ETHICAL DIMENSIONS IN TEACHING AND TEACHER EDUCATION: A REVIEW

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ABSTRACT

This paper is a humble attempt in exploring the concept of academic misconduct, the moral and ethical dilemmas inextricably intertwined with teaching as a profession and the teacher educators' role in developing teachers well quipped to counter the menace. The work done in this area is reviewed to gain a contour of the grey zone related to ethical practices in teacher education and to provide avenues of further research in this area.

KEYWORDS: Academic Misconduct, Teacher Education, Moral Dilemma

INTRODUCTION

Research literature for some 60 years has focused on the problem of academic misconduct among college students (e.g., Baird, 1980; Bowers, 1964; Campbell, 1933; Drake, 1941; Haines et al., 1986; Harp and Taietz, 1966; Parr, 1936; Stern and Havlicek, 1986). Articles on the topic have even appeared in popular magazines (e.g., "Cheating in Colleges," 1976; Mano, 1987; Selwall, Drake, and Lee, 1980; Wellborn, 1980). Although most researchers agree that academic misconduct is a "threat to academic integrity, consensus as to the "magnitude of such a threat" has not been reached (Karlins, Michaels, and Podlogar, 1988, p. 359). However, it is generally recognized that colleges and universities should take measures to "ensure that it [academic misconduct] is not ignored or tolerated" (Fass, 1990, p. 181). To date, most studies involving the academic misconduct of students in higher education have dealt with students in general. Fewer studies to determine the extent to which students in particular fields engage in misconduct have been conducted. These studies include investigations of academic misconduct among students in psychology (Hetherington and Feldman, 1964), medicine (Sierles, Hendrickx, and Circle, 1980), nursing (Harnest, 1986; Hilbert, 1985; Smith and Daniel, 1992), marketing (Tom and Bonn, 1988), communication (Pratt and McLaughlin, 1989), and engineering (Singhal, 1982). An extensive search of the published literature indicated that studies investigating the academic misconduct behaviors of college students in education were virtually non-existent.

Review of Literature on Academic Misconduct: Academic misconduct has been defined as "dishonest acts connected with coursework, such as cheating on tests, examinations, and assignments" (Rich, 1984, p. 69), as well as employing other questionable or deviant behaviors, including illegally obtaining examinations, plagiarizing all or part of a course assigned paper, falsification of information, and the theft and mutilation of library materials (Daniel, Blount, and Ferrell, 1991). Academic misconduct, more commonly referred to as cheating, has been regarded as "a form of deviancy resulting from an acceptance of the institutionalized goals, but not the institutionalized means" (Harp and Taietz, 1966, p. 366). Rich (1984) asserted that cheating not only "violates institutional regulations and

decreases the value of a diploma or a degree," but also "corrupts students' freedom to learn, and violates the free and open pursuit of truth" (p. 69). Likewise, Michaels and Miethe (1989, p. 870) acknowledged that "cheating is considered a significant problem, because of its frequency, and because it interferes with conventional learning and evaluation processes." The cheating phenomenon is by no means a new occurrence. In fact, this social problem dates back to antiquity when even the threat of death did not stop some ancient Chinese applicants for civil service positions from cheating on the civil service examination (Barnett and Dalton, 1981). However, according to Lamont (1979), academic misconduct in higher education was not a serious problem in America during the first half of the twentieth century "because the pace-setting schools fostered a climate of strict academic integrity" (p. 72).

At these universities, a teacher's moral sense could strongly influence students, honor systems functioned effectively, and the threat of punishment was a powerful deterrent. For instance, in the early 1900s, Dartmouth students who gave or received help on an examination were expelled; Yale dismissed Henry Ford II for submitting a ghost-written paper (with a bill from the "ghost" enclosed). By contrast, nearly a half century later, Harvard initially discharged, but later reinstated, Edward Kennedy because a friend took a Spanish exam for him (Lamont, 1979), suggesting that institutional policies regarding academic misconduct had somewhat softened. During the 1950s, recognition of the growing dimensions of cheating began to evolve as the result of surveys to determine the existence and frequency of the problem among college and university students. By 1965, a nationwide study of 99 institutions (Bowers, 1964) indicated that even students at elite universities such as Yale, Columbia, Penn State, and Stanford were engaging in some form of academic misconduct on campus (e.g., cheating on tests and assignments, plagiarism, falsification of information, mutilation of materials). In the 1970s, the problem seemed to have become even more serious as evidenced by polls at Michigan and Dartmouth which indicated that over 60 per cent of the students had violated the institutional honor code at least once. It was during the 1970s that students persuaded themselves that they had "to beat the system to survive" (Lamont, 1979, p. 74).

In an effort to explain the rapid escalation of the cheating phenomenon, many theorists have examined social causes. Fass (1986) asserted that college students of the 1970s and 1980s grew up in an era marked by scandal involving public servants, major corporations, and various highly visible private citizens. According to Fass, these scandals influenced the students' perceptions of acceptable standards of behaviour in the workplace and caused them to question the integrity of their teachers, their parents, and other authority figures. Fass (1986) argued that something must be done to reverse these current trends, asserting that institutions of higher learning should include education about the importance of ethical behaviour. Unless students learn to respect and adopt the intellectual ethics of their colleges or universities, they cannot be expected to exhibit respect for ethics in their future professional communities or personal relationships. Moreover, Michaels and Miethe (1989) have noted that academic misconduct may generalize to other organizational settings, reasoning that those who cheat in college may rely on similar adaptations in carrying out their responsibilities in their careers. Consequently, Fass suggested that academic misconduct should not be ignored or tolerated, and that academic and professional ethics must be promoted if an institution of higher learning "is to be regarded as a community in which it is legitimate to hold students to the highest standards of behaviour in their academic work" (Fass, 1986, p. 35). Behaviours That Constitute Academic Misconduct Researchers over a period of years have identified various behaviours that are regarded as academic misconduct. Cheating on tests and assignments is perhaps the most classic behaviour that has been considered to constitute misconduct (Campbell, 1933; Parr, 1936; Stang, 1937). Various forms of plagiarism and

misuse of resources serve as a second category of behaviours judged as violations of academic integrity. In fact, Harp and Taietz (1966) found that plagiarism was perceived as the most frequent form of academic deviance by professors at one Ivy League college. Typical behaviours ascribed to this "vast twilight zone of chicanery outside the examination hall" (Lamont, 1979, p. 77) include obtaining/purchasing of term papers from fraternity/sorority files, "term paper mills," or "ghost writers" (Hawley, 1984; Lamont, 1979; Stavisky, 1973), turning in papers as one's own work that are written by someone else (Hawley, 1984; Lamont, 1979; Stavisky, 1973), direct copying or paraphrasing of existing scholarly work into term papers without giving the original author credit (Robinson and Moulton, 1985; Standing and Gorassini, 1986; Stavisky, 1973), and "drylabbing" of experimental results (Lamont, 1979).

In a comprehensive study of 5,000 students in 99 American colleges and universities, Bowers (1964) confirmed the common perception that "academic dishonesty" consisted of cheating and plagiarism, noting that most behaviours fell within these two general categories. Harp and Taietz (1966) concur, noting from their research that cheating on tests and plagiarism arc the behaviours most frequently agreed upon by college professors as constituting "forms of cheating." Lamont (1979) and Levine (1980) include these two areas as well as the theft and mutilation of library materials as components of academic misconduct. Fass (1990, pp. 173-174) provides one of the most comprehensive lists of behaviours constituting academic misconduct, including (a) unethical behaviour during examinations, (b) inappropriate use of sources on papers and assignments, (c) inappropriate use of writing assistance and tutoring, (d) dishonest collecting and reporting of data, (e) unethical use of academic resources, (f) tampering with the work of others, (g) questionable practices regarding computer usage, (h) allowing misuse of one's academic work by others, and (i) failing to adhere to academic regulations. Similarly, Robinson and Moulton (1985, pp. 88-92) suggest there are "many forms of cheating," including plagiarism, cheating on exams, and manipulating computer grading systems. Interestingly, Robinson and Moulton add an additional dimension of academic misconduct not addressed by most other scholars who have studied the phenomenon, namely, the forming of friendships or romances with instructors in hopes of influencing grades. These relationships can lead to ethical dilemmas for both students and faculty. The difficulty of impartially grading a student-lover is obvious. Suppose the student deserves to fail or does badly on the final exam after a lovers' quarrel. Suppose the student is competing for a scholarship and the instructor is on the awarding committee. Even people who disapprove of faculty-student romances do not usually see that the same dangers exist in faculty-student friendships. [However,] students can use friendship to try to improve their grades, (p. 92)

Professional ethics has been defined as "all issues involving ethics and values in the roles of the professions and the conduct of the professions in society" (Rich, 1985, p. 21). Recent texts such as Tom's Teaching as a Moral Craft (1984), Strike and Soltis' The Ethics of Teaching (1985), Rich's Professional Ethics in Education (1984), and Goodlad, Soder, and Sirotnik's The Moral Dimensions of Teaching (1990) illustrate academia's and the public's growing interest in ethics within the teaching profession. Other recent works (e.g., Sichel, 1990; Soltis, 1986) have also stressed the importance of the professional ethics of teachers. Rich (1985) cited several reasons for the increased interest in the ethics of the teaching profession, among which are cases involving violations of ethics by prominent individuals which have been brought to the attention of the pub lic, as well as changes in the demographics of the American work force resulting in a greater percentage of professional people in the population. According to Nucci and Pascarella (1987), another possible reason for increased interest in ethics is that higher education is being expected to assume responsibility for promoting and improving ethical standards and behaviour among students pre paring for professional careers. Moreover,

Nucci and Pascarella (1987) argued that the involvement of higher education in the ethics issue is an indication that the control of academic misconduct may currently be perceived as a more ur gent problem than in years past. Tom (1984) described the student-teacher relationship as "inherently moral" (p. 76) because of the unequal power relationship between the teacher and the student. According to Tom, the teacher assumes moral responsibility for the student by assisting the student in developing competence and independence.

Teachers are also obligated to protect honest students and to uphold institutional regulations (Rich, 1984). Hence, the fact that teachers function as "moral educators" cannot be avoided (Howe, 1986, p. 5). Furthermore, Rich (1985) noted that without high standards of professional ethics, teaching will never be regarded as an "authentic" profession nor will parents want to entrust their children to teachers. Rich implied that the development of a generally accepted code of professional ethics will promote teaching as a "true" profession. If a higher standard of ethical behaviour within teaching is to emerge, individuals training to become teachers must resist engaging in academic misconduct since academic misconduct threatens the personal and professional integrity of the persons entering teaching (Rich, 1984). As Daniel et al. (1991) have noted, college faculty would be wary of placing in the classroom a recent graduate who had purchased a pre-written term paper for a foundations of education course or who had plagiarized the teaching unit developed in the methods of teaching social studies class. Obviously, the knowledge base and skill levels of such individuals would be held suspect, (p. 107) Ellis, Cogan, and Howey (1991) recognized that, "There is something implicit in the role of a teacher that calls for high moral character and positive social values […] [A] true professional aspires to conduct of the highest ethical standards, shunning even the hint of impropriety" (pp. 35-37). Soltis (1986) also acknowledged the need for beginning teachers to possess a general sense of moral etiquette: When a person becomes a member of a profession, he or she joins a historical community of practice with a telos, a general purpose and one must be committed to order to be a professional. In the tradition of a practice like teaching, certain standards of conduct and of manner develop in support of the telos and become recognized as a desirable part of the moral climate of the practice. In the treatment of students, of subject matter, and of colleagues, honesty, truth, and justice become central virtues of the practice. Since the future of the teaching profession seems to depend on the personal integrity of teachers, a concern for the academic behaviour of teacher education students is warranted.

Moral and Ethical Dilemmas in Teaching: While there is a certain element of optimism, if not even romanticism, about the conceptualization of teaching as an inherently moral and ethical activity, there is also a need to recognize that it is fraught with tensions and challenges that have the potential to lead to morally objectionable situations in schools and to ethically questionable behaviour on the part of the professionals working within them. The interpersonal essence of teaching provides ample fuel to ignite moral conflicts among teachers, between teachers and principals or students or parents, and within individual teachers themselves who struggle to do the right thing amidst the complexity of knowing what is fair or honest or caring in specific situations. Some teachers feel like helpless and silent witnesses of colleagues' conduct they believe to be harmful to students, be it abusive emotionally or physically, negligent, or incompetent. Should a teacher report a colleague whose conduct is harmful to students at the personal risk of collegial ostracism for perceived disloyalty? Some teachers experience moral qualms about dutifully implementing policies and adhering to expected practices they believe similarly disadvantage or injure students, be they related to assessment, discipline, curricula, or school rules. Should a teacher subvert the process of administering standardized tests he or she feels are harmful in ways

intended to enhance one's own students' achievement? Some teachers worry that their own responses to classroom situations might result in unintended negative consequences and therefore avoid doing what they might otherwise know they should. Should a teacher misrepresent a student's poor academic or behavioural performance in order to protect the student from harsh punishment at home? All such teachers grapple, sometimes on a regular basis, with moral and ethical dilemmas that sting the conscience, compromise principles, undermine moral sensibilities, and jeopardize a feeling of professional autonomy.

Whether one defines a dilemma broadly as a moral problem or as a difficult choice between two or more equally defensible alternatives (Nash, 1996), between two equally indefensible alternatives (Young, 1995), or a choice involving doing wrong in order to do right (Boss, 1998), it is clear that teachers experience dilemmas in their professional lives. One of the earliest articles to address this area is Lyons' 1990 study of three teachers faced with dilemmas that, according to Hansen's review of the article (2001b), "challenged the teachers to think that much more deeply about their students as people and about their possible influences on them" (p. 850). Shortly after this in 1993, the special issue of the Journal of Moral Education on professional morality that was referenced previously generated three articles that explored the area of moral and ethical decision making as well as dilemma resolution in teaching. Firstly, using questionnaires and structured interviews with teachers, Joseph and Efron (1993) concluded, "teachers' individual moralities shape the choices they make and the conflicts that concern them" (p. 201). Secondly, in an article on the ethical decisions "at the heart of teaching," Tippins, Tobin, and Hook (1993) referred to complex decisions "embedded in the professional lives of teachers" (p. 221) as being ethical dilemmas. They conducted an interpretive study of a middle school teacher to examine "the ethical dimensions of science teaching" (p. 221) and question the nature of the ethical dilemmas encountered. Thirdly, in his account of his empirical study of teacher education in Norway, Bergem (1993) examined a range of student teachers' analyses of a moral dilemma in teaching.

Teacher Education's Role in Preparing the Ethical Teacher: In his review of Bergem's study (1992) of Norwegian colleges of teacher education, Oser (1994) remarks that in a moral sense, "Bergem found that no clear and sound rationale guides teacher education, that the practical technological approach to teacher education prevails […] and that prospective teachers do not acquire a moral vocabulary. In my view, this analysis reflects all of the dark sides of reality in teacher training" (p. 110). This concern that teacher education neglects the teaching of ethics in comparison to what is taught in other professional education programs is a common criticism. A belief that greater emphasis needs to be placed on moral and ethical education continues to prevail among those of us who regard teacher education programs as the initial place to acquaint new teachers with the moral dimensions of their chosen profession (Campbell, 1997a; Freeman, 1998; Hamberger& Moore, 1997; Willemse, Lunenberg, 8c Korthagen, 2005; Yost, 1997). Indeed, two entire theme issues of the Journal of Teacher Education (1991, 1997) are devoted to this general topic. Within the teacher education literature are articles that present conceptual and theoretical arguments promoting the inclusion of moral themes in the curricula taught to teachers and pre-service teachers as a way to acquaint them with the moral nuances of teaching (Beyer, 1991, 1997; Joseph, 2003; Sockett, 2006; Yost, 1997); others offer similar arguments but use the language of professional ethics and the development of ethics curricula in teacher education (Bradley, 1998; Bull, 1993; Donahue, 1999; Freeman, 1998; Lovat, 1998; Nash, 1991; Rogers 8c Webb, 1991; Ungaretti, Dorsey, Freeman & Bologna, 1997). Many of these authors use illustrative examples from their own personal experience as teacher educators, as well as evidence from their empirical studies (Cummings, Dyas, Maddux, &Kochman, 2001). Other sources, as mentioned, connect the moral and ethical nature

of teaching to the teacher's role as a moral educator and the need for teacher education programs to acquaint student teachers with this important responsibility. Such contributions to the literature reflect both theoretical positions (Berkowitz, 1998; SangerOsguthorpe, 2005; Weber, 1998) and the results of empirical studies (Jones et al., 1998; Mathison, 1998). And, some of the articles mentioned above (Berkowitz, 1998; Beyer, 1991, 1997; Donahue, 1999; Joseph, 2003) adopt conceptual frameworks that suggest or support an orientation within teacher education programs towards social justice perspectives.

The field of ethics in teaching as a moral profession is a robust and compelling one. It captures the interest and imagination of scholars, researchers, and practitioners alike because it is so very important and integral to the world of education. It cuts to the core of human relationships, speaks to the dependent vulnerability of students and the professional dedication and dignity of teachers, and rekindles the memories of all of us who ourselves have been students and of many of us who have been teachers. The purpose of this review article has been to explore selected themes that have emerged in the scholarship since its reinvigoration in 1990 that contribute to the discourse around the moral and ethical dimensions of teaching. In reflecting on these themes of the moral nature of teaching, the moral role of teachers, professional ethics of teaching, and the ethical dilemmas in teaching, as well as the associated areas of moral and character education, teacher education, social justice, and educational administration, several questions have occurred that may be put to the field for future contemplation. They are: Some have noted that the shadow of moral relativism negatively dominated much of the scholarship in the late 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s (Clark, 1990; Fenstermacher, 2001; Hunter, 2000; Reitz, 1998; Soltis, 1986; Watras, 1986). Now that it seems to be disappearing, at least insofar as its influence on the primary themes explored in this review, is there greater overall agreement among those of us studying the field about what the moral essence of teaching really is, or not? And, what might this mean for the advancement of a clear professional ethics in teaching? Will schools of teacher education embrace the teaching of applied professional ethics and the moral complexities of the teacher's role and responsibilities as a curricular priority in ways that might have a significant impact on the practitioner field? Will an emphasis on social justice paradigms overwhelm the field of ethics in education in ways that influence not only the scholarship, but also the practice of teaching and teacher education? Will research consider from a variety of perspectives and in a more focused sense the inevitable connection between the moral education of students and the moral accountability of teachers? What can be learned from the ethics literature on teaching to enhance educational administration? Conversely, does the principal leadership and school administration literature have relevance for the professional ethics and moral work of teachers? These questions evidently are not conceptualized as research questions. Rather, they are thoughts about potential areas of exploration for ongoing and future research, emerging from the review done in this paper.

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