

MODEL OF TEACHER MORAL DEVELOPMENT

JEFFREY MOORE¹

ROQUE DO CARMO AMORIM NETO²

ABSTRACT

The influences of a school district on teachers' ethical decision-making were examined with 19 public school teachers working in grades K-12 in the same school district. Data were collected via semi-structured interviews. From the thematic analyses, a model of teacher moral development emerged. The analyses also indicated that the school district positively impacts teachers' ethical decision-making by offering effective professional development and by creating an inspirational vision, which fosters a collective identity. These influences can be translated into a clear plan for school improvement with shared values and nurturing meaningful relationships of teachers with peers, mentors, staff, and administrators. Theoretical and practical implications are discussed.

KEY WORDS: TEACHER EDUCATION; TEACHER MORAL DEVELOPMENT; SCHOOL DISTRICT MORAL DEVELOPMENT; ETHICAL DECISION MAKING

MODELO DE DESENVOLVIMENTO MORAL DOCENTE

RESUMO

A influência de um distrito escolar na tomada de decisão ética dos professores foi examinada com 19 professores de escolas públicas trabalhando nos graus K-12 no mesmo distrito escolar. Os dados foram coletados por meio de entrevistas semiestruturadas. A partir das análises temáticas, emergiu um modelo de desenvolvimento moral dos professores. A análise também indicou que o distrito escolar impacta positivamente a tomada de decisão ética dos professores, oferecendo um desenvolvimento profissional efetivo e criando uma visão inspiradora, que promove uma identidade coletiva. Essas influências podem ser traduzidas em um plano claro para melhorar a escola com valores compartilhados e nutrir relacionamentos significativos de professores com colegas, mentores, funcionários e administradores. As implicações teóricas e práticas são discutidas.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: FORMAÇÃO DE PROFESSORES; DESENVOLVIMENTO MORAL DO PROFESSOR; DESENVOLVIMENTO MORAL DO DISTRITO ESCOLAR; TOMADA DE DECISÃO ÉTICA

¹ Anderson University, USA.

² College of Urban Education at Davenport University, USA

MODELO DE DESARROLLO MORAL DEL MAESTRO

RESUMEN

La influencia de un distrito escolar en la toma de decisión ética de los maestros fue examinada con 19 maestros de escuelas públicas trabajando en los grados K-12 en el mismo distrito escolar. Los datos fueron recolectados a través de entrevistas semi-estructuradas. A partir de los análisis temáticos, surgió un modelo de desarrollo moral de los maestros. El análisis también indicó que el distrito escolar impacta positivamente en la toma de decisión ética de los maestros, ofreciendo un desarrollo profesional efectivo y creando una visión inspiradora, que promueve una identidad colectiva. Estas influencias pueden ser traducidas en un plan claro para mejorar la escuela con valores compartidos y nutrir relaciones significativas de maestros con colegas, mentores, funcionarios y administradores. Se discuten las implicaciones teóricas y prácticas.

PALABRAS CLAVE: FORMACIÓN DE MAESTROS; DESARROLLO MORAL DEL MAESTRO; DESARROLLO MORAL DEL DISTRITO ESCOLAR; TOMA DE DECISIÓN ÉTICA

INTRODUCTION

Moral development has been the focus of study among disciplines such as philosophy, theology, psychology and education. Each discipline has defined moral development and shaped its research according to its own scope. Thanks to the contributions of Piaget and Kohlberg, the research on moral development conducted by educational researchers has been heavily influenced by the findings in the psychological field (Narvaez & Lapsley, 2013). However, within the psychological discipline there is a plethora of approaches to the study of moral development. Narvaez and Lapsley listed five sets of processes that have shaped the discussion and the research around moral development in the field of psychology: reasoning, sensitivity, motivation, perception, and action. While these processes are considered isolated for the sake of research, they are not isolated in real life. Perceptions, thoughts, and motives interact to inform action. The combination of how people think, feel, and act toward self, others, and society defines their development toward moral maturity (Gleeson & O'Flaherty, 2016; Narvaez & Lapsley, 2013).

Researchers of moral development as it pertains to education have highlighted the inherent moral nature of the teaching profession (Cummings, Harlow, & Maddux, 2007; Sanger & Osguthorpe, 2013a). There seems to be a consensus that teachers play a critical role in the moral life of students nationwide (and therefore to society as a whole) and that teaching is an inherently moral activity (Cummings *et al.*, 2007; Sanger & Osguthorpe, 2011). A body of research also points out that the teacher-student relationships have a special place in students' overall development, including their moral capabilities (Pantic & Wubbels, 2012; Sanger & Osguthorpe, 2013a). Morally developed teachers are more likely to be aware of the moral aspects of teaching and take more responsibility for them (Cummings, Dyas, Maddux, & Kochman, 2001).

Such awareness helps them work in a diverse environment (Beyer, 1997), usually the case in urban public schools. In addition, teachers who are more morally developed are open to different perspectives and to diverse groups (Guthrie, King, & Palmer, 2000; Reiman & Peace, 2002). However,

those who research the topic shared a concern about the gap in research and practice for pre-service and in-service teacher moral development (Sanger & Osguthorpe, 2013b). While some attention has been given to pre-service teachers in an attempt to improve teachers' education programs, the topic is almost non-existent in continuing education programs that benefit in-service teachers. This gap leaves those in the field in what Sanger and Osguthorpe (2013b) call "the moral vacuum" (p. 42).

Given the importance of research and practices aimed to foster teachers' moral development, the lack of research regarding in-service teachers' moral development and the fact that school districts have a great deal of responsibility in fostering teachers' continuous development, it makes sense to investigate how school districts facilitate in-service teachers' moral development.

BACKGROUND

Cummings *et al.* (2007) conducted a review of the research on moral development of in-service and pre-service teachers. They noticed the incongruence between the accepted notion of teaching as a moral enterprise and the lack of systematic approaches to research the moral development of teachers. They found that in-service and pre-service teachers' moral development is relatively low, again contradicting the moral nature of their profession (Cummings *et al.*, 2007). Their review also found a limited set of studies exploring interventions to help teachers to further develop morally. The studies focusing on in-service teachers were from the late 70s or early 80s (*e.g.*, Miller, 1981; Sprinthall & Bernier, 1979; Thies-Sprinthall, 1984). Reiman and Peace (2002) conducted the most recent intervention study with in-service teachers cited in this review by Cummings *et al.* (2007). It consisted of a 7-month quasi-experiment involving 13 teachers from a large American school system. The study consisted of a professional development program called the "learning-teaching framework." By the end of the study, researchers found significant gains in participants' moral development (Reiman & Peace, 2002). Cummings *et al.* (2007) conclude their review by pointing out the implications of their study for teacher education, focusing on pre-service teachers, but say nothing about continuing education for in-service teachers.

In a more recent review of the literature, Bullough (2011) found that most of the studies analyzed support the argument that teaching is essentially a moral endeavor. The core of this endeavor is the way teachers care for students. The findings of his review point out the evidence of promising methods to promote moral development not only in pre-service, but also in-service teachers. These methods include coaching on moral issues, challenging assumptions about students' reflective skills and overcoming rooted ways of thinking and feeling about their profession (Bullough, 2011).

The two reviews discussed above indicate that the moral development of in-service teachers can be fostered through certain types of continuing education programs (Bullough, 2011; Cummings *et al.*, 2007). While each adult professional has the primary responsibility for professional development, school districts share this responsibility with teachers. In many cases they become the first provider of continuing education to teachers. Many districts offer professional development to foster needed skills in areas such as literacy, math, and science. A plethora of studies documenting this can be easily found (*e.g.*, Avalos, 2011; Buczynski & Hansen, 2010; Penuel, Fishman, Yamaguchi, & Gallagher, 2007). However, no attention has been paid to identifying how school districts influence teachers' moral development. The current study aims to start filling this gap.

THIS STUDY

The present study aims to explore the moral development of teachers in a school district setting. The primary research question driving this study is “How is the teacher developed morally in the school district?” Supporting questions are:

- What school district factors influence the moral development of teachers?
- How do the school district, school culture, and environment connect teachers to ethical outcomes?

This study advances education ethics research by exploring teacher perceptions of factors important to their moral behavior and ethical decision-making. The contributions of this research may lead to higher teacher retention and higher student outcomes.

The present investigation extends a research stream by Hanson and Moore (2014), which focused on the moral development of the business student in the university setting. Hanson and Moore studied university students by asking them how they perceived they were being developed morally. Findings uncovered that students were impacted by five main factors. These were: the impact of moral amplifiers, who are role models such as faculty or staff; the impact of service learning activities; times of conflict or crisis with faculty members, classmates or roommates; institutional moral reinforcers such as rules; and lastly by their own ethical code found in their evolving moral identity. Our current research uses the same approach by studying teacher’s perspective of how they are being morally developed. We seek to bring to light the moral development model teachers are using so that other stakeholders can be more intentional in accelerating teacher moral development.

To achieve this goal we apply the epistemological perspective of constructionism (Crotty, 2003), which is looking at the collective viewpoint of our participants and abstracting data into interactions between themselves and actors or artifacts in their environment. We also use symbolic interactionism as our theoretical framework and root it in social psychology. This framework is perfectly suited to participant observations, in which the researcher uncovers the meaning created by the social interactions of the participants (Meltzer, Petras, & Reynolds, 1975). Symbolic interaction uncovers the subjective meaning people impose on things, norms, rules, languages, behaviors, and culture (Charon & Cahill, 2004). We look to the participants and their responses to give us the meaning of the process and interrelationships of the topic studied. Finally we use qualitative case study method to both collect and interpret relevant data into collective truths.

We seek to use the discovery method, by which the research focuses primarily on the participant’s collective responses and perspectives. To decrease researcher bias, our findings are connected directly to participant comments and responses.

Furthermore our research method is inductive as we seek to present findings that are conceptual generalizations. These findings seek to produce future research questions and theoretic models. This research incorporates a strategy represented by the case study approach (Creswell, 2003; Eisenhardt & Graebner, 2007).

METHOD

In order to investigate the moral development of teachers in a school district setting, we

conducted semi-structured interviews with 19 public school teachers working in an urban school district in Michigan.

PARTICIPANTS AND PROCEDURE

For this study we interviewed 19 public school teachers, 10 women and 9 men, teaching in any grade levels from kindergarten to high school. Their working experience ranged from two to 20 years of teaching, 15 of them with less than 10 years of teaching experience. These teachers work in the same urban school district in Michigan, and currently pursue their Master's degree in a graduate program developed in a partnership between the school district and a private university. They were invited to participate in this study during one of their graduate classes.

MEASURES

The study adapts the original 7 open-ended semi-structured questions to the participant used by Hanson and Moore (2014). While Hanson and Moore's study focused on the university as the primary source of influence to students' moral development, our study focuses on the school district's influence in teachers' moral development. In this sense, changes were made to the questionnaire to clarify and specify the context to which the participant should respond. They asked, "Think of three things (other than people) at your university that enable you to make better ethical decisions. How did they contribute making good, ethical choices?" (p. 544). This question was adapted to "Think of three things (other than people) at your school district that enable you to make better ethical decisions. How did they contribute to making good, ethical choices?" These two additional open-ended semi-structured questions were included: "What Educational or School values do you identify with? Why?" and "What other organizational values do you think should be included in the school's core values? Why?"

RESEARCH DESIGN

We used the methods of Strauss and Corbin (1990) where thematic analysis was used to code data and analyze the data into collective relationships important to the teachers in their personal moral development and ethical decision-making. Furthermore our data had many commonalities and recurrent themes, perfect for thematic analysis (Eisenhardt & Graebner, 2007). Qualitative research credibility and trustworthiness was gained through triangulation methods, which is a way to show research rigor and verification (Greckhamer & Koro-Ljungberg, 2005).

First, we used investigator triangulation. Investigator triangulation is achieved by having two or more researchers involved in data analysis (Elliott, Fischer, & Rennie, 1999). Both researchers looked at the same data and compared our coding notes. This process allowed us to reach agreement on axial coding categories.

Second, we used participant checking. Participant checking is key to establishing research trustworthiness by giving participants the opportunity to comment, elaborate, and correct emerging findings (Santiago-Delefosse, Gavin, Bruchez, Roux, & Stephen, 2016; Tong, Sainsbury, & Craig, 2007). All 19 participants were involved in three participant checking sessions. These sessions lasted about an hour each. Participants answered clarifying questions from the researchers to thoroughly establish meaningful categories showing clear relationships on how the school district influences

their moral development. Between each session, participants had more than two weeks to reflect, ponder, and bring their recommendations of corrections and improvements to this study's findings to the next session.

RESULTS

In studying teacher moral development, we discovered that teachers are developing morally, with or without the existence of an intentional district initiative. We were not surprised to discover that positive relationships are essential to their moral development. The main finding is an overall model of teacher moral development. We discuss elements of that model below.

MODEL OF TEACHER MORAL DEVELOPMENT

As shown in Figure 1, the model of teacher moral development is divided into three meta themes. These are: self (teacher ethical professional identity), the internal environment of the school district and the external environment. The self meta theme of the moral identity of the teacher is divided into two areas. First is teacher core values that are central to their decision making (moral aspiration) and second their evolving moral code (stages of the teacher development). The internal environment meta theme is divided into school district support, school policies and key relationships. Lastly the external meta theme is divided into continuing education, parents and community. Each one of the elements that comprise the model will be further discussed next.

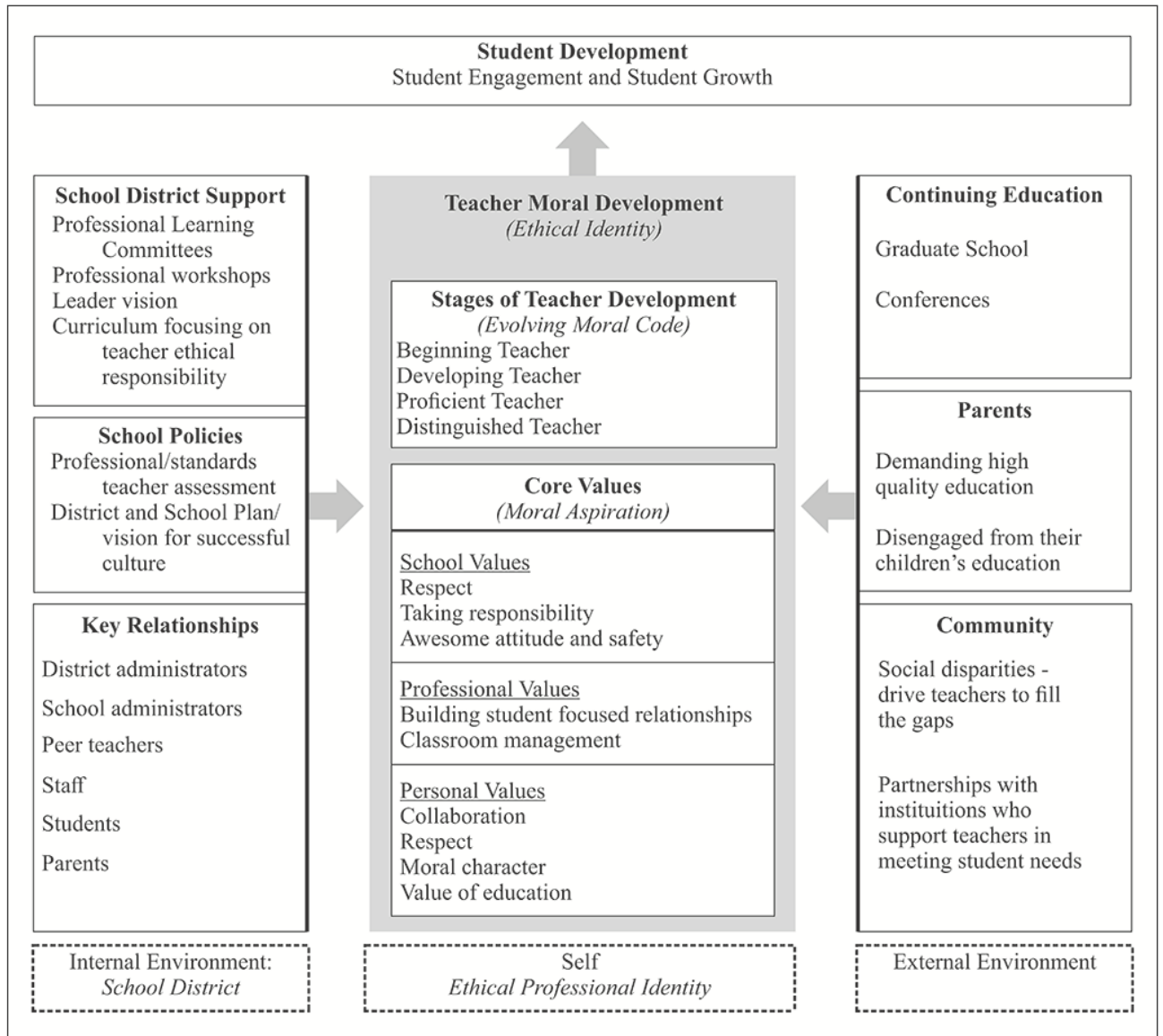


Figure 1. Model of teacher moral development

MORAL DEVELOPMENT THROUGH KEY RELATIONSHIPS

When asked about the most important relationships in their workplace and the reasons why these relationships are important, participants noted that their relationships with their supervisors (school administrators), mentors, colleagues and students were the most important relationships they developed while working for the school district. The relationship with their supervisors seems to be important because it favors professional growth and service to students. By developing a satisfactory relationship with their school administrators, teachers can avoid negative consequences, and are seen in a more positive light by them. The relationships with mentors are important because they can learn from more experienced teachers how to be better teachers and serve students, how to be more honest with themselves and others and how to be cautious as they start their careers. Peer to-peer relationships are important because of the mutual support, the validation of goals, the resources

they share and the assistance in growing professionally. The relationships with students are relevant because they enable teachers to serve students in need and exercise “tough love.”

It is worth noting that even though the question referred to school districts, participants focused exclusively on relationships established in the school building. This may suggest that teachers value their immediate relationships, and that inter-district relationships (between school buildings) may not be intentionally fostered, non-existent or simply regarded as irrelevant.

Relationships are immediate and not extended past the facility due to the policy of unpredictable teacher location rotation. “I’ve had other strong relationships that had begun in my first few years in the district, but due to high teacher turnover in some buildings I do not work near them anymore.” Figure 2 illustrates the relationships in the workplace teachers consider the most important.

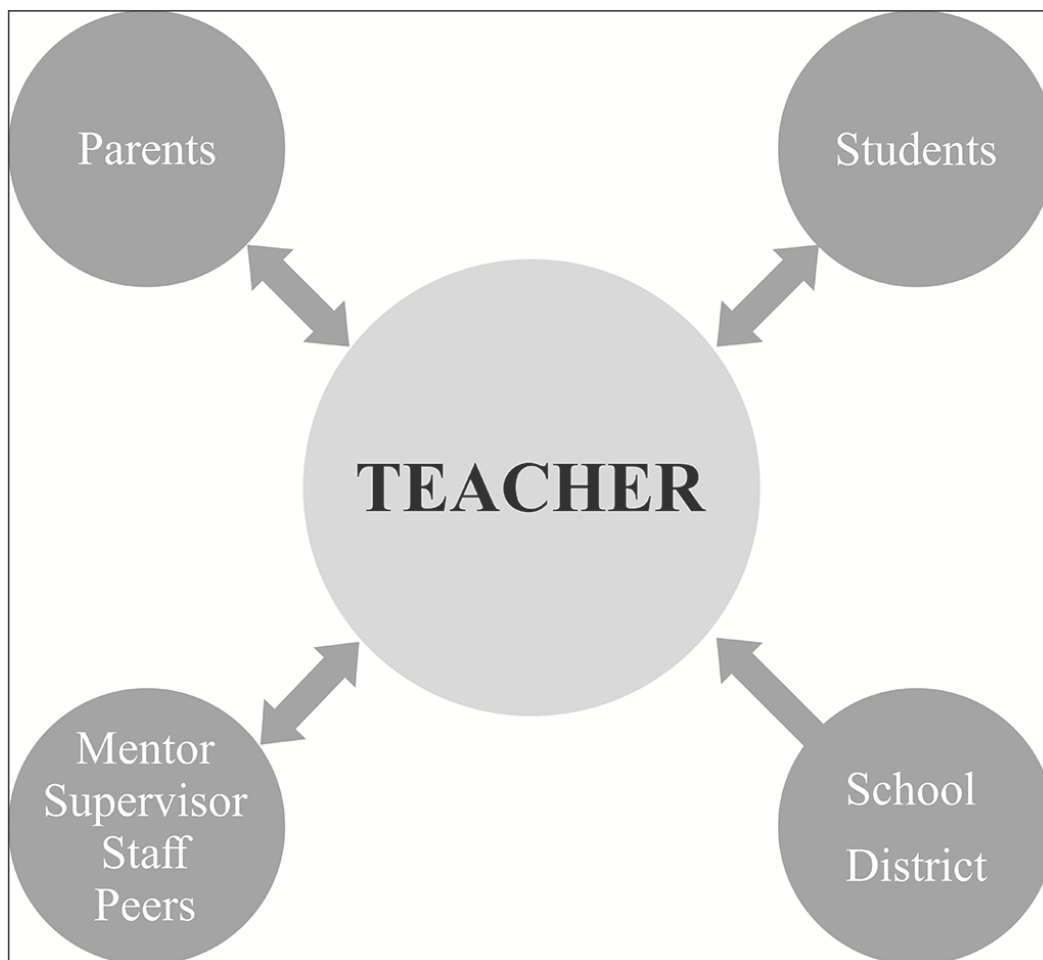


Figure 2. Key positive teacher relationships in the workplace

To complement the previous question on key relationships and focus on the moral aspect of those relationships, participants were asked about the three people at their school or school district who influence them to be better persons or make good, ethical choices. Their responses fell into five categories: peers, school administrators, school staff, district administrators and mentors. The way they influence teachers could be broadly divided into indirect and/or direct communication.

Indirect communication between peers takes place through role modeling that helps teachers develop stronger emotional self-regulation in terms of keeping calm and being more patient, compassionate and positive, and being inspirational. One participant said about a peer teacher: “[x] inspires me to continue to perform to the highest level. [...] His ability to have fun in the classroom while still holding students to high standards is also a model of effective teaching that I hope to embody as well.”

Direct communication among peers takes the form of sharing ideas and strategies, and advising in difficult situations to facilitate problem-solving. “She is very reassuring and extremely helpful in hard situations. She has influenced me to be a better teacher by giving me strategies to use when dealing with classroom management/behavior/tricky students.”

With school administrators, direct communication is prevalent. Through direct communication, administrators helped participants develop professionally, encouraged teachers to form a positive identity, and provided feedback in helping teachers to consider situations from different perspectives. The following quote illustrates this finding: “My administrator and my coordinating teacher have always shown me that they believe in my work and have lots of admiration for me. This has boosted my confidence as a professional and pushed me to become a successful teacher, and a grateful person.” Similarly to school administrators, school staff also influence teachers through direct communication by advising them on how to deal with difficult cases and sharing strategies and techniques for problem-solving around family and students.

District administrators were mentioned as role models. Through indirect communication, these people demonstrated how to balance personal and professional life and work ethics. “They are driven, hard-working, loyal and passionate [...]. As a young teacher learning to balance my personal and professional life, these two [role models] encourage me to seek the balance necessary to be effective in both pursuits.”

Mentors influence teachers through direct and indirect communication. Indirect communication takes place through role modeling—especially in what concerns the relationship between teachers and students—and direct communication through encouragement and fostering a positive identity. Mentors are considered a kind of cheerleader for teachers. “[mentor teacher] models appropriate and effective student-teacher relationships and reminds me every day that I’m doing a good job. She makes me feel safe as a teacher and a person.” Table 1 illustrates how workplace relationships influence teachers’ moral development.

	Peer Teachers	Mentors	Staff	School Administrators	School District Administrators
Direct Communication	Sharing ideas/ Creating solutions Advice/ Problem solving (solving crises)	Encouragement/ Positive identity	Advice/ Problem solving (solving crises around family and student)	Encouragement/ Positive identity Sharing ideas/ leadership of sense making Professional development	
Indirect Communication	Being positive and compassionate (character) Inspiring	Student-teacher relationship			Balance of professional and personal life

Table 1. How teachers are ethically influenced by others in the school system

STAGES IN TEACHER DEVELOPMENT

Teachers described two areas essential to their professional development. The first area is the professional classroom management and mastery of the curriculum. Secondly, their ethical decision making and ethical development. The data could be broken into four different stages. During the member checks, teachers clarified and expounded on these stages.

The *first stage* is the beginning teacher, who is fresh out of school and has little practical skill and knowledge of the curriculum. They care about students and are excited about the new challenges to face.

The *second stage* is the developing teacher who has some experience and is more familiar with the curriculum. Teachers explain that at this stage they care about students, but it is a critical point in their professional career. It is at this point that “reality sets in” and they are faced with relational and classroom management challenges. For those who seek and are able to find support, they overcome these trials, frustrations and discouragements and go on to become proficient and possibly distinguished teachers.

The *third stage* is the proficient teacher, who has developed classroom management skills and has mastered the curriculum. This teacher is self-aware of his / her own strengths and weaknesses, cares about students, and understands how to most effectively serve student needs. Proficient teachers collaborate with other teachers and staff to meet student needs. In developing relationships with individual students, teachers focus on building trust, sharing experiences, taking time to know their students and avoid making assumptions and creating high expectations to show students that they can achieve great things.

The *fourth and final stage* is the distinguished teacher, who is excellent in classroom management

and acts as a positive school representative. This teacher creatively adapts the curriculum to make it meaningful to students. Distinguished teachers care about students and understand how to most effectively serve their needs. They also care about other teachers and serve them becoming school champions. One teacher explains about another teacher:

In thinking about the three most impactful relationships I've had while working in the school district, the ones that come to mind are those that have allowed me to be honest, make mistakes, act as teacher and student, and grow as an educator. The first of the three was with my mentor teacher. [...] She continues to be one of my greatest champions and role models...

Figure 3 shows the four stages in the teacher experiential and ethical development.

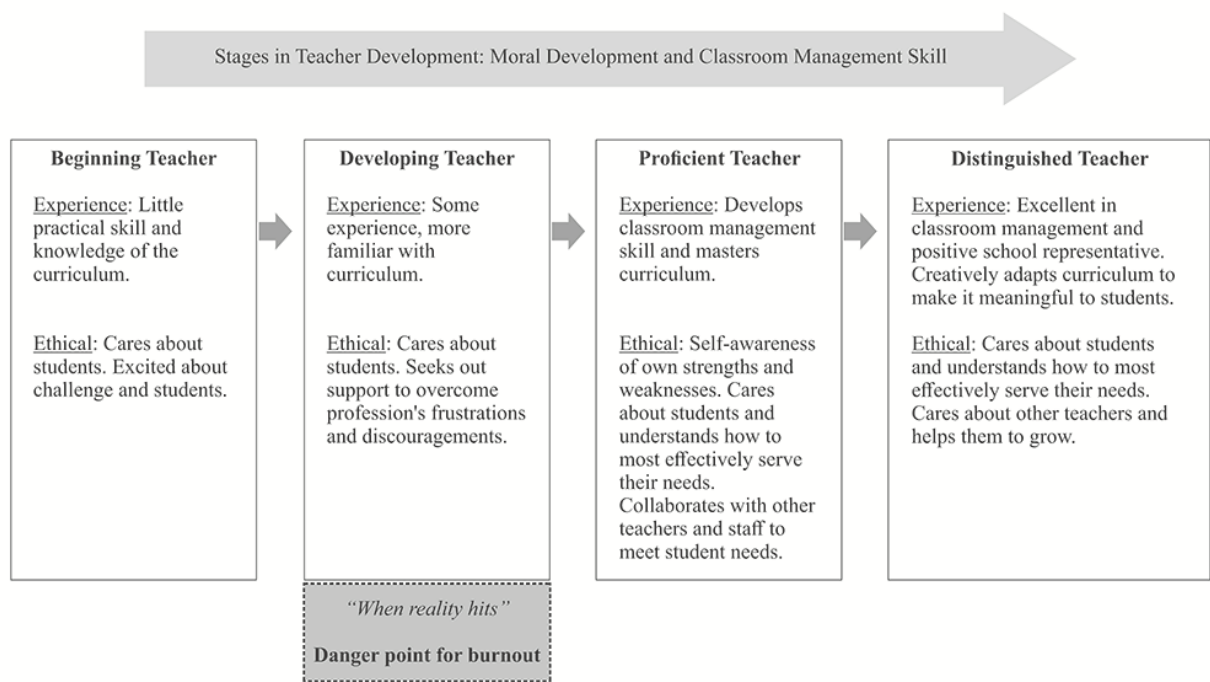


Figure 3. Stages in teacher experiential and ethical development

ROLE OF THE SCHOOL AND SCHOOL DISTRICT

Participants said that the school district increased their ethical and moral development in four ways. First, *supportive relationships* with peers and administrators that are aimed to meet the needs of the community: "The personal and professional support of my colleagues and administrators, the relationships I establish with a diverse and unique group of students, and the needs of my community encourage me to maintain a high level of moral integrity". Second, by inspiring efforts by the district to *improve school quality*: "The district is truly trying to make this the best district... When you see the people you work for attempting to do better, it motivates everyone to want to do better and work harder". Thirdly, effective *professional development* that fosters personal growth: "The school district has increased my ethical and moral development through creating effective professional development, allowing me to advocate for my students, and giving me the opportunity to showcase my talents". Fourthly, through the creation of a *collective identity and shared values*: "Because I am believed in, and because I believe in those people, we establish a net of morality together through

which no one is encouraged to fall.”

TEACHER CORE VALUES

Participants identified with school values related to (a) collaboration, (b) education and (c) moral character. *Collaboration* includes the value of respect, about which a teacher said, “Respect is the foundation for all the other values. When a person – parent, teacher, student – does not feel accounted for, respected, they will not strive for their full potential.” Along with respect, participants also identified with being non-judgmental, supporting school diversity and building community. Participants identify with “*education*” as a value, as they believe every student can learn. One teacher states: “I believe every student has the ability and potential to learn, just in different ways.” They also believe that education can help children to overcome poverty: “I also believe that it is my responsibility to educate the next generation to help break the cycle of poverty.” Participants also identify with *moral character* values such as kindness, responsibility, honesty, hard work and self-discipline.

Values that participants listed, and feel should be included in the school’s core values, are relationship oriented. Teachers mentioned “*parental involvement*,” as one commented: “I believe that parental involvement should be included in the core values. I say this because of the amount of help that could be offered to the students if parents were involved in their child’s schooling. We have a good parent community at my school, but I know of ones that do not.” Others called attention to values that have to do with the *teacher-student relationship*, such as tolerance, open-mindedness, diversity and equality: “Our vision statement is missing a piece about equality. We know that all students have different needs, and we must meet them at their needs. We must remind ourselves of this constantly, if we want to see student success.” Teachers mentioned the values of *fairness* and *appreciation* as the two key values in the workplace between co-workers. Fairness in distribution of resources: “Fairness in the workplace because honestly there are teachers who are the administrator’s [favorites], and are given all that is requested.” Appreciation for doing valuable work: “Teachers need to feel that their work is appreciated; this is a motivator for teachers to give the best.” Participants also believe that values that express individual positive attitude (e.g., positivity, peace) and commitment to education (e.g., hard work, mastery) should be included in the school’s core values.

DISCUSSION

This qualitative research was guided by the question, “How is the teacher developed morally in the school district?” The data showed that key relationships in the workplace, through direct and indirect communication, influence teachers’ ethical decision-making. In addition, effective professional development, attempts to improve school quality, a collective identity and shared values such as collaboration, education, kindness, responsibility, honesty, hard work and self-discipline were also revealed to positively influence teachers’ moral development. Teachers understand that parental involvement and values related to the teacher-student relationship (which include tolerance, open-mindedness, diversity and equality) also help them to make ethical decisions and should be included in the schools’ core values.

In considering their development as professionals, participants indicated that ethical decision-making is also accompanied by their classroom management skills and mastery of the curriculum. By pairing their ethical decision-making and their pedagogical experience, the data revealed four

stages in teacher development, going from “Beginning teacher” to “Distinguished teacher” as shown on Figure 3.

All these elements were organized into three meta-themes — self or the teacher’s ethical professional identity, the internal environment of the school district, and the external environment — within a comprehensive model of teacher moral development (Figure 1), which sheds light on how school districts influence teachers’ moral development.

The results of this study also expand the findings by Hanson and Moore (2014), following the same research stream. At the core of both studies are three meta themes of the individual (self: identity development), the internal group - the organization (school or university), the external group -outside of the organization (parents, community, internship, service learning projects). Both studies identify two parts in an individual’s self: core values and a moral code that is in development (maturity). Furthermore, the studies show that key relationships and experiential learning are the change process for individuals. It is through healthy relationships and engaged in practical projects that individuals can develop morally.

The findings of this study also connect to one of the conclusions of Bullough’s (2011) review regarding the nature of the moral endeavor of the teaching profession, which is care for students. The results of this study point to the need of looking beyond the care that teachers have for their students by considering how teachers can care for each other. This expanded view sheds light on how to maximize the moral development growth in teachers, not only in their classroom or school building, but across the school district.

Our current findings broaden the scope and show that teachers actually care for one another, and that there exist key individuals who are role models and coaches to developing teachers. The moral activity of caring for others is not only done for the student, but is also happening between employees. This is a key contribution in a time where resources are limited, and key employees are actively serving and caring for one another. Increasing and highlighting this dynamic will not only help increase teacher moral development, but also the students’ moral development.

Another element of this study that is also connected to the conclusions of Bullough’s (2011) review is the importance of continuing education through professional development as a means to foster teachers’ moral development. While this study did not examine the nature of the professional development and other continuing education opportunities mentioned by the participants, it is clear that these opportunities might provide teachers with more ways to reflect and challenge their own assumptions in terms of professional skills and ethical decision-making.

This research gives practical tools to school district to fill the in-service gap in teacher moral development noted by Sanger and Osguthorpe (2013b). District leaders could take into consideration the importance of meaningful relationships in teachers’ ethical decision-making, and reconsider policies regarding teacher rotation through different school buildings on a yearly basis. Such rotation prevents teachers from building the meaningful relationships that enable their growth. Moreover, in regard to these meaningful relationships, school districts could prepare school administrators to intentionally engage teachers, through direct and indirect communication, to foster their moral development.

Another key implication of this study is the identification of the stages of teacher development. These stages are an important tool to explain the inevitable challenges and crises ahead. District leaders could develop supporting structures, through professional development or mentorship opportunities, especially for those “developing teachers” who need support to overcome the profession’s frustration and discouragement as well as their struggles to master curriculum and classroom management.

By using the model of moral development, in-service workshops can help the teacher leverage the organization’s resources, identify key role models, and become self-aware of professional and moral realities. School leaders could also align the teacher personal core values to the professional and school values. This can be done by school administrators updating and adapting the current school values to bring in the personal and professional values of the teachers. Alignment of efforts and clarity in values enables better decision making in the everyday life of the school staff and teachers. The greater the extent of teachers’ buy-in to the values of the school, the more they will engage and follow them.

While this study provides a great deal of insight into teachers’ moral development and implications for school districts and teachers, we would like to acknowledge some of the limitations of this study. First, this study is a case study limited to a specific geographical location in the United States. Secondly, this case study comes from the public educational sector. Other educational sectors might shed light into other teacher development factors due to differing educational environment and constraints.

Future research could look at the nature of professional development offered to teachers to identify which elements are more likely to foster their moral development. In doing so, studies could also look at the impact of in-service teacher moral development workshops on increased teacher retention.

Future research could explore the connection between the two main elements of the stages in teacher development: pedagogical skills and ethical decision-making. Does one positively influence the other? If one is negative does it affect the other? If a teacher becomes more developed morally, does that increase his ability to master and adapt the curriculum to meet student needs?

REFERENCES

- AVALOS, B. Teacher professional development in Teaching and Teacher Education over ten years. Amsterdam/Netherlands. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 27(1), 2011, p. 10-20. doi:10.1016/j.tate.2010.09.007
- BEYER, L. E. The moral contours of teacher education. Thousand Oaks/CA/USA. *Journal of Teacher Education*, 48(4), 1997, p. 245-253.
- BUCZYNSKI, S., & Hansen, C. B. Impact of professional development on teacher practice: Uncovering connections. Amsterdam/Netherlands. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 26(3), 2010, p. 599-607.
- BULLOUGH, R. V. Ethical and moral matters in teaching and teacher education. Amsterdam/Netherlands. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 27(1), 2011, p.21-28. doi:10.1016/j.tate.2010.09.007

CHARON, J. M., & Cahill, S. Symbolic interactionism: an introduction, an interpretation, an integration. *Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Prentice Hall, 2004.*

CRESWELL, J. Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches (2nd ed.). *Thousand Oaks, CA, USA: Sage, 2003.*

CROTTY, M. The foundations of social research: Meaning and perspective in the research process. *Thousand Oaks, CA, USA: Sage, 2003.*

CUMMINGS, R., Dyas, L., Maddux, C. D., & Kochman, A. Principled moral reasoning and behavior of pre-service teacher education students. *Thousand Oaks, CA, USA: American Education Research Journal, 38(1), 2001, p. 143-158. doi:10.3102/00028312038001143*

CUMMINGS, R., Harlow, S., & Maddux, C. D. Moral reasoning of in-service and pre-service teachers: A review of the research. *London, England: Journal of Moral Education, 36(1), 2007, p. 67-78. doi:10.1080/03057240601185471*

EISENHARDT, K. M., & Graebner, M. E. Theory building from cases: Opportunities and challenges. *Briarcliff Manor, NY-USA: Academy of Management Journal, 50(1), 2007, p. 25-32. doi:10.5465/AMJ.2007.24160888*

ELLIOTT, R., Fischer, C. T., & Rennie, D. L. Evolving guidelines for publication of qualitative research studies in psychology and related fields. *West Sussex, England: British Journal of Clinical Psychology, 38, 1999, p. 215-229.*

GLEESON, J., & O'FLAHERTY, J. The teacher as moral educator: comparative study of secondary teachers in Catholic schools in Australia and Ireland. *Amsterdam-Netherlands: Teaching and Teacher Education, 55, 2016, p. 45-66. doi:10.1016/j.tate.2015.12.002*

GRECKHAMER, T., & Koro-Ljungberg, M. The erosion of a method: Examples from grounded theory. *London-England: International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education, 18(6), 2005, p. 729-750. doi:10.1080/09518390500298204*

GUTHRIE, B. L., King, P. M., & Palmer, C. J. Higher education and reducing prejudice: Research on cognitive capabilities underlying tolerance. *College Park, MD-USA: Diversity Digest, 4(3), 2000, p. 10-23.*

HANSON, W., & Moore, J. Business student moral influencers: Unseen opportunities for development? *Briarcliff Manor, NY-USA: Academy of Management Learning & Education, 13(4), 2014, p. 525-546. doi:10.5465/amle.2012.0325*

MELTZER B. N., PETRAS J. W., & REYNOLDS L.T. Symbolic Interactionism: Genesis, Varieties, and Criticism. *Boston, MA: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1975.*

MILLER, A. Conceptual matching models and interactional research in education. *Thousand Oaks, CA-USA: Review of Educational Research, 51(1), 1981, p.33-84. doi:10.3102/00346543051001033*

NARVAEZ, D., & LAPSLEY, D. Becoming a moral person - moral development and moral character education as a result of social interactions. *In M. CHRISTEN, C. VAN SCHAİK, J. FISCHER, M. HUPPENABAUER, & C. TANNER (Ed.), Empirically informed ethics: Morality between facts and norms. Switzerland: Springer, 2013, p. 227-238.*

PANTIC, N., & WUBBELS, T. Teachers' moral values and their interpersonal relationships with students and cultural competence. Amsterdam-Netherlands: *Teacher and Teacher Education*, 28(3), 2012, p. 451-460. doi:10.1016/j.tate.2011.11.011

PENUEL, W. R., Fishman, B. J., Yamaguchi, R., & Gallagher, L. P. What makes professional development effective? Strategies that foster curriculum implementation. Thousand Oaks, CA-USA: *American Educational Research Journal*, 44(4), 2007, p. 921-958. doi:10.3102/0002831207308221

REIMAN, A. J., & Peace, S. D. Promoting teachers' moral reasoning and collaborative performance: A developmental role-taking and guided inquiry study. London-England: *Journal of Moral Education*, 31(1), 2002, p. 51-66. doi:10.1080/03057240120111436

SANGER, M., & Osguthorpe, R. Teacher education, pre-service teacher beliefs, and the moral work of teaching. Amsterdam-Netherlands: *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 27(3), 2011, p. 569-578. doi:10.1016/j.tate.2010.10.011, 2011

SANGER, M., & Osguthorpe, R. Modeling as moral education: Documenting, analyzing, and addressing a central belief of pre-service teachers. Amsterdam-Netherlands: *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 29(1), 2013a, p. 167-176. doi:10.1016/j.tate.2012.08.002

SANGER, M., & Osguthorpe, R. The moral vacuum in teachers' education research and practice. Hoboken, NJ-USA: *National Society for the Study of Education*, 112(1), 2013b, p. 41-60

SANTIAGO-DELEFOSSE, M., GAVIN, A., BRUCHEZ, C., ROUX, P., & STEPHEN, S. L. Quality of qualitative research in the health sciences: Analysis of the common criteria present in 58 assessment guidelines by expert users. Amsterdam-Netherlands: *Social Science & Medicine*, 148, 2016, p. 142-151. doi:10.1016/j.socscimed.2015.11.007

SPRINTHALL, N. A., & BERNIER, J. E. Moral and cognitive development for teachers. In HENNESSY, T. C. (Ed.), *Value and moral education: Schools and teachers*. New York, NY: Paulist Press, 1979, p. 119-145.

STRAUSS, A., & CORBIN, J. Basics of qualitative research: Grounded theory procedures and techniques. Newbury Park, CA: Sage, 1990.

TONG, A., SAINSBURY, P., & CRAIG, J. Consolidated criteria for reporting qualitative research (COREQ): A 32-item checklist for interviews and focus groups. Oxford-England: *International Journal for Quality in Health Care*, 19(6), 2007, p. 349-357. doi:10.1093/intqhc/mzm042

THIES-SPRINTHALL, L. Promoting the development growth of supervising teachers: Theory, research programs, and implications. Thousands Oaks, CA-USA: *Journal of Teacher Education*, 35(3), 1984, p. 329-336. doi: 10.1177/002248718403500311

RECEBIMENTO: 02/08/2017

APROVAÇÃO: 22/09/2017

APPENDIX A - INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

1. What are the top three lessons, learned as a teacher, which help you make right decisions? Describe how each of these lessons was learned either through trial or positive experience. How did you learn these lessons?
2. Think of the top three relationships you have developed while working in the school district. Describe why these relationships are very important to you and what challenges or experiences made this relationship so strong.
3. Think of three people at your school or school district who influence you to be a better person, or make good, ethical choices. Describe how they influence you.
4. Since you have been a teacher, how has your service in the school changed? Do you feel that the level of your service in the school has increased, stayed the same, or decreased? Why?
5. Since you have been a teacher, how has your community service changed? Do you feel that the level of your community service has increased, stayed the same, or decreased? Why?
6. Think of three things (other than people) at your school district that enable you to make better ethical decisions? How did they contribute making good, ethical choices?
7. How do you feel that the school district has increased your ethical or moral development, contributing to your making ethical decisions?
8. What Educational or School values do you identify with? Why?
9. What other organizational values do you think should be included in the school's core values? Why?

ABOUT AUTHORS

Jeffrey Moore, PhD in management from the University of Nice Sophia Antipolis, France. Currently he serves as professor of management and associate dean of the graduate business program at Anderson University, USA.

Roque do Carmo Amorim Neto, Received his doctoral degree in educational leadership from Saint Mary's College of California, USA. Currently he serves as the department chair for the College of Urban Education at Davenport University, USA.