1

Analysis of Barriers to Effective Moral Decision Making*

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Abstract

This assessment is used in a class titled Ethical Leadership as part of a graduate level principal preparation program. The assessment has been approved by NCATE as meeting all of the stipulated ELCC standards for which it is designed (ELCC 5.1, 5.1. & 5.3). The assignment has two sections. In the first section candidates are asked to interview people in the field about a difficult decision or dilemma they had to deal with and analyze the responses. In the second section candidates interview each other about moral failures they have experienced in their own decision making and analyze the responses through the lens of two key concepts taught in class: schema theory and a moral decision-making model.



NOTE: This module has been peer-reviewed, accepted, and sanctioned by the National Council of Professors of Educational Administration (NCPEA) as a significant contribution to the scholarship and practice of education administration. In addition to publication in the Connexions Content Commons, this module is published in the International Journal of Educational Leadership Preparation, ¹ Volume 4, Number 2 (April - June, 2009). Formatted and edited by Theodore Creighton, Virginia Tech.

1 Directions to Candidates

1.1 Part 1

Interview 3 people from the field of educational leadership to talk about a difficult professional decision they have faced and document their responses to the following semi-structured protocol:

Explain that all personal identifying information will be held confidentially (ELCC 5.1) and that if at any time they would like to stop the interview or ask you to not use any part of their response that you will stop the interview and delete from your records their response in accordance with their request. Their name

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should be changed before the work is turned in to me or shared with the class. Demographic information you should collect is their age, gender, and level of education.

- Describe a difficult decision or dilemma you have had to deal with (note to interviewer: there is no need to preface this question as an inquiry into ethical dilemmas most difficult decisions have an ethical component to them that will come out later in the interview).
- When and how did you know you would have to make a choice?
- What options did you consider?
- How did you choose which was the best course of action among the possible choices?
- Was it difficult to follow through with your choice? If so what were the factors that made it difficult for you – both internal and external forces?
- Did you modify your choice once you were faced with actually implementing it? If so, how and why?

When you have completed all three interviews prepare a report that first documents the interview transcript and then provides a 2-3 page report of commonalities or stark differences you found in your interviews.

What do you see as the primary socio-cultural and cognitive barriers the subject wrestled with to resolve their dilemma?

1.2 Part 2

In class the candidates will interview each other in small groups using the following interview questions:

- Think of a difficult decision you made that you would change if you had to make it again A moral failure where some part of you (if even a small part) knew the right path but you made another choice.
- How did you eventually resolve the dilemma?
- What were the pressures and considerations that influenced your choice (e.g., social, cultural, cognitive).
- Do you think you are susceptible to a similar failure now? Why or why not?
- What strategies can you employ to be more aware of your barriers and effectively overcome them in the future?

The interviewer will take detailed notes and after each interview is complete the listeners and interviewer will discuss a schema analysis and decision-making model analysis of the candidate's responses. For a detailed description of schema theory and how it is taught in a graduate school ethics curriculum see Pijanowski (2009) and Rest, Narvaez, Bebeau, & Thoma (1999). For a detailed description of the decision-making model see Pijanowski (2009, p. 6). The interviewers will demonstrate impartiality, sensitivity to student diversity, and ethical considerations throughout the interview and analysis process. (ELCC 5.2). There will be time for two rounds so each candidate will be interviewed twice (discussing two different integrity failures)

For part 2 the candidate will write an analysis of their own social, cultural and cognitive barriers to processing moral dilemmas effectively. Students should take each component of moral decision making and schema models into account. The peer analysis is to be used as information for the candidate's analysis but does not need to be reported for the assignment. The candidate's reflection and analysis should also be informed by their interviews in part 1. Compare and contrast the barriers and strategies for making decisions based upon ethical principles. (ELCC 5.3)

EDLE 5043 Leadership Ethics – Ethical Barriers Analysis #1(to be placed under NCATE Assessment #6)

continued on next page

Category	Criterion	1. Does not meet standard	3. Meets standard	5. Exceeds stan- dard
Synthesis	Drew conclusions that were supported by the case study	There is no indication the student tried to synthesize the information or make a conclusion based on the interviews. Insights into the issues and their application to the problem are absent.	The student provides concluding remarks that show an analysis and synthesis of ideas occurred. Some of the conclusions, however, were not supported in the body of the report. Insights into the key issues and their application to the problem are absent or insufficient.	The student was able to make succinct and precise conclusions based on the interviews. Insights into the key issues and their application to the problem are appropriate. Conclusions are strongly supported.
Community interviews (ELCC 5.1, SPM 3,6)	Acts with integrity	Showed disrespect for the rights of others, broke confidentiality, and/or undermined the dignity of others. Failed to interact honestly with others. (ELCC 5.1a)	Demonstrated a respect for the rights of others with regard to confidentiality and dignity and engaged in honest interactions. (ELCC 5.1a)	Demonstrated empathy in interactions with others. Provided leadership in facilitating a respectful dialogue. (ELCC 5.1a)Demonstrated consistency between moral reasoning and moral action.

Barriers analysis (ELCC 5.3, SPM 2, 4, 6) Candidate filters moral stimulus information on the basis of its effects on matters of personal interest. Demonstrated approach to moral decision making. Candidate does not make and explains decisions based upon ethical principles (ELCC 5.3a). Candidate filters moral stimulus information on the basis of its effects on matters of personal interest. Demonstrated approach to moral dilemmas and known others. Begins to discern the advantages of role systems and established practices. Candidate uses a post-conventional date makes and explains decisions based upon ethical principles (ELCC 5.3a).	Peer interviews (ELCC 5.2, SPM 3,6)	Acts fairly	Approached relationships and dilemmas exclusively from a position of personal interest and demonstrated favoritism and/or a lack of sensitivity to diversity (ELCC 5.2a).	Demonstrated the ability to combine impartiality, sensitivity to diversity, and ethical considerations in their interactions with others (ELCC 5.2a).	Demonstrated leadership in brokering fair relationships among others and with others. Exemplified a perspective taking approach that attempted to achieve mutual gain negotiation of conflict. (ELCC 5.2a).
	sis(ELCC 5.3,	Acts ethically	moral stimulus information on the basis of its effects on matters of personal interest. Demonstrates little if any sociocentric perspective on moral decision making. Candidate does not make and explains decisions based upon ethical principles (ELCC	ability to take into account the welfare of unknown others. Begins to discern the advantages of role systems and established practices. Candidate makes and explains decisions based upon ethical principles (ELCC	post conventional approach to moral dilemmas and primacy of moral criteria in making decisions about social cooperation. Candidate uses a post-conventional approach to make and explain decisions based upon ethical principles

Writing	Wrote the review with clarity and sound technique	It is hard to know what the writer is trying to express. Writing is convoluted. Misspelled words, incorrect grammar, and improper punctuation are evident	Writing is generally clear, but unnecessary words are occasionally used. Meaning is sometimes hidden. Paragraph or sentence structure is too repetitive	Writing is crisp, clear, and succinct. The writer incorporates the active voice when appropriate
APA Format	References are used appropriately and in proper APA format	Citations for statements included in the report were not present, or references which were included were not found in the text	Citations within the body of the report and a corresponding reference list were presented. Some formatting problems exist, or components were missing	All needed citations were included in the report. References matched the citations, and all were encoded in APA format

Table 1

2 References

Pijanowski, J. C., (2009). The Role of Learning Theory in Building Effective College Ethics Curricula. *Journal of College and Character.* 10 (3).

Rest, J., Narvaez, D., Bebeau, M. & Thoma, S. (1999). A Neo-Kohlbergian approach: The DIT and schema theory. *Educational Psychology Review*, 11 (4), 291-324.