citizens of our campus. These include the following:

- DSU Computing Privileges Policy (11-15-05)

- DSU Tablet Repair / Service Policy (02-02-06)

- DSU Academic Integrity Board Policy (01-12-06)

- DSU Use of the United States Copyright Act Policy (12-04-98)

- DSU World Wide Web Policy (10-27-05)

- DSU Code of Conduct Board Policy (05-25-05)

In addition to the above mentioned university policies, there have been several procedures and practices that have been implemented, they include:

- Academic Honesty statement included in syllabi

- Freedom of Learning statement included in syllabi

- Use of Tablets in the Classroom statement included in syllabi

- Institutional Graduation Requirement of writing intensive classes

- Implementation and use of software applications to target plagiarism

- Development of the Faculty Research Initiative (FRI)

- Development of the Student Research Initiative (SRI)

- Development of an undergraduate research methodology course

- Chartering of the Phi Eta Sigma first year National Honor Society

- Growth in the course offerings of Honors courses

10. CONCLUSION

The tools implemented by Dakota State University individually are not sufficient to turn the tide of unethical educational behaviors. Viewed as parts of the whole educational environment on campus, these policies, procedures, and practices have gone a long way toward addressing the moral development of the student body. Rather than develop a course offering for ethics, it has been deemed a better solution to infuse these concepts into all courses. In addition, the policy modifications at the university level are there for the protection and the use of all groups on campus.

Values education is not a some time thing. Values education must be an ongoing chal-

lenge that is faced by administration, faculty, and students in concert to create a more ethical learning environment for all parties. On the DSU campus, this is a quest that has become a team approach to creating more prudence and morality among the entities.

In simple terms, the concepts of morality and prudence (Chamfort, 1781) and values education (Halstead, & Taylor, 2000, Fraser 1999) has been viewed as potential solutions to the ethics problems that the 21st century society is currently dealing with.

"Education in the tradition and ethics of higher education can do much to reduce the moral confusion within the academy, with its intuitional strife and erosion of social trust" (DeRussy, 2003, p. B22). The ethics and integrity of academe itself are critical (DeRussy, 2003)

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