Chapter 1

Ethics in Higher Education Leadership: Current Themes and Trends

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ABSTRACT

Universities have been around for a very long time and operated in very similar ways for hundreds of years, but they are not immune to the disruption of the 21st century. In resonance with the surrounding environment, institutions of higher education are in a state of change and having to respond to the globalization, unstable economies, and to the changing expectations of society. In what is sometimes referred to as the most tumultuous time of change in higher education, leaders are faced with the challenge of frequent and complex decision making, and oftentimes implicit ethical challenges. As higher education is thrown into upheaval, and corruption in higher education comes to the limelight, it is an opportune time to take stock of the ethical status of higher education leadership by identifying emerging themes in relation to ethics, as a platform for encouraging deeper consideration of ethics in higher education leadership.

INTRODUCTION

Leadership is fundamental to the success of organizations. Leadership is not easy. The great volumes of literature around leadership attest to the difficulties and complexities of leadership. To complicate matters further, the present time, as is often acknowledged in literature, is tumultuous, bordering on chaotic. As Peter Drucker (2012) observes, 21st century organizations, as a result of globalization and technological revolutions, are on a “threshold of chaos”. If organizations are to persist at this time then there is urgent need for leadership capabilities to support innovation, and agile strategic decision making.

DOI: 10.4018/978-1-7998-4141-8.ch001

“Leadership must be exercised in a fair and just manner mindful of the human dignity, the environment and rights of others that may be affected” (Pityana, 2017).

Leadership is inextricably bound to ethics. Most everything a leader does has a moral component – relationships with others, decision-making, exerting influence on followers, etc (Eubanks, Brown, & Ybema, 2012). Leaders, intentionally or unintentionally will engage in unethical as well as ethical behaviours (Eubanks, Brown, & Ybema, 2012), (Eubanks & Mumford, 2010). But there is yet much to learn about how leaders behave and how they construe ethics in relation to behaviour. Thiel, Bagdasarov, Harkrider, Johnson, and Mumford (2012) strongly argue for the need to better understand how leaders construct ethical behaviour, particularly in the context of their organizations and the surrounding complex environment. There is substantial evidence to suggest that ethical leadership is closely linked to positive employee outcomes in terms of well-being and job satisfaction Avey et al. (2012)

It is against the above described background that the issues of ethics in higher education leadership are considered. The enormous challenges faced by higher education at the present time are well-acknowledged in literature (Kisner & Hill, 2011). Higher education institutions are exposed to unprecedented social and economic forces never before experienced. Subjected to these forces, universities are compelled to change; change that is not merely surface but deep-rooted change, which inevitably forces examination of core values and brings to the fore the issue of ethics in higher education leadership.

Mervyn Frost (2016) argues that higher education plays a central ethical role in societies with respect to the advancement of knowledge. The “ethical duty of universities” upholds Frost (2016), “is to question truth claims, to seek explanations, to find good understandings, and not to propound one or another doctrine without question”. Unethical behaviours in higher education undermine the ethical values that are indispensable to the very reason for the existence of higher education – the pursuit and production of knowledge (Frost, 2016). Furthermore, because the business of higher education is knowledge production, universities exert substantial influence over society at large and therefore the ethical character of universities ultimately influences the ethical character of society at large.

There are thus two tenets underpinning the present chapter. Firstly, the key mission of higher education is knowledge production and ethics is integral to this mission. Secondly, the increasingly complex nature of the social and economic fabric within higher education are embedded is disrupting higher education in a manner which is challenging traditional values of universities. Thus, in the present chapter the authors aim to ‘take stock’ of the state of ethics in higher education leadership by identifying emerging themes in relation to ethics in higher education leadership, as a platform for encouraging further discussion and development. The key question addressed is: What are the emerging ethical issues with which leaders in higher education must contend? To gain insight into the present state of ethical issues facing leaders in higher education, the author turns to Australian edition of *The Conversation* (<https://theconversation.com/au>). *The Conversation* is an independent online platform for academic commentary and/or debate about current issues. A search of *The Conversation* (<https://theconversation.com/au>) using keywords Higher Education /University/ethics/morals yielded a number of key themes in the ethical landscape of higher education.

Many of the ethical challenges faced by leaders in higher education are connected to positioning universities as a business. Hence, the chapter begins with a discussion of universities as a business. Stemming from the background of universities as businesses, the ethical issues of ‘selling students short’ are identified, and the ethical perils of industry research funding are highlighted before moving to a succinct review of corruption in higher education. Having described the ethical lay of the land of higher

education the question of *where to go from here?* is addressed. The argument is made that there is a need for re-thinking leadership in higher education, and for considering shared leadership as a viable model to support ethical behaviours in higher education. Towards inculcating ethics into higher education and higher education leadership it is recommended that: ethics and morals are framed as virtues of quality in higher education, ethical paradigms are used to facilitate ethical decision making in universities, and systems thinking approach is taken to provoke the ethical revival of higher education.

UNIVERSITIES AS A BUSINESS

‘Universities have turned into a business’ – whether one disagrees or agrees with the statement, it is not difficult to see why the view of higher education as a business with students as customers or clients emerges. First and foremost, digital technologies are driving the disruption of higher education just as much as other industries. The global connectivity enabled by ICT is the driver of a fast paced, highly dynamic and competitive globalized world. Globalization opens vast opportunities for larger markets but at the same time leads to fiercer competition as organizations seek to take a share of the one global market. Throw into the mix, a great diversity of students including greater numbers of non-traditional students, expectations of flexible anytime anyplace learning, unstable and tougher economies, and the conditions become conducive for universities to engage in serious competitive struggle for survival.

The current state of higher education in relation to competitiveness is perhaps best summarised by the headline of a Financial Times article on June 23 2016 “*University challenge: the race for money, students and status*” (Hale & Vina, 2016). Universities are turning to this ‘corporate’ approach in response to the financial constraints they face. Often, government or state funding is decreasing but costs are rising. The larger number of students attending university or massification of higher education is another challenge. With decreased state support, for many universities the principal funding source is now tuition fees rather than government grants (Swain, 2016). Higher education leaders thus often need to look for other sources of funding. Some argue that the perception of universities as businesses is at odds with the fundamental purpose of higher education – “the academic project” (McKenna, 2018), and in the present discussion of ethics in leadership of higher education is highly pertinent, warranting further discussion.

Undeniably, leaders in higher education are faced with very complex challenges. Reduction in state provided funds and the shift to students as the main source funds, globalized competition, pressures for internationalization, unstable economies, rapidly shifting social conditions and expectations, and diversified student cohorts with a huge range of academic capabilities are the reality with which higher education leaders must grapple. Furthermore, social and economic conditions are very fluid and there is a need for leaders to be highly agile. All in all, higher education leaders face an intensive period of rapid problem solving. It is no wonder then that adoption of business practices and the marketization of higher education is viewed as a viable solution (Natale & Doran, 2012). The business view and subsequent marketization of education conceivably reduces “students to a revenue stream and colleges to businesses” and becomes the source of one of the most prominent ethical dilemmas facing contemporary higher education (Natale & Doran, 2012, p. 187).

“Selling Students Short” (Hil, 2016)

Richard Hil, in his provocative book entitled: ‘Why you won’t get the university education you deserve: Selling students short’ (2016) raises concerns about the impact of the business approach on students and learning outcomes. In his chapter on ‘Brand Power’ Hil (2016) discusses the ‘marketisation’ of the student experience with university managers referring to students as clients – a conceptualisation of students which Hil (2016) says has a negative influence on the nature of the teacher-student relationship. Hil gives examples of how increasingly, teaching approach is influenced from above and is deaf to the actual needs of students, as is the case with online learning. Online learning is seen as efficient and attractive to students, yet research shows that the majority of students still have a preference for face-to-face learning. The ethically laden issue of international students is also captured by Hil (2016). In some of Australia’s larger universities, international students may make up to half of their student body and the revenue from international students is very substantial (Burton-Bradley, 2018). Among the students which Hil (2016) interviewed for his book, he notes that there “is the sense among those I interviewed that they were being fleeced in order to prop up” the university system (p. 138). There are allegations of fraud or deception in relation to recruitment agencies and allegations of questionable practices in relation to English language tests, as well as a lack of support once students enter the system.

Another ethical issue some see as arising from the corporatization of universities and their quest for funds and greater student numbers, is the concern over dropping academic standards for the sake of retention and student success. In some cases standards for entry to university have allegedly been lowered. This means that students who previously would not have satisfied requirements for entering university are able to do so. From the positive perspective this means that some of those who previously were not able to access a university education are now able to do so. However, although the entry points may have been lowered, there may be little support offered to these sometimes struggling students, which usually manifests as high rates of dropping out (Weale, 2018).

The shift to a business mindset for universities permeates and shapes the core learning and teaching activities of a university, and the mindset of students. The motivation for going to university has shifted considerably from attending university to “experience and education” (Natale & Doran, 2012, p. 188). Increasingly, students go to university to get a degree which will give them the skills needed for employment in a higher income job; programs are structured around the skills and knowledge that employers see as valuable, rather than focusing on the more traditional approaches of learning to think (Natale & Doran, 2012). Universities are being asked to ‘push out’ more students while maintaining quality standards. Recently, in Australia, Universities are being put even under more pressure to churn out students with the skills required by industry and to adopt programs of study that are more closely linked to the skills and jobs required by industry. Robert Bolton (2019), the education editor for the Financial Review, reports:

“From 2020, ‘graduate employment outcomes’ will account for 40 per cent of the extra money for new students – that’s twice the weighting given to the other three criteria: student success, student experience and increased participation by remote, Indigenous and low socio-economic students. ‘The performance-based funding model that has been finalised makes an explicit link between funding and one of the key goals of every university: to produce job-ready graduates with the skills to succeed in the modern economy,’” said the education minister Dan Tehan. His comments follow a report from consultants EY, which showed that if universities raised the completion rate of students and turned around the

long-term decline in wage premiums for graduates, there would be a \$3.1 billion productivity boost to the economy by 2030.”

The Financial Review article exemplifies well the current pressures on Higher Education to be an efficient, productive mechanism. There is considerable pressure for efficiency – a process reminiscent of a more ‘factory model’ of education. Faculty are being increasingly recruited from industry with a focus on industry skills (Molesworth, Nixon, & Scullion 2009). The distinction between education and training is blurring and some authors such as Natale and Doran (2012) and others such as Molesworth, Nixon and Scullion (2009) and see this approach as cutting to the core of the long standing mission of universities to produce “intellectually complex” individuals capable of generating new knowledge for a better human condition. Natale and Doran (2012) argue that higher education is degenerating to support a consumerism culture and no longer striving to grow reflection and critical thinking as a priority which are at the very core of the ethos of higher education.

VIGILANCE WHEN PARTNERING RESEARCH WITH INDUSTRY FUNDING

In the quest of higher education institutions to compete on the research front, there is a trend towards greater industry links and funding of research by Industry. University industry links are not new and, there is nothing intrinsically unethical about such links. However, in the present climate of competitiveness among institutions, and more stringent government funding, industry links with universities are on the increase, and even strongly encouraged by higher education leaders. To illustrate, the headline of a 2018 article in the Financial Review reads: “Cash strapped universities should work harder to collaborate with business” (Bolton, Financial Review, 2018)

Definitely, in the current climate there is increased receptiveness to industry funded research in universities. Furthermore, industry engagement with universities may have potentially positive outcomes in terms of influencing industry activities and policies. Hence, industry linkages with University are not necessarily a ‘bad thing’ and have the potential to support the knowledge production for greater good ethos of universities. However, the potential ethical risks must be brought to the fore. The goals of universities and industry differ somewhat with universities being knowledge production for public good while industry is profit driven for the success of the business (Hillerbrand & Werker, 2019). Other issues in relation to such things as intellectual property rights also come into play (Carayol, 2003), and there maybe ethical issues in the knowledge chain (Carayol, 2003). The importance of the giving attention to the ethical facet of university and industry engagement in research is highlighted by the number of articles in *The Conversation*. The articles provide a useful launching point for discussion of the ethical issues inherent in industry university collaborations and funding.

Komesaroff and Harvey (2015) explore the question of whether or not universities ought to accept funding from industry, and in doing so, the authors bring to the fore that funding from industry brings with it substantial ethical risks, and the imperative of having well-articulated codes of conduct and guidelines to help mitigate those risks. The ethical risks are fairly obvious: conflicts of interest, ‘cherry picking’ results to push forward the agenda of the industry, refusing to publish negative results, restrictions on what can and can’t be done as research and so forth (Komesaroff & Harvey, 2015). The issue of who controls the research is obviously present with industry funded research, and the question must also arise where there is ‘matched funding’. That is, when industry funding is matched by various government funding bodies (Creagh, 2011). Awareness of the issue and vigilance must be advocated in such cases (Creagh, 2011).

Then there are the obvious ethical issues arising when universities form research partnerships with arms manufacturers or the military. Browne and Ruff (2018) raise ethical concerns including concerns of allegations of corruption, bribery and fraud by some manufacturers that may partner with universities. “Research conducted by the World Peace Foundation and the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute show bribery, fraud, sales to repressive regimes and poor environmental practices are endemic to the arms trade.” (Browne & Ruff, 2018).

Pressures from those funding research is a well-acknowledged, but under-addressed ethical issue. To date existing ethical codes of conduct are primarily for the researchers themselves rather than for the funding bodies (Van Wee, 2019). There is a need to implement ethical codes of conduct for the funding bodies and policy makers (Van Wee, 2019). Interestingly, although research ethics is a well discussed topic there is little discussion on codes of conduct aimed at funders and policy makers. Van Wee (2019) while supportive of a code of conduct, also considers that perhaps simply implementing a code of conduct for research funders is insufficient to avoid research manipulations, and suggests that a “systems approach’ whereby all the stakeholders of the research are included is likely a better option.

CORRUPTION IN HIGHER EDUCATION

“Corruption is any type of deviation from an ideal. Ideals, as well as ideas, are core business for higher education. So when we fall short it matters” (Watson, 2014). Yes, corruption happens in higher education, and as David Watson states in his article in *The Conversation*, it is time that universities face up to the ‘c-word’ (2014).

Corruption in Higher Education happens across the globe and comes in many different forms. Though corruption is the subject of much academic discussion both inside and outside of the higher education context, the concept itself is not clearly defined. What behaviours actually constitute corruption is open to discussion and subject to personal and contextual interpretation. What might be viewed as corruption in one context or culture might not be viewed so in another, or at least might be viewed as having less severity (Nabaho & Turyasingura, 2019). This is problematic not only from the perspective of identifying corruption but also from the perspective that some individuals may unknowingly be engaging in corruption because they don’t realise they are crossing an ethical boundary (Chapman & Lindner, 2016).

Corruption in Higher Education is certainly not a new phenomenon but it is on the rise. An Inside Higher Ed Blog declares “Higher Education: A Hotbed of Corruption? Hardly a week goes by without an article on corruption in higher education” (Mohamedbhai, 2015). Over the past decade there is a growing awareness of and focus on corruption in higher education. Corruption is often attributed to being facilitated (not invited) by the pressures on universities resulting from changing social and economic conditions (Nabaho & Turyasingura, 2019). The corporatization of universities is seen by some as raising the risk of corruption. As Schwarz observes, universities, regardless of their financial situation or their status are feeling the uncertainties of the time and “try to reduce [uncertainty] through access to even more resources, the incentive to use illegal or unethical means can appear to some as an alternative course of action” (Schwartz, 2017, p. 276). Complex business processes leading to less transparency alongside pressures for efficiency and productivity playing a role in adoption of questionable behaviours. The hierarchies of business organization models “becomes an opening for corruption when it is associated with low levels of transparency and a culture that discourages questioning” (Schwartz, 2017). Additionally, resource dependence can become a facilitator for corruption (Schwartz, 2017), hence as discussed

previously universities need for funding can push the boundaries of ethical behaviour, particularly in dealings with external government or industry bodies. The pressures exerted on higher education which increase the risk of unethical behaviour or corruption in universities are well summarised by Shaw (2013) as being excessive competition, misalignment of teaching and research, disproportionate rewards, injustice in working environments, and concentration of power with insufficient checks and balances.

Palmer (2013 cited in Schwarz, 2017, p. 276) makes an interesting observation that often the pathways to corruption are quite ordinary, utilizing the very same structures used to enable efficiency and effectiveness, and this often serves to mask the wrongdoing to a certain extent.

Corruption is, unfortunately, pervasive in organizations. However, it is particularly difficult to ‘disentangle’ in higher education, mostly because of the highly complex structure of activities, and numbers of different stakeholders involved (Chapman & Lindner, 2016). Corruption in higher education is, quite rightly so, attracting much attention and concern among its stakeholders (Chapman & Lindner, 2016). Corruption is a threat to reputation and trust. The consequences of corruption are widespread, far beyond the consequence for any individual or any single institution. Corruption threatens the credibility and trust in, of the whole of the academy (Nabaho & Turyasingura, 2019). Recalling the central importance of universities for the generation of knowledge for the common good, it is self-evident that any activity which undermines the credibility and integrity of universities is cause for serious concern. Furthermore, corruption in university erodes the trust of employees, employers and oftentimes, in the form of academic corruption will lead to graduates who are professionally ‘underqualified’ and moreover, exit the system likely believing that “personal success comes, not through merit and hard work, but through favouritism, bribery and fraud” (Chapman & Lindner, 2016, p. 248).

In February 2019, the Council for Higher Education Accreditation in the UK, released a report entitled *Policies and Actions of Accreditation and Quality Assurance Bodies to Counter Corruption in Higher Education* (Glendinning, Orim, & King, 2019). The general findings from an extensive literature review of corruption in higher education across the globe are that corruption in higher education is ubiquitous and very diverse, and that higher education is affected to some degree by corruption across the world, although the type and prevalence varied among countries.

A thematic analysis of the data collected for the report precipitated nine major themes each of which are summarised below:

1. Corruption in the regulation of higher education

The existence of this kind of corruption was acknowledged but 64% of respondents did not express concern about this kind of corruption in their organization or felt that the measures put in place kept this under control.

2. Corruption in the governance of higher education institutions

Evidence of this kind of corruption was found a number of countries where political interference included institutional decisions, banning courses from the curriculum, imprisonment of academics who disagreed politically, or overriding research funding decisions. Plagiarised doctoral dissertations or instances of institutions favouring their graduates were found.

3. Inconsistencies in relation to integrity, quality and standards within higher education. There is a lack of consistency in higher education standards and there are issues such as gender discrimination arising, for example in how many graduates will be female.
4. Corruption in the teaching role

Less than one third of respondents expressed concern about corruption in the teaching role but some responded with concerns of corruption in recruitment and promotion of academic staff. Forms of corruption identified were tied to pressures relating to completion rates, casual teaching appointments, poor remuneration and job insecurity.

5. Corruption in admissions and recruitment

Less than half of respondents expressed concern here. Concern was expressed in terms of underqualified students, either in language or subject knowledge who if not supported may resort to cheating to get by.

6. Corruption in student assessment

Considered corruption when teachers and academics comply by taking bribes etc. This kind of behaviour was found in many countries. The role of information technology in complicating cheating was raised.

7. Corruption in credentials and qualifications

Concern was expressed about degree and accreditation mills which produce false qualifications but there was little concern about political pressure to award degrees.

8. Corruption in research and academic publishing

This theme had the lowest response rate with very few respondents viewing that this was of importance to their organisation.

9. Networking as a way of countering corruption in higher education.

(Glendinning, Orim, & King, 2019)

Reports such as the *Policies and Actions of Accreditation and Quality Assurance Bodies to Counter Corruption in Higher Education* (Glendinning, Orim, & King, 2019) provide clear evidence of the deepening concern about corruption in the higher education sector.

WHERE TO FROM HERE?

From the preceding discussion, it is evident that ethics in higher education leadership are problematic and warrant some action. Some direction conducive to ethical higher education leadership is provided by recognising the need for re-thinking leadership in higher education, considering leadership models such as shared leadership which may be more appropriate to the needs of higher education, considering

ethics and morals as virtues of quality in higher education, using ethical paradigms to facilitate ethical decision making in universities, and taking a systems thinking approach towards an ethical revival of higher education.

Re-Thinking Leadership in Higher Education

Leaders in higher education have the unenviable task of navigating through the complexities and challenges of an upheaval in higher education. Corruption and the ethical challenges of leading in higher education are thankfully coming to the fore. Most certainly there is no single solution to the problem. But the question must be asked to what kind of leadership may best suit current and future conditions. Evidently, the top-down, heroic forms of leadership will poorly serve the universities. As discussed earlier, top down, hierarchical forms of leadership tend to impede transparency and with points of concentrated power are not conducive to questioning of actions. And transparency is of crucial importance if corruption is to be minimized and ethics are to be upheld. Furthermore, top-down leadership with its “power-over connotations and inequalities” is particularly problematic in the academic context where autonomy is highly valued and seen as necessary to the knowledge production function of the university (Bradley, Grice, & Paulsen, 2017). Similarly, more corporate models of leadership intensify management approaches which also erode the valued informal academic self-leadership (Bradley, Grice, & Paulsen, 2017).

Given this current era of significant change in higher education, there is growing attention to the importance of understanding the leadership required to guide campuses successfully, and a growing concern that existing approaches to leadership are ineffective (Kezar & Holcombe, 2017).

Shared Leadership

Pearce, Wood and Wassenaar (2018), and (Bradley, Grice, & Paulsen, 2017) among others, propose shared leadership as a possible effective model of leadership in higher education which will counter corruption. Shared leadership is the antithesis to individual or heroic leadership. The focus in shared leadership is on collaboration and influence “across organisational and professional boundaries” (Bolden, Jones, Davis, & Gentle, 2015, p. 3). Research in shared leadership has shown it to be effective in highly complex organizations where there is a need for the capacity of the organization to be agile and innovative (Kezar & Holcombe, 2017). In shared leadership the multiple perspectives of others are taken into account and there is flexibility in decision structures. By virtue of shared decision making and multiple perspectives, transparency in decision making is supported. Furthermore, shared leadership manifests in flatter organisational structures where there is less concentrated power and hierarchy, thereby reducing the potential for undisclosed activity. It was established earlier that understanding of ethics and corruption varies across individuals and across cultures. Shared leadership would provide a model of leadership which facilitates the negotiation of understanding of ethics in play in the situation.

Ethics and Moral Values as Virtues of Quality

‘Universities should trade in morals not profits’ (Narushima, 2011), is the view upheld by Stephen Schwarz, a former vice chancellor of Macquarie University (Sydney, Australia) as he stressed the importance of universities keeping sight of their ethical function and not lose sight of this in the desire for profit. Along a similar vein, Prisacariu and Shah (2016), argue that because of the context of higher education

is changing dramatically there is an urgent need to redefine what it meant by quality. Furthermore, if the current pressures around funding, productivity and efficiency are not erode the knowledge creation ethos of higher education, then morals and values must be fundamental to the understanding of quality in universities (Prisacariu & Shah, 2016).

Part of the issue with defining quality in higher education (and in most other contexts) is that the concept of quality is very subjective and contextual (Prisacariu & Shah, 2016) (Schindler, Elvidge, Welzant, & Crawford, 2015). Different individuals will perceive quality in different ways depending on their own perceptions of the situation, their disciplines, their prior experiences, prior knowledge, their own personal values, attitudes etc. There is no universal agreement on the concept of quality, and likely there will never be since it is a deeply contextual and individual concept. The evasive nature of the concept of quality makes it all the more important to have an agreed definition of quality within the context of higher education and if higher education is to maintain its ethical goal then the definition of quality must embody values and ethics (Prisacariu & Shah, 2016). Values and ethics must be considered a virtue of quality in higher education. (Prisacariu & Shah, 2016).

Ethical Decision Making in Higher Education

The undertone of the discussion thus far is that ethics and morals are inherent to leadership. Given the impact the ethical (or not) behaviour of leaders influences the well-being and behaviours of others in the organisation, ethical leadership should not be considered an option. Particularly in higher education leadership where education leaders are responsible for the academic and social development of students as professional (Trent & Pollard, 2019). Ethical leadership is imperative. The research on the ethical dimension of leadership in higher education is unfortunately sparse and there is little understanding of how ethical decisions are made/not made in the higher education setting. This, as Trent and Pollard (2019) so well put it, is “unfortunate, given that college presidents operate in a world with potential ethical calamities” (para 6, online). Additionally, leaders in higher education are frequently academics appointed on the basis of their excellent performance in research and/or learning and teaching. As discipline experts, academics possess excellent depth of discipline knowledge and well developed problem solving skills but generally have little if any education related to leadership or to frameworks which can assist with ethical decision making. Much of what they do from an ethical perspective is based on their own personal and professional values and ethics. As Vaughan (1992) observes, likely the “most effective way for presidents to bring an ethical approach to their leadership is to be above reproach in their own professional and personal actions” (p. 24).

To assist with ethical decision making, leaders in higher education can refer to ethical paradigms. The ethical paradigm will help to crystallize what is right and what is wrong. Neal, Brooke and Barron (2019) refer to ethic of justice, ethic of care and ethic of community as three ethical paradigms suited particularly to community colleges. The ethic of justice paradigm places emphasis on fairness, equity and the rule of the law (Neal, Justice, & Barron, 2019). Neal, Justice and Barron (2019) provide an example to illustrate how the ethic of justice might be used to assist decision making: in a community college, open admissions may be the policy but there is tension between two options: maintain open admission at all times or follow rules about late registration which is known to lower student success. How can the ethic of justice help to clarify the situation on the basis of fairness, equity and rule of the law? One potential decision is to provide all students who enrol within 10 business days from the beginning of term with coaching and financial aid to help ensure success. The impact on the student is then minimal, the open

admission is honoured, and it should likely result in positive success metrics. The ethic of care places emphasis on values as opposed to outcomes. Organizational values can lead to care for the person as of higher importance than processes and rules (Neal, Justice, & Barron, 2019). For example, although budgets might be tight, there would be no cost cutting for supporting students in first year first semester because this first semester (Neal, Justice, & Barron, 2019). The ethic of community places emphasis on the community involvement in decision making related to interests and needs of the local community (Neal, Justice, & Barron, 2019).

Ethical Revival?

In the literature surrounding higher education, leadership in universities and corruption in universities there is a sense that ethical virtue in universities is eroding “Ethics no longer occupies a central place in campus life and universities are not always run ethically” (de Russy & Langbert, 2005). News of unethical behaviour in university leadership is becoming disturbingly commonplace. Alongside the erosion of ethics is the erosion of public trust and confidence in universities. Ethics in universities is the business of all stakeholders, although it is most strongly influenced by the behaviours of leaders. Also, it is important to bear in mind that university leaders are the product of universities themselves, and that students are ‘our future’. It is therefore crucial that ethics is fully integrated into all dimensions of universities, from research through to teaching and learning.

One very important issue that has thus far not been approached in the present paper is that of academic integrity both for academics and students. There are a number of unfortunate cases where academics have been found guilty of plagiarism and even been stripped of their doctoral qualifications. Among students, violation of academic integrity is rising to new heights. There are a number of reasons for this. Some reasons have to do with massification of education and dubious practices related to entry of students to university. As noted earlier, the marketization of universities is seeing students as a revenue source and in the quest for funding entry points are being lowered and language competencies being waived; and worse still once students are in the system, they are not offered the extra support they need. The other contributor to the rising incidence of unethical conduct by students in the course of their studies is technology. There are a large number of tools available online to facilitate cheating including websites which offer solutions to assignments at a cost, tools which ‘re-write’ copied papers so that they are not ‘picked up’ by text matching software during online submission. And there are ‘ghost-writers’ available both online and in person on campus. Most faculty are aware of the use of these ‘techniques’ but in many cases are unable to prove any misdoing. Each time a student ‘gets away with it’ it is sending a strong message that academic success isn’t so much depending on hard and honest work but rather on clever ways of rorting the system.

On the faculty side of reducing violations of academic integrity, there is a strong need for consistency and frameworks around how violations by students are dealt with. There is at present huge variation in how different faculty deal with instances of cheating on assessment and from the student perspective, cheating is a bit like a lottery – chances are they may or may not get caught. Additionally, given the subject, cultural and contextualised nature of ethics and morals, the author believes that university’s and faculty responsibility is not limited to ‘catching students out’. Universities and their faculty have a responsibility to educate their students about the academic standards of conduct upheld in the university and must scaffold their learning and understanding of academic integrity.

The issue of students violating academic integrity cannot be viewed in isolation. The author advocates that the ethical revival of higher education requires a 'systems approach'. Ethics and morals must again permeate the whole of the system at all levels of the system. Universities leaders at all levels evidently have a key role to play in re-establishing an ethical culture throughout institutions by both being role models and engaging in ethical leadership practices and also including ethics in the vision and strategic planning for higher education.

Fostering an ethical culture within universities also requires embedding ethics into learning. In some degree programs there may be courses specific to ethics in that particular discipline. For instance, in the authors' field of information technology, the IT programs include capstone courses in professionalism and ethics. While this approach is useful, a true cultural change requires that students embrace ethical thinking, and this takes time to develop. Ethical thinking must become an outcome of the whole program of study and thus the theory and practice of ethical decision making should be embedded vertically and horizontally through programs of study. Teaching faculty, as leaders in learning, must of course, model ethical behaviours in their classes.

Within learning and teaching domains, there is much talk of 21st century skills needing to be embedded fully into the curriculum to enable graduating students to establish successful careers in the present and future society – capabilities such as communication, critical thinking, problem solving, creativity are all present in discussions of 21st century skills, yet ethical decision making isn't often acknowledged as a crucial 21st century skill. It is imperative to instil ethics and ethical decision making into the 21st century skill set of higher education graduates. It is already abundantly clear that university graduates will face a future of increasing complexity. Advancing technologies will offer numerous options for the pathway of humanity. Propelling humanity forward will require much decision making, and that decision making will invariably involve ethical considerations. The ethical questions already arising in relation to artificial intelligence, robotics, self-driving cars and biotechnology are likely the tip of the iceberg. It is imperative, for the common good of humanity, that graduates are acutely aware of the ethical implications of innovations, and are also armed with the knowledge and decision making capabilities to navigate their way through tricky ethical dilemmas.

CONCLUSION

Ethics cannot be separated from leadership. In higher education the current state of the surrounding social, economic and political context is exerting extreme pressure on institutions and their leaders are grappling with much uncertainty. These are conditions conducive to un-ethical behaviours, as is being seen by an increase in corruption in universities across the globe. Excessive competition, misalignment of teaching and research, disproportionate rewards, injustice in working environments, and concentration of power with insufficient checks and balances (Shaw, 2013) are all contributing to favourable conditions for erosion of ethics and corruption in higher education.

Undeniably, leaders in higher education are faced with difficult times. Universities are transforming and are on a brink of which way the transformation will go. The ‘businessfication’ of universities, struggles for funding, and the marketization of universities is challenging the basic ethos of universities which is to “produce knowledge for the greater good and thus, the ethical duty of universities is to question truth claims, to seek explanations, to find good understandings, and not to propound one or another doctrine without question” (Frost 2016).

In the present chapter the author has sought to take stock of the most current state of higher education with respect to ethics and leadership. The chapter began with a discussion of universities as a business. This became the backdrop to identify the ethical issues of ‘selling students short’ and highlighting the ethical perils of industry research funding. A review of corruption in higher education completed the orientation around ethical lay of the land of higher education. To move forward with the issues of ethics and leadership in higher education, the argument was made that there is a need for re-thinking leadership in higher education, and for considering shared leadership as a viable model to support ethical behaviours in higher education. It was suggested that the ethical revival of higher education can be assisted by framing quality in higher education around ethics and morals, and through the ethical paradigms facilitate ethical decision making in universities. A system’s thinking approach is advocated by the author such that ethics permeate the character of higher education.

It is hoped the reader has gained broad insights into the factors contributing to the upheaval of higher education, and an appreciation how those factors interact are conducive to creating ethical dilemmas with which higher education leaders must contend.

The problem space of higher education ethics is obviously very complex and requires much exploration and problem solving in order to reach a more desirable state. The birds eye view of the landscape of higher education in the present chapter forms a reference on which further discussion and reflection can take place. The challenges ethical higher education leadership are significant but, borrowing from the design thinking paradigm – the challenges must be viewed in the positive light as being opportunities for innovation and positive impact on higher education leadership (Drucker, 2012).

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KEY TERMS AND DEFINITIONS

Ethics: Principles of behaviour associated with what is right and what is wrong.

Efficiency: Achieving maximum productivity with minimal use of resources.

Leadership: Influencing others (followers) to create change to work towards the realization of a shared vision.

Management: The definition, planning and monitoring of activities for achieving particular outcomes within particular resource constraints.

Quality: A subjective and highly contextualised perception of the extent to which something meets standards of use or usefulness. There is no agreed definition of quality.

Shared Leadership: Shared leadership is the antithesis to individual or heroic leadership. The focus in shared leadership is on collaboration and influence “across organisational and professional boundaries” (Bolden, Jones, Davis, & Gentle, 2015, p. 3).