



Reflective, ethical, and moral constructs in educational leadership preparation: effects on graduates' practices

Reflective,
ethical, and
moral constructs

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Daisy Arredondo Rucinski

*College of Education, Educational Leadership, Seattle University,
Seattle, Washington, USA, and*

Patricia A. Bauch

*The University of Alabama, Educational Leadership and Policy Studies,
Alabama, USA*

Abstract

Purpose – A 34-item Likert-type survey instrument, The Reflective, Ethical, and Moral Assessment Survey (REMAS), measuring perceptions of use of reflective, ethical and moral dispositions and leadership practices was developed. Items, component factors, and results of the self-assessment of graduates from an educational leadership preparation program in which the reflective, ethical and moral constructs are two of four curricular strands are reported.

Design/methodology/approach – Data from mailed surveys from 106 program graduates and 113 co-workers were compiled and analyzed. Descriptive statistics, factor analysis, and analyses of variance (ANOVA) were used for analyses of program graduate responses on the factor scores based on demographic variables of age, gender, and position, i.e. higher education, p-12, or other.

Findings – Its show differences among the graduates by gender for the defensive behavior factor with males tending to be more defensive than females, and for age on the reflective dimensions factor, with older graduates tending to be more reflective. Data were subjected to factor analysis to confirm that the hypothesized items were measuring predicted constructs. Extraction of principal components, with orthogonal rotation yielded four factors, with approximately 62.3 per cent of the variance explained. Alpha reliabilities ranged from 0.91 on the first factor to a low of 0.71 on the third.

Originality/value – The REMAS instrument is newly developed and fulfills a void in the literature on this topic. Both the literature review and instrument will be useful to universities as changes emphasizing reflective, ethical and moral leadership are made to preparation programs and increased needs for program assessments are articulated.

Keywords Leadership, Ethics, Students, Education, Assessment, Social policy

Paper type Research paper

Introduction

The achievement gap in the USA between African American and white students has placed educational leadership faculty on notice to emphasize pedagogical leadership with a focus on “democratic dialogue” in the preparation of school leaders.

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Democratic dialogue attends specifically to issues of reflection and ethics culminating in action for social justice on behalf of all students. These components work well together in pursuing a value-centered and transformative pedagogical preparation for educational leaders in the context of an increasingly global society (for example, Beck, 1996; Beck and Murphy, 1999; Begley, 1999; Bryk, 2003; Capper, 1993; Jackson, 2001; Lyman and Villani, 2002; McCarthy, 1999; Murphy and Datnow, 2003; Sergiovanni, 1992; and Starratt, 1991, 2003).

In the twenty-first century, characterized by expanding technology, exploding knowledge, accelerating change, growing diversity, and increasing uncertainty (Merseth, 1997, p. 1), there is an emerging consensus among scholars of educational leadership that preparation programs need to prepare students to work effectively as reflective and ethical practitioners within the context of complex social justice issues (Starratt, 2003; Young and Liable, 2000). This perspective is in contrast to Rapp's (2002, p. 226) assertion that "... educational administration and social justice have nothing in common", and with conclusions from a national survey of program faculty and department chairs that for most educational leadership programs, "... the complexity of poverty is a missing or minimal social justice component" (Lyman and Villani, 2002, p. 268). Poverty is generally the culprit in student educational attainment. The achievement gap in the USA will continue to widen unless school administrators take on the new roles of engagement in reflective thinking, ethical and moral behavior, and commitment to social justice actions.

This paper reports results from a survey assessment of graduates from a small educational leadership preparation program in which reflective, ethical, and moral dispositions and practices are major curricular strands. REMAS was developed, field-tested and used for the primary purpose of measuring the extent to which graduates of the leadership preparation program under study perceived that they demonstrate use of reflective, ethical, and moral dispositions and leadership practices within their professional workplaces. These program components increasingly appear among the goals, mission statements, and professional standards of many educational leadership preparation programs today (Murphy and Datnow, 2003).

Our report of this research is organized as follows. First, we review the theoretical literature as a basis for understanding or conceptualizing the practical literature on reflective, ethical, and moral leadership issues present in an increasing number of educational leadership preparation programs. This literature served as the underpinnings for development of the survey instrument used in this study, the REMAS. Second, we describe the institutional setting in which the study occurred. Third, our methods section includes a description of the participants, instrumentation, procedures, data collection and analysis. Lastly, we present a discussion of the results, our conclusions and implications for social justice and for the future development of leadership preparation programs. The results suggest that the reflective, moral and ethical leadership program components incorporated in the REMAS instrument have construct validity and hence may be quite useful to faculty interested in developing and assessing these curricular strands.

Conceptual framework

Analyses of literature describing preparation programs in educational leadership suggest that faculty are increasingly concerned about the place of reflective thinking

and practice, ethical decision-making, and moral character development in their courses (Murphy and Seashore Louis, 1999; Osterman, 1990). The literature base that argues for this inclusion has a long intellectual history. It is worthy of note that the application of reflective thinking in the preparation of teacher educators preceded its use in educational leadership preparation programs, whose primary grounding has been in management and administration. While ethics and moral applications in practice were primarily relegated to professions such as business, law, and medicine, often in the form of courses such as “business ethics,” slowly these applications have found their way into educational leadership programs in the USA. In the overview of literature on reflection and moral and ethical decision making, we describe how the concepts found in the literature served to frame our survey items.

Reflection

Smith (1983, p. 124) defined reflective thought as “an active response to the challenge of the environment”. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, urban universities in the USA, such as Columbia, Johns Hopkins, and the University of Chicago sought to advance knowledge, teaching, and learning by working to improve the quality of life in cities experiencing the effects of industrialization, immigration, and large-scale urbanization (Benson and Harkavy, 1997). John Dewey developed a theory of instrumental intelligence and instrumental education that advanced the notion that engagement in real-world problem solving with intelligent thought and action constituted learning. According to Dewey (1910), authentic learning only occurs when human beings focus their attention, energies, and abilities on solving genuine dilemmas and complexities – and when human beings reflect on their experiences. Intelligence does not develop exclusively as a result of action and experience; it develops as a result of reflection on action and experience (Benson and Harkavy, 1997).

Hence, reflection on one’s action is seen as an important element in learning from experience. Moreover, this seems especially relevant for administrators charged with making decisions in ambiguous, unstable, and unique situations. According to Schön (1984, p. 42), reflection-in-action often takes the form of a reflective conversation with the situation; (it) involves “on-the-spot” surfacing, criticizing, re-structuring and testing of intuitive understandings. The works of Argyris (1982), Argyris (1974), Kolb (1984), Mezirow (1991, 1995) and Schön (1983, 1984, 1987), contribute both theoretical and practical understanding to the notion of learning as reflection in action. Given their particular theoretical focus, taken together, each provides an expanded understanding of reflection on, in and about action.

Argyris’ (1974) theories-in-use and espoused theories distinguished between what we say we want to do versus what it is we actually do in practice. Schön (1984, p. 50) suggested that practitioners be asked reflective, inquiring questions like:

What features do I notice when I recognize this thing? What are the criteria by which I make this judgment? What procedures am I enacting when I perform this skill? How am I framing the problem that I’m trying to solve?

Kolb (1984) differentiated among three categories of learning response to experience: nonlearning, nonreflective learning, and reflective learning. Mezirow (1991, 1995) described the relationship between reflection and action as a complex interactive relationship. He described reflection in itself as a form of action. According to Mezirow,

action is deliberative, intentional, self-critical, and action-oriented. Mezirow argued that reflection on action has a personal transformative effect.

Husserl (1960) suggested that reflection on action comes from the lived experiences of individuals. This means knowing and understanding one's own experiences, as well as the ability to listen to and understand the experiences of others. Reflecting on lived experience goes beyond having the "experience" in itself. Rather, reflecting on experience calls for developing from experience a conceptualization of experience. It also calls for testing this conceptualization through subsequent action to produce additional experience for further reflection. Adapted and departing from emphases on the traditional scientific method with its grounding in objective observation, reflective inquiry places learning in the broader context of the "life-world" of hermeneutic phenomenology of Hans-Georg Gadamer (1993). The phenomenological tradition began with Husserl (1960) who emphasized the role of subjectivity (i.e. feelings, values and beliefs) in the process of knowing. Given the organizing structures of one's consciousness, learning cannot be generalized by experience, only by perceptions about experience. It is this perception as experience that Husserl called the "life-world."

Husserl's writing is relevant here as we are interested in the emphases hermeneutic phenomenology places on understanding the world. From the perspective of hermeneutic phenomenology, learning is an act of interpretation. Through dialogue and communication, the consciousness of one's life-world bumps up against the consciousness of another's life-world. The life-world is made up of what is culturally transmitted and linguistically organized. Through the medium of language people simultaneously use and reproduce their own life-worlds.

Dialogue, as a unit of analysis, has become increasingly important as a method for exploring meaning and for facilitating learning in a number of settings (Arredondo and Rucinski, 1998; Issac, 1993; Schein, 1993). Issac defined dialogue as:

... a discipline of collective thinking and inquiry, a process for transforming the quality of conversation and, in particular, the thinking that lies beneath it (p. 25).

Arredondo conceptualized dialogue as a means through which learning could occur through the interaction of "supportive" and "challenging" responses within the dialogue. Dialogue requires careful, active listening from each party, not thinking about rebuttal but concentrating on what is being said, considering the whole person who is speaking, and being very conscious of one's reactions to what is said. Argyris' (1992) investigation of defensive behaviors usually exhibited during reflective dialogue has enriched our understanding suggesting that defensive behaviors such as denying responsibility, screening out criticisms, rationalizing behaviors, and blaming others, all interfere with the abilities of individuals to fully learn from their experiences.

In describing reflective dialogue, Mezirow (1995, p. 53) explained it as:

... an effort to set aside bias, prejudice, and personal concerns and to do our best to be open and objective in presenting and assessing reasons and reviewing the evidence and argument for and against the... assertion to arrive at a consensus.

This dialogue or discourse, then, is interconnected with critical reflection:

When we critically reflect on assumptions... and arrive at a newly transformed way of knowing, believing, or feeling, we need to validate the assertions we make based upon these transformative insights through this process of discourse.

Altogether, analyses suggest that scholars have come full circle in discussing reflection as a process of critical inquiry to discussing reflection as a process of understanding and making meaning based on one's life-world. Reflection as a process for finding meaning in action to the grounding of reflection in one's own lived experience is key. In conceptualizing how practitioners become skilled, how they learn new theories of action, Schön (1983) argued that through reflection, practitioners use their experiences as a basis for assessing and revising existing theories of action. Lowy *et al.* (1986) found that the most effective leaders were those who valued learning on the job, were open to receiving information from others, and constantly sought ways to improve practice. With this in mind, we examined program effects through the perceptions of program graduates' use of reflective behaviors in the workplace.

For the purposes of this research, then, three pertinent areas of reflective practice were focused upon. These include: planning and receiving critical feedback from others, practice demonstrating the tendency of graduates to construct meanings and explore interpretations in conversation with others, and analyses of graduates' penchant for taking action based on reflection and dialogue. The reflective dimension of the survey (REMAS) incorporated the following concepts:

- Becoming a reflective leader requires the ability to plan, to dialogue with others about one's plans and to invite critical feedback being careful not to become defensive when questioned by others.
- The reflective educator must be able to construct meanings in conversation taking care to ensure that the assumptions underlying the meanings are clear and that various perspectives and interpretations have been understood and taken into account. Such educators should be able to ask questions about their own perspectives as well and to interpret and check interpretations with others.
- Finally, reflection and dialogue need to be followed by action. When educators make decisions or take actions, they must not deny responsibility for those actions, blame others, nor intentionally screen out criticisms. Such defensive behaviors indicate a lack of openness and a lack of desire to reflect on one's own experiences and interpretations and thus to become transformed by one's everyday learning on the job.

Ethical and moral leadership

The educational leadership literature often refers to ethical and moral leadership as if they are synonymous. For a more complete understanding of these concepts, we make a distinction based on the work of Northouse (2004). Briefly, "ethical" leadership is grounded in the concept of duty and personal responsibility, while "moral" leadership implies the development of virtue or moral character. Northouse (2004) conceptualized two domains of ethical leadership theory: theories about leaders' conduct, and theories about leaders' character. Ethical theories are about the actions of leaders and their consequences while ethical leadership is about who such people are as persons. In considering a leader's character, Northouse described such theories as virtue-based theories. From this perspective, virtues are rooted in the hearts of individuals and are manifested as dispositions (Pojman, 1998). It is believed that virtues and moral abilities are not innate, but can be acquired and learned through practice. Educational leaders need to personify appropriate values about what it means to be a moral human being in a school setting. The following section describes the

importance of this distinction and the educational writers who focus on ethical leadership as conduct or duty.

Ethical leadership as conduct or duty. Numerous scholars and researchers describe the contrast between the normative duties and actions of ethical leaders as compared to technical-rational leadership practice. A common stereotype of practicing administrators portrays them as focused on pragmatic and operational matters. From this perspective, there is a tendency for principals to make decisions based on a culture of policy and procedure that characterizes bureaucratic schooling. Increasingly, however, the theoretical and empirical literature suggests the need for educators to regard their professional responsibilities as based on moral and ethical imperatives (Fullan, 1993; Grace, 1995; Hodgkinson, 1991; Sergiovanni, 1992, 1996; Sockett, 1990, 1993; Starratt, 1991; Strike and Ternasky, 1993; West, 1993).

Central to the argument of administrators developing and articulating a greater awareness of the ethical ramifications of their decisions and actions, is the changing definition of what it means to be an educational leader. The move away from bureaucratic management to a more transformational leadership arises from the postmodern understanding of the complexities of schooling and society (Blasé and Anderson, 1995; Burns, 1978; Leithwood *et al.*, 1999). As West, 1993, p. 152 noted, the:

... loss of common purpose and shared values in our society encourages a tendency to turn away from the immeasurable areas which are concerned with values or ethics and to substitute for such considerations a reliance on the apparently neutral language of technical and operative mechanisms.

Educational leadership requires a counter disposition that addresses society's problems from an ethical perspective.

Starratt (1991) developed three fundamental ethical themes referring to conduct – critique, justice, and caring – to describe the day-to-day duties of an ethical educational administrator. In an age of school reform, he argued, administrators have the task or duty of establishing a school environment where the educative function can occur ethically. Hence, the structure, the system, the processes, and the context of the school become the arena in which administrators make ethical decisions. Ethical understandings allow leaders to move away from bureaucratic systems and control, and toward teacher empowerment and participatory decision making. The position taken by Starratt is:

... those educational administrators have a moral responsibility to be proactive about creating an ethical environment for the conduct of education (p. 187).

Following Starratt (1991, 1994), Shapiro and Stefkovich (2003) and her colleague presented a model in which they describe the ethic of justice, the ethic of critique, and the ethic of care. They added a fourth view, the ethic of the profession. The latter refers to codes and standards drawn up by scholarly and professional organizations such as The National Association of Elementary School Principals and The National Association of Secondary School Principals. Shapiro and Stefkovich (2003) viewed "the best interests of the student" as the focus of these ethical perspectives. The work of numerous educational scholars associated with each of these ethical views have further defined and applied the parts of this model to educational leadership, particularly to educational decision making. The three ethical themes they identify can be summarized briefly as follows.

The ethic of justice serves as a foundation for legal principles and ideals, and functions in schools as it does in societies through courts upholding what is considered legal or illegal in a community, including such elements as due process and students and teacher rights. The ethic of justice emanates from two schools of thought, one originating in the seventeenth century including the work of Hobbes and Kant, and more contemporary scholars such as Rawls and Kohlberg; the other rooted in the works of philosophers such as Aristotle, Rousseau, Hegel, Marx, and Dewey (Shapiro and Stefkovich, 2003; Starratt, 1991, 1994). The former considered the rights of the individual as central and taking precedence over the right of the community, while the latter viewed the community as central and sought to teach individuals to discharge their duties within the context of communities.

Contemporary educational writers on ethics, using the foundational principle of the ethic of justice, have had a profound impact on approaches to education and educational leadership (Beauchamp and Childress, 1984; Beck, 1994; Gilligan, 1993; Goodlad, 1990; Kohlberg, 1981; Sergiovanni, 1992; Strike *et al.*, 1998). Using what Kant and Rawls postulated as higher universal principles to guide ethical action, school leaders encompass both understandings of justice as they make decisions with the awareness that school community choices must be balanced with individual choices that are being made in the school every day. In practice, ethical school administrators tend to encourage discussion about school programs, governance, and participatory decision making in a way that benefits both individual and community choices and to make use of group dynamics, conflict resolution, and active listening before decisions are made.

The ethic of critique is aimed at awakening us to the inequities found in schools and in society. It raises questions about laws, the processes used to determine them, and whether they are just. The ethic of critique questions bureaucratic power structures of schools, how individuals are treated, and the inequities that arise from the continued use of a more technical approach to teaching and learning. Scholars and activists writing in this vein (Apple, 1988; Baktin, 1981; Bowles and Gintis, 1988; Foucault, 1983; Freire, 1970; Giroux, 1994; Greene, 1988; Purpel, 1995) raise difficult questions about inconsistencies found in schooling, formulate problems, and raise challenging questions. They ask, "Who makes the law?" "Who benefits from the law?" "Who has the power?" "Whose voices are silenced?" Not only do such questions force us to rethink important concepts such as democracy, they also prompt us to redefine and reframe other concepts such as privilege, power, culture, language, and even justice (Shapiro and Stefkovich, 2003).

The theme of critique forces administrators to confront the moral issues of the day, hard questions dealing with social class, race, gender, sexual orientation, and other areas of difference. Administrators must face tough questions such as how they can justify the way in which schools disproportionately benefit some groups in society and fail others. Given the growing divisions of wealth and power in the US, educational leaders need to become proficient in social analysis and become more knowledgeable about the inequitable distribution of resources both within and among groups in society and in schools. Capper (1993, p. 14), in writing about educational leadership, stressed the need for ethical leaders who are concerned with "freedom, equality, and the principles of a democratic society". She argued:

Grounded in the work of the Frankfurt school, critical theorists in educational administration are ultimately concerned with suffering and oppression, and critically reflect on current and

historical social inequities. They believe in the imperative of leadership and authority and work toward the empowerment and transformation of followers, while grounding decisions in morals and values [...] (p. 15).

School administrators should be able to question what is happening in society and in schools since both are linked; they need to become critical theorists who can help rectify wrongs while identifying key morals and values. Morals and values influence administrative behavior and shape administrative action.

The ethic of care has for its goal the well-being of other persons, particularly their growth and development, needs and aspirations, and spiritual liberation. Caring has to do with relationships and takes place in a community setting:

The communal relationships between people mean that the welfare of each is inextricably related to the welfare of others [...] such that caring for others is, in fact, caring for oneself (Beck, 1994, p. 20).

The ethic of care is related to the ethic of justice in that relationships arise out of a sense of absolute positive regard for another, not as a contractual obligation. Starratt (1991) argued that the ethic of care is altruistic. It requires the leader to hold up each person as having value, dignity, and worth, qualities that are inherent in the nature of what it means to be a human being, and as such to consider that relationship as sacred.

Gilligan (1993) offered a new definition of justice in the resolution of moral dilemmas which was different from Kohlberg's (1981). In her research, similar to that of Kohlberg, but conducted with women and girls rather than males, she found that, unlike Kohlberg's males who adopted rights and laws for the resolution of moral issues, women and girls frequently resorted to care, concern, and connection, in finding solutions to moral dilemmas. Noddings (2002) advanced Gilligan's research resulting in the concept of an "ethic of care." Thus, care theory is not a variety of ethical behavior, although it shares important characteristics with that tradition, but it is relationship rather than agent-centered. As such, it is more concerned with the caring relation than with caring as a virtue.

We argue that educational leaders today need to be committed to an ethic of care grounded in the belief that the integrity of human relationships should be held sacred and that the school as an organization should hold the good of human beings within it as sacred. Often school purposes such as the efficiency and productivity associated with an increase in standardized test scores and the lowering of per-pupil costs supercede caring by viewing persons as "means to other ends" instead of the ethical Kantian notion of viewing them as "ends in themselves." An ethic of care, rather than business or military models, can be used to resolve dilemmas. This means less frequent use of bureaucratic decision making and increased use of more participatory models, listening to multiple voices, listening to the silences, promoting interpersonal interactions, facilitating a sense of belonging, and teaching people to learn from one another. According to Starratt (1991), this ethic of care provides an alternative way for administrators to respond to complex moral problems facing schools by showing a concern for others as a part of decision processes.

Ethical leadership as character development. In addition to viewing ethical leadership as conduct or duty as described above, Northouse's second theoretical ethical domain focuses on character as based in moral virtues. The writings of

Aristotle present a view of a moral person as demonstrating the virtues of courage, temperance, generosity, self-control, honesty, sociability, modesty, fairness, and justice (Velasquez, 1992). In writing about business ethics, Velasquez argued that managers should develop virtues such as perseverance, public-spiritedness, integrity, truthfulness, fidelity, benevolence, and humility.

Northhouse (2004) developed three virtue-based perspectives of educational leadership supported by the work of Burns (1978), Greenleaf (1970, 1977) and Heifetz (1994). Briefly, Heifetz formulated an approach to ethical leadership that emphasizes how leaders help followers to confront conflict and to effect changes from conflict. For Heifetz, this perspective is related to ethical leadership because it involves values – the values of workers, and the values of the organizations and communities in which they work. According to Heifetz (1994), leaders must use authority to mobilize people to face tough situations. The leader does this by providing trust, nurturance, and empathy in a supportive environment so workers can feel safe to confront and deal with hard problems. The duties of the leader are to assist the followers in struggling with change and personal growth. Leaders cannot do this unless they are grounded in their own values and have confidence in their own self-knowledge and ability to change and grow.

In designing the ethical and moral leadership dimensions for the REMAS, we viewed workplace decisions as having both ethical and moral components. In asking about ethical components we focused on “right and wrong” actions or decisions and by asking who will be advantaged or disadvantaged by the results or effects of decisions made or actions taken. Similarly, in developing the moral components, we asked about the presence of moral dimensions in making decisions, particularly whether graduates perceive that they exhibit moral character in the workplace through the practice of specific virtues. Thus, the survey items incorporated the following concepts:

- The tendency to examine the action to be taken or decision being contemplated as having ethical dimensions. For example, asking, “Is this an ethical action? Is this decision right or wrong?”
- Examining the effects of these actions and decisions on employees, future practice, policy, customers, disadvantaged groups, and on society in general. For example, “What is the likely effect on fellow employees? What is the likely effect on future practice?”
- Examining the motivation or prioritization among competing goods; that is, the needs of employees, society, marginalized groups, clients or customers, policy and future practice; as well as examining the perspectives of professional codes of ethics, of justice, and of care. For example, asking, “Do the needs of the marginalized or disadvantaged rate more highly than those of policy, future practice, or society in general?”
- Examining moral character in the workplace through the practice of moral virtues such as sensitivity, courage, and persistence.

Methodology

Setting

Participants in the study were graduates of a leadership preparation program offered at the doctoral (Ed.D.) level at a small, private, northwestern university. The program

was first conceptualized and implemented in the late 1970s, with the first cohort of students earning doctoral degrees in 1979. The cohort program currently[1] admits 15-20 students annually; and in its more than twenty five year history, approximately 500 students have graduated, or about 85 per cent of those enrolled. By design, the leadership preparation program brings faculty and students from different professional and social backgrounds together in interdisciplinary study for the purpose of preparing ethical and reflective professionals who can provide socially just leadership and service to members of diverse communities.

Reflective practice and ethical and moral leadership constitute two of four interdisciplinary curricular strands[2] woven throughout the three-year curricula. Program faculty believe that the development of knowledge and skills for reflective, ethical, and moral leadership practices involves a number of strategies including written reflective journals and essays, reflective dialogue, continuous reflection on behaviors and actions, relevant readings, projects and field activities designed to increase awareness of learning from practice. Faculty members also design and use complex cases and problem solving exercises to provide learning opportunities that focus on competing perspectives, values, and making decisions among equally fair and opposing “goods” (Begley, 1999; Capper, 1993; Murphy, 1998; Shapiro and Stefkovich, 2003).

Participants

The REMAS was mailed to all program graduates across the 25-year span, of which 462 were still living. Of these 462 individuals, 105 or 22.7 percent returned surveys. As indicated in Table I, approximately 47 per cent percent of the respondents ($n = 50$) were P-12 educators, 31 per cent ($n = 32$) were employed in higher education, and 22 per cent ($n = 23$) held other leadership roles such as in education-related agencies or positions in business, health, religious, government, or nonprofit organizations. Of the total sample, 77.9 per cent ($n = 82$) are currently employed and 22.1 per cent ($n = 23$) reported that they were retired. Respondents were somewhat older than the overall population sampled. Eighteen percent ($n = 19$) of the respondents were below 50 years of age, 53 per cent ($n = 56$) between 50 and 59 years, and 30 per cent ($n = 31$) between

	Frequency	Percentage
<i>Respondents</i>		
Selected (grads)	105	100.0
<i>Gender</i>		
Female	69	66.7
Male	36	33.3
<i>Position</i>		
K-12	50	47.4
Higher education	32	30.8
Other *	23	21.8
<i>Age</i>		
Less than 50	19	18.1
51-59	56	53.3
60-70	31	29.5

Table I.
Characteristics of
program graduates
(frequency and
percentage distribution)

Note: *Includes: business, health, government, nonprofit, and religious leaders

60 and 70 years of age. Only one respondent (0.009 per cent) did not report age. Sixty-seven percent ($n = 69$) are female and 33.3 percent ($n = 36$) are male. The sample is overwhelming white (approximately 93 per cent). These data correspond to the overall characteristics of the sampled population with the exception of age, as noted above.

Instrumentation

Participants were asked to respond to 34 items using a six-point Likert-type scale with scores ranging from 1 = "not at all" to 6 = "often." These survey items were constructed by the researchers based on extensive literature reviews of reflective thinking, ethical behavior, and moral intentions and behavior, as described above. The program graduates were asked to indicate the frequency with which they perceived that they engaged in each activity on a regular, everyday basis. Specific areas included: the frequency with which graduates reviewed actions, invited feedback, responded to feedback, constructed meanings with others, questioned their own and others' assumptions and perspectives, interpreted and checked others' interpretations, planned actions and checked plans with others, as well as, the levels of reflection and degrees of defensiveness with which graduates were regularly engaged. Ten of the survey items focused on the specific components of reflection, while five items focused on "defensive" behaviors of graduates. These five items were negative actions (e.g. rationalize behaviors, blame others, deny responsibility) so ratings on these were reversed in the scoring process.

The remaining survey items asked graduates to report their perceptions of the frequency with which they viewed ethical and moral issues as dimensions of decisions and actions, about the results of their actions and decisions, their prioritization of ethical considerations, and whether their behavior included moral intentions and results in actions and decisions when they were faced with competing goods. For example, 13 items asked graduates to rate the frequency with which they asked, "Is this an ethical (or moral) action or decision?" and, "What is the likely result of this action or decision on fellow employees, on future practice, on policy, on clients or customers, on society in general, on marginalized or disadvantaged groups?" Six items asked about the frequency with which each of these groups were rated higher than the remaining ones. For example, "From the perspective of your professional code of ethics, do you rate the needs of employees first and above future practice, policy, clients or customers, society in general, or persons from disadvantaged or marginalized groups?" This idea was developed into six items each with one of the choices first and the others following, specifically designed to assess graduates' awareness of and thinking about each of the four ethics described above (i.e. justice, care, critique and professional codes). Five items asked about moral or ethical motivation, character, or perspective, with "moral" being further defined as "demonstrating sensitivity, courage, persistence, and implementing behaviors." Table II shows the items on the survey used to determine reflective, ethical, and moral behavior.

Procedures

The test-retest reliability of the survey items and internal consistency were investigated using a pilot-test and by calculating Cronbach's α tests on the results. First, the REMAS was administered once to 47 students in the current cohorts of the

Table II.
Factors, survey items,
factor loadings,
descriptive statistics, and
reliabilities for variable
scales (N = 168)

Variable name	Variable description and survey items loading on the factor	Factor loadings	Range	Mean	SD
ETHMORDM	Ethical/moral dimensions of actions and decisions, survey item stem: "how frequently do you...?" *Ask: Is this an ethical decision? *Examine decisions from an ethical moral perspective? *Ask: is this a moral action? *Ask: is this decision right or wrong? * Exhibit moral or ethical motivation in the work place (i.e. prioritize moral or ethical values relative to other values) *View workplace decisions and actions as having moral and ethical dimensions? *Exhibit moral or ethical character in the workplace (i.e. demonstrate sensitivity, courage, persistence and implementation behaviors)? * Ask: what is the likely result of this action on fellow employees? * Ask: what is the likely result on marginalized or disadvantaged groups? * Ask: what is the likely result on future practice? * Ask: what is the likely result on clients or customers?	0.828 0.823 0.809 0.777 0.773 0.737 0.711 0.649 0.593 0.574 0.565 0.91	3.00-6.00 3.00-6.00 2.00-6.00 2.00-6.00 2.00-6.00 3.00-6.00 3.00-6.00 3.00-6.00 1.00-6.00 3.00-6.00 2.00-6.00 1.00-6.00	5.07 5.26 4.79 5.29 5.01 5.21 5.27 5.16 4.84 5.13 5.35 5.12	0.94 0.89 1.12 0.88 0.96 0.83 0.74 0.80 1.11 0.80 0.84 0.90
Total scale	$\alpha =$	0.773	2.00-6.00	4.88	0.99
REFLDMS	Reflective dimensions * Ask questions about your own perspectives? * Review actions in conversations? * Ask questions about assumptions underlying actions? * Interpret and check interpretations of others? * Ask questions about perspectives of others? * Invite feedback from others? * Respond to feedback from others with clarifying questions or paraphrased statements? * Describe plans and check plans with others? * Plan actions?	0.771 0.743 0.714 0.707 0.699 0.641 0.641 0.635	2.00-6.00 2.00-6.00 2.00-6.00 2.00-6.00 3.00-6.00 2.00-6.00 2.00-6.00 3.00-6.00	5.02 4.86 4.70 5.03 4.93 4.79 5.06 5.37	0.93 0.97 0.90 0.84 0.92 0.85 0.88 0.72

(continued)

Variable name	Variable description and survey items loading on the factor	Factor loadings	Range	Mean	SD
Total scale DEFENBEH	*Construct meaning in conversations? $\alpha =$	0.631.89	2.00-6.00	4.644.93	1.06.91
	*Rationalize behaviors, e.g. "I only did that because ..."? *Intentionally screen out criticisms, e.g. use expressions like, "I don't remember saying that ..."? *Become defensive when questioned by others? *Blame actions or decisions on others, e.g. I could not do that because policy/past practice/forbid it ..."? *Deny responsibility for decisions you make ...?	0.824 0.822 0.747	2.00-6.00 1.00-6.00 1.00-6.00	4.78 5.00 4.31	0.82 0.85 0.84
Total scale ETHPRIOR	$\alpha =$ Consider results on ethical priorities in society *Society first *Disadvantaged first *Clients first	0.705 0.692 0.71	1.00-6.00 1.00-6.00 1.00-6.00	5.07 5.23 4.87	0.92 0.92 0.87
Total scale	$\alpha =$	0.774 0.745 0.702	1.00-6.00 1.00-6.00 1.00-6.00	3.37 3.71 4.27	1.28 1.19 1.38
		0.72	1.00-6.00	3.78	1.28

Table II.

program (33 female and 14 male) with a mean age of 53.6 years. Pearson correlations between the group's scores obtained on the pilot administration and the first round of survey results with the program graduates were calculated. No statistically significant differences were found between the two group's scores. Prior to the second data collection, minor changes in wording were made to two or three items in the REMAS based on participant feedback from the field test. To investigate the internal consistency for the identified factors, Cronbach's α tests were conducted on the related items. (Results are presented in Table II and are discussed in the results section of this paper).

As noted, the REMAS instrument was administered as a mailed survey to all program graduates for the past 20 years; a postage paid response envelope was included. The survey directions instructed participants to complete the alumni survey and return it to the program office. A follow-up reminder postcard was mailed out after the first two weeks, and a new survey packet was mailed on two separate occasions during the subsequent eight months. The follow-up survey packets contained a letter encouraging participants to respond and asking them to do so unless they had responded previously. This procedure yielded a total of 106 useable surveys from program graduates for an overall alumni response rate of 22.9 per cent. While we were disappointed with this relatively low response rate, we believe the data analyzed for this report present worthwhile information, and that the literature reviews, survey instrument and findings will be useful to other institutions interested in developing or assessing reflective, ethical and moral components in educational leadership programs. (A co-worker form of the survey was also collected in an attempt to ascertain differences between graduates' perceptions and those of their co-workers. However, due to the low return rate, 8.9 per cent, for the co-worker survey, we do not report the data here. The responses were, however, used in the factor analysis to determine construct validity for the survey items. Copies of both survey forms are available from the co-authors.)

Data analysis

The REMAS data were analyzed using factor analysis, descriptive statistics, correlations, and analyses of variance. ANOVA was used for the purpose of comparing program graduate responses on the REMAS based on demographic variables of age, gender, and job position. For these latter analyses, the REMAS data, based on perceptions of frequency of reflection and ethical and moral actions were treated as interval data. The survey data were subjected to factor analysis to confirm that researcher hypothesized survey items actually measured the constructs we believed they were measuring. As noted above, for this analysis, the survey responses gathered from 106 graduates were combined with responses from 113 co-workers of graduates, responding to a co-worker version of the survey.

Results

Principal component analysis with varimax rotation was conducted to assess the underlying factors of the REMAS. A loading value of 1.0 was used as the cut-off point to determine the factors. The results revealed four underlying factors. The first, "Ethical, Moral Dimensions" (ETHMORDM) was generated from 11 survey items, which predominantly required consideration of external results of actions, or ethical and moral

considerations. (Table II for the survey items for each factor). The second, “Reflective Dimensions” (REFLDMS) was generated from 10 survey items that required predominantly internal considerations rather than results of actions. The third, generated from five survey items representing “Defensive Behaviors” (DEFENBEH), required predominantly non-reflective responses. The fourth (ETHPRIOR), was generated from three survey items and represents prioritization of the effects of actions and decisions on society, on the disadvantaged members, or on clients. Cronbach’s α coefficients indicated moderately strong internal consistency for the overall scale (Cronbach’s $\alpha = 0.72$) and very strong for the ETHMORDM (Cronbach’s $\alpha = 0.91$) and the REFLDMS (Cronbach’s $\alpha = 0.89$); the DEFENBEH Cronbach’s α was 0.71 and the ETHPRIOR Cronbach’s α was 0.72. Table II displays the factor loadings, variable components, and descriptive statistics for these four factors.

Pearson correlations were calculated to assess criteria-related validity between the four subscales, Factor 1 (ETHMORDM), Factor 2 (REFLDMS), Factor 3 (DEFENBEH), and Factor 4 (ETHPRIOR), and the category variables of gender, age and role or position (i.e. higher education, public school, or other). Several significant correlations (i.e. $p = 0.01$ and $p = 0.05$) were found. (These results are presented in Table III). For example, reflective dimensions (REFLDMS) and ethical moral dimensions (ETHMORDM) at 0.539 ($p = 0.01$), defensive behaviors (DEFENBEH) and ETHMORDM at 0.355 ($p = 0.01$), with DEFENBEH and REFLDMS at 0.240 ($p = 0.05$), ethical priorities (ETHPRIOR) and ETHMORDM at 0.405 ($p = 0.01$), and ETHPRIOR and REFLDMS at 0.296 ($p = 0.01$). The expected negative correlation -0.303 between age and REFLDMS was significant at the 0.05 level, as was gender and DEFENBEH at 0.247. No significant correlations were found between any of the factors and graduates’ role or position.

Graduates of this doctoral program in educational leadership perceive that they frequently consider ethical and moral issue in decisions and actions in their practice. For example, respondents rated these components (ETHMORDM) quite high, the item means range from 4.79 to 5.35 (grand mean = 5.12) on a 6-point scale (Data are presented in Table II). For the reflective variable (REFLDMS) respondents rated the items a bit lower but still quite high with item means ranging from 4.64 to 5.37 (grand mean = 4.93). The defensive behavior variable (DEFENBEH) range (4.31-5.23), on the other hand was a bit lower by respondents, with a grand mean = 4.87, while the ethical priority variable (ETHPRIOR), a still lower item mean range (3.37-4.27, grand mean = 3.78) was found. Of interest to us, was the graduates’ perception that they

Factors:	ETHMORDM	REFLDMS	DEFENBEH	ETHPRIOR	Age	Gender	Position
ETHMORDM	1						
REFLDMS	0.539**	1					
DEFENBEH	0.355**	0.240*	1				
ETHPRIOR	0.405**	0.296**	0.127	1			
Age	0.025	-0.303*	-0.026	0.158	1		
Gender	0.039	0.067	0.247*	0.000	-0.124	1	
Position	-0.108	-0.165	0.056	0.090	0.105	-0.115	1

Notes: * $p = 0.05$; ** $p = 0.01$

Table III.
Pearson correlations
among four factor
variables: ETHMODM,
REFLDMS, DEFENBEH,
and ETHPRIOR and
demographic variables:
age, gender, and position
($N = 104$)

considered ethical and moral dimensions in their actions and decisions at a high rate of frequency (5.12) when compared to perceptions that they did not as frequently (3.78) prioritize the effects of their decisions and actions on society, on disadvantaged populations, or on clients. We interpret the ratings on these items to mean that the more easily recognized components of the reflection process and the ethical and moral leadership components, important strands of the curriculum since program inception, have been learned at a highly effective level and that graduates perceive that these components have been successfully transferred into their professional practices. This is consistent with feedback from program graduates collected on an annual basis.

And as noted, the data presented in Table II indicate that program graduates were slightly less likely to have mastered control of their defensive behaviors (DEFENBEH) yet the overall rating of this component (grand mean = 4.87) was still relatively high when compared to that (3.78) for ethical priorities (ETHPRIOR). The ethical priority items asked about the frequency with which graduates perceived that they prioritized the needs of subgroups, such as disadvantaged or marginalized clients, in their consideration of the effects of their actions or decisions. Responses on these items ranged from a low of 3.37 (the frequency with which they considered the needs of society first and above employees, clients, etc.) to a high of 4.28 (the frequency with which they considered the needs of clients first and above all others, etc.). These items were also the most complex ones on the survey, which may have been a factor in the number (approximately 10 per cent) of respondents who omitted them. In addition to this complexity, some researchers (Arredondo Rucinski, 2005; King and Kitchener, 1994) have argued that thinking about the effects of one's actions or decisions on the needs of disadvantaged and marginalized others requires a different level of reflection, and one that is usually not well developed until later in life, if at all. We would also note, however, that these items reflect a relatively newer emphasis within the program on the effects of leaders' actions on others, especially those often marginalized or disenfranchised, and that this emphasis may have been accepted and internalized less well.

Analyses of variance tests (ANOVA) indicated that differences existed between females and males for the defensive behaviors (DEFENBEH) variable, $F(1, 78) = 4.829$, $p = 0.031$. The gender differences are consistent with predictions based on the literature review (Gilligan, 1993; Tannen, 1994; Lakoff, 2001) that support the idea that females may be less defensive than their male colleagues when questioned by others. Age differences were found on the reflective dimensions (REFLDMS) variable, although at a lower significance level $F(2, 68) = 3.302$, $p = 0.043$. This was also expected based on the literature review. For example, Rest and Navarez (1994), Kohlberg (1981) and King and Kitchener (1994) have argued that older adults may be somewhat more likely to be reflective about their practices than are younger colleagues. No significant differences, $p > 0.05$, were found between graduates representing the three different job role categories, i.e. higher education, public school, or other, for any of the four factor variables.

Discussion

Osterman (1990) and Osterman and Kottcamp (2004) have emphasized the importance of reflection in professional development. Osterman and colleagues connect reflection with experiential learning theory and address the need for open communication,

empathy, and collaboration. As they pointed out, neither higher education nor school workplaces are currently conducive to this type of learning as both often are mired in a traditional management style that places emphasis on:

... highly centralized decision-making processes and predominantly vertical patterns of communication which restrict both the quality and quantity of information distributed throughout the organization (p. 149).

Critical reflection, experiential learning, and personal agency appear to challenge this traditional approach. Today, more attention is being given to reflection as a means for improving professional practice (Arredondo Rucinski, 2005; Arredondo and Rucinski, 1998; Kaufman, 2004). Additionally, reflection on action is seen as a mechanism for school reform (Beas *et al.*, 2004; Carr, 2004; Delany and Arredondo, 2001; Pearce, 1995).

Educational leadership programs across the nation are beginning to include reflective practice in their curricula. To date, however, few instruments have been developed to assess these curricula. While the data reported here are self-assessments based on individuals' self-perceptions, an assessment design was developed based on both these self-perceptions and on co-worker perceptions of program graduates' behavior. Two versions of this survey have been developed and field-tested and are available from the authors. This paper reports on the development and use of this apparently reliable instrument and the authors suggest that other programs could use it to assess reflective strands in their curricula. This instrument has the potential to contribute to educational leaders' knowledge and learning, and hence to the improvement of educational practices in schools.

Further, by using the components of reflection drawn from the literature review as "standards for reflective practice" program faculty can develop teaching methods for helping their students become competent reflective practitioners. For example, students enrolled in this leadership program experience a battery of assessments early on for indications of styles of learning and leadership, and to assess their dispositions to think about equity and social justice. To illustrate, one course goal involves completing a social justice project based on the concept of a small win (Weick, 1984). This year-long project assignment is designed to bring students to a higher degree of understanding and willingness to take personal action on social justice issues. Another course goal focuses on ethical attitudes. Here, students collaboratively develop solutions to cases and problems. By doing so, they consider new values or reinforce old ones through a conscious, rational process of thinking about the sources, implications, effects, and relationships of their values and beliefs to those of others in society, and to the relationships that students wish to develop.

Faculty in the educational leadership program studied and colleagues in other universities are planning administrations of the survey with doctoral program students and graduates, as well as with entering educational leadership students. The curricula and instructional strategies used in the program studied to develop reflective thinking dispositions are being revised as a result of analyzing and incorporating the results of this assessment with this and the co-worker survey. Our analyses suggest that while there are needs for program refinement, experiences in our program enable students to reflect on their own decisions and actions in ways that may allow consideration of the well-being of clients, employees, policy, practice, and of marginalized and disenfranchised populations within what often are undemocratic

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schools and organizations. Curricular strands focused on reflective practice, ethical and moral beliefs and actions are perceived by program graduates as effective for enabling them to pursue and realize social justice and democratic outcomes. Study data reinforce these perceptions by showing that graduates report frequent use of the reflective skills learned in the program. Until programs in educational leadership systematically study and report the effects of such curriculum changes, the outcomes of making the profound shift from provided knowledge to training graduates to construct meaning through reflection, experience, and personal agency, may yield consequences that are poorly understood.

Notes

1. Earlier cohorts included more students than the current ones.
2. Interdisciplinary strands include: ethical, reflective, and professional leadership effective for diverse communities and an interdependent world.

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Corresponding author

Daisy Arredondo Rucinski can be contacted at: darredo@seattleu.edu

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