The challenge of ethical leadership university courses: preparing leaders for an uncertain, turbulent and divert future

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Abstract

This paper discusses the necessity of introducing Ethical Leadership in university leadership preparation courses and provides an example of designing and implementing such a course. Emphasis is given on the teaching methodology of the course which is based on experiential learning, a combination of action and case study research approaches and an intermingling of open and traditional teaching practices. The structure of the proposed course draws upon extensive relevant literature review and attempts to incorporate the main strands of adult education. A students' self-evaluating tool is also included as a means to evidence the course participants' satisfaction as well as to help feedback and further enquiry. The rationale behind this course proposal is that, instead of trying to change or eradicate misappropriate leadership concepts and values at a later age, it is much better to care for their good formation and foundation as earlier as possible, during [head]teacher initial formation [at university level].

Keywords:

ethical Leadership; university course; experiential learning; school leaders

Liderança distribuída para a igualdade e a aprendizagem

Resumo: Neste artigo discute-se a necessidade de introduzir a Liderança Ética nos cursos universitários de preparação para a liderança e dá-se um exemplo da conceção e implementação de um destes cursos. Dá-se especial enfase à metodologia de ensino do curso, que se baseia na aprendizagem experiencial, uma combinação de abordagens de investigação ação e estudo de caso entremeados de práticas de ensino abertas e tradicionais combinadas. A estrutura do curso proposto é concebida a partir de uma extensiva e relevante revisão de literatura e tenta incorporar as principais tendências da educação de adultos. Também se inclui um instrumento de auto avaliação de alunos, como modo de evidenciar a satisfação dos alunos, como contributo de feedback e para posterior inquirição. O racional subjacente a esta proposta de curso é que, em vez de mudar ou erradicar mais tarde, conceitos e valores de liderança desadequados, é muito melhor cuidar de uma boa formação dos candidatos, bem fundamentada, tão cedo quanto possível durante a formação inicial dos diretores e professores, a nível da Universidade.

Palavras-chave: *liderança ética; programa universitário*; aprendizagem experiencial, director de escola

Leadership distribué pour l'équité et l'apprentissage

Résumé: Cet article examine la nécessité d'introduire le sujet du leadership moral dans les programmes du leadership éducatif aux universités et elle fournit un exemple d'organisation et application d'un tel programme. On met l'accent sur la méthodologie de l'enseignement des disciplines laquelle est fondée sur l'apprentissage des expériences, sur la combinaison des approches d' «Action Research» et de «Case Study» et sur un «mélange», ca veut dire, un usage commun des pratiques d'enseignement ouvertes et traditionnelles. La structure du programme propose est basée sur une vaste observation de la littérature pertinente et vise à intégrer les piliers de l'apprentissage des adultes. En plus, elle contient un outil d'auto-évaluation et de satisfaction des participants. La problématique de ce programme proposé est basée sur la condition qu', au lieu de changer ou de déraciner de fausses conceptions et valeurs du leadership éducatif a un âge avancé, il est préférable de s'occuper de la juste conception et leur compréhension le plus tôt possible, c'est-à-dire pendant la formation principale des instituteurs et des chefs d'établissements (la formation à l'université).

Mots-clés: leadership moral; programme universitaire; apprentissage des expériences; chefs d'établissements

Liderazgo Distribuido para la Equidad y el Aprendizaje

Resumen: En esta obra se discute la necesidad de introducir Liderazgo ético en los cursos de preparación de liderazgo de la universidad y ofrece un ejemplo de diseño e implementación de un curso de este tipo. Se hace énfasis en la metodología de la enseñanza del curso que se basa en el aprendizaje experiencial, una combinación de enfoques de investigación-acción y el caso de estudio y una mezcla de las prácticas de enseñanza abiertos y tradicionales. La estructura del curso propuesto se basa en una amplia revisión de la literatura relevante y trata de incorporar las principales vertientes de la educacion de adultos. A los alumnos herramienta de auto-evaluación también se incluye como un medio para evidenciar los participantes en el curso 'satisfacción, así como para ayudar a la regeneración y la investigación adicional. El fundamento de esta propuesta de curso es que, en lugar de tratar de cambiar o erradicar los conceptos y valores de liderazgo apropiarse indebidamente a una edad mayor, es mucho mejor para cuidar de su buena formación y fundación como antes posible, durante la formación inicial del maestros y directores del escuelas [en la universidad.

Palabras-clave: liderazgo ético; cursos de la universidad; aprendizaje experiencial; directores del escuelas

Introduction

In the transition from the bureaucratized organizations of the twentieth century with their pathologies and maladministration patterns to the globalized New Public Management Era of the beginning of the twenty first century, new issues and needs emerge for educational leaders (Fullan, 2003, Gunter, 2002, Samier, 2008) . Moreover, this transition happens amidst turbulent times. Turbulence is conceived as "an economic turmoil buffeting every aspect of life…. [while] deep inside there is a deficit of culture, values, principles and a consequent [un]ethical decision making … [which, in turn, reveals] lack of ethos, lack of democratic and equalitarian values, lack of respect for each other" (Argyropoulou, 2011). This means that leadership preparation patterns and courses should be modified accordingly to meet these needs.

There are various types of leadership courses. Categorization of these courses can be done according to a number of criteria (Laot et Olry,2004) : whether the course is offered within an institutional framework [initial teacher training courses in a graduate or post—graduate level at a university], courses targeted at professionals [in-service pre-appointment or post-appointment courses for school leaders, see for example, National College for School Leadership, UK or Leadership Academy, Austria] or free-market courses offered on private or individualized level and open to everyone interested in education issues. Lately, leadership training courses in a new form- that of a peer-learning activity- are encouraged by the EACEA, EU, and are offered within the framework of European Comenius, Lifelong Learning Programmes (LLP) or even ERASMUS programmes. They can be either traditional face-to-face courses or distant -learning ones, adopting Open Education principles and using ICT (Open University courses). This variety indicates an increasing interest in developing leadership skills and capacities in a constantly changing society and school system.

However, the author of this paper argues that more attention should be given to university leadership courses for teacher trainees; the significance of these courses lies in the fact that they formulate future [head] teachers' values, perceptions of and attitudes towards their profession at a quite early stage of their life and profession. Early formulated concepts and values are deeply rooted; so, instead of trying to change or eradicate misappropriate concepts and values at a later age, it is much better to care for their good formation and foundation as earlier as possible.

This paper focuses on a university graduate course for Ethical School Leadership. After discussing a number of critical factors underlying such a course, an experiential and critical teaching [and learning] methodology and supporting

teaching material is proposed. The approach used in this [designing and teaching] action research suggests that cognitive and meta-cognitive capacities are acquired best when "learning [is achieved] by doing" (Dewey, 1902, Boydston, 2008).

The purpose of this paper

Starratt (2004) supports leadership preparation should start from university. Ethical leadership is an issue for everybody working within school organizations (human beings organizations), as it "infuses and energizes the work of schools". Accordingly, "the ethical analysis of the virtues needed" (that is "responsibility, authenticity and presence interpenetrate and enrich one another" and all three of them) should be appropriated by the human beings engaged in the school process (teachers, learners, school leaders, teachers as leaders). As far as [specifically] school leaders are concerned, "their understanding of educational leadership needs to move beyond similar notions of technical efficiency to seeing it as a moral activity that engages the full humanity of the school community" (Starratt, 2004:9).

So, the purpose of this research paper is to provide, analyze and discuss a model for an Ethical Leadership course at university level for initial teacher trainees; moreover, the proposed course may [and it is wished to] trigger further discussion among professionals and university staff on the validity, usefulness and ideal structure of such a course.

The methodology

Both the structure of the course proposed here and the implemented type of students' research are engaged with two methodological approaches, action research and case study, which, though distinct, intermingle through the course design and implementation by the teaching person and the Ethical Leadership small-research projects organized by the students. Lomax (2006, quoting Carr and Kemmis, 1986) describes action research as "self-reflective, self-critical and critical enquiry undertaken by professionals to improve the rationality and justice of their own practices, their understanding of these practices and the wider context of practice" and adds that it utilizes many traditional research skills and tools". Bassey (2006), on the other hand, provides a definition of research case study by outlining its main characteristics as follows: it is an empirical, critical enquiry aimed at informing understandings of phenomena pertinent to the discipline of education and improving action through theoretical understanding. So, it is "conducted within a localized boundary of space and time,

into interesting aspects of an educational activity, mainly in its natural context and within an ethic of respect for persons, in order to inform the judgments and decisions of practitioners, policy-makers or theoreticians who are working to these ends". He makes his definition "prescriptive" by adding details of how the researcher will make good use of the multiple data s/he collects. He also identifies three case study types according to their end-points: a. story-telling and picture-drawing, b. theory-seeking and theory-telling [however, leading to fuzzy general predictions], and, c. evaluative. In this paper, care has been taken to indicate which aspect/type is meant, when the term is used.

The Theoretical Background
A/ Designing a University course

Several issues intermingle when designing a university course: the level of the course, the context in which the course is taking place, the learners' profile and the teaching methodology, the latter one combining and integrating elements of the three previous issues.

1. The level and the context of the course.

It is important to distinguish between graduate and post-graduate courses, as this indicates a difference in content difficulty and may indicate a difference in students' age and, consequently, cognitive level or analytic capabilities.

Although contextual features are more or less given on a university level, universities differ from one another in their scope, faculty/school structure, organizational structure characteristics, [democratic] collegial culture, authority and control, competitiveness, administrative support, facilities, research range and culture, funding patterns, innovation-mindedness and internal politics (Zücker, 1987) . Each of these organizational features may or may not be proactive and generative for the introduction and /or continuation of a course.

2. The learners' profile

There are two underlying issues here regarding what is to be learned and how adults in professional, semi-professional or quasi-professional roles learn. Experience, enquiry, critical thinking and collaborative work with fellow learners seem to be adopted by many as the best learning tools.

University students are adults falling into Roger's (1999) first adult category, 18-25 years. They are future- and career- oriented, they are still developing as personalities and as future professionals, though they already have their own experiences and values, and they come to university courses with given intentions and often pre-set expectations regarding the course content effec-

tiveness. Course content effectiveness is associated with perceptions and the attitudes of the educating process they have formed in their previous learning experiences. These form a challenge for both the students and the professors in the sense that students form a more or less mature audience that can challenge, critically discuss, accept or maintain a negative stance against professors' teaching and evaluation of their progress or professionalization process. Students, as adults, strive for more academic freedom on their part and they fight to have a say in their university life. In other words, university students are more "political" today than they used to be in the past. The challenge for professors is whether they listen to their students' voice, they "resolve the confusion", they integrate leading qualities in their teaching and they introduce new approaches to old issues (Rogers, 1999, as above).

To go a little bit further than Rogers, one would suggest that what is needed is a change in teaching patterns. Modern students have innumerable sources of information; what seems to be the need is the guidance to new learning patterns. Accordingly, the teaching staff is expected not just to teach but bring this change to learning patterns. Rogers (1999: 126) points out the importance of motivation and reinforcement (i.e. leading qualities) of adult students as the vehicle for acquiring new knowledge and implement in the profession.

Following to the above described adult learners' profile, it is necessary to analyze their cognitive and meta-cognitive competences and provide a conceptual framework for their best knowledge acquisition. The role of the teaching person is pivotal in the way the students learn: is it the all-knowing teacher or the teacher-facilitator of knowledge? In other words, do we stand for a teacher-centered or a learner-centered process? The answer to this question defines both the teaching and learning method. Adult students, professionals, semi- professionals [young people who have just entered their career paths] or quasi-professionals [university students working and learning in a profession-simulating environment, such as the internship] have already form ways and experiences of learning (see also: Laot et Olry, 2004: 96-101); they need to be respected for what they do or the process they follow, they demand learning freedom and a "democratic" environment for their voice to be heard, they have to take decisions following critical thinking on the acquired knowledge and information, to "conscientize" this knowledge (Freire, 1972) and then move again to think critically and take new decisions. Van de Werf (2011) argues that adults' learning process is a *psychological function* that passes through three distinct stages: cognition, meta-cognition and motivation. He puts emphasis on meta-cognition as "it enables individuals to monitor their current knowledge and skills levels, plan and allocate limited learning resources with optimal ef-

ficiency, and evaluate their current learning state"; the meta-cognition field is considered as "thinking about thinking" or "higher order thinking". Both Freire and Van de Werf's arguments are included in the adults' "learning cycle", as described by Rogers in the following figure (figure 1). Rogers introduces the notion of experience as the main learning source, the starting point. Experience, here, can be broadly defined as knowledge gained from study, research and pure experience, that is, knowledge through feeling, which is using the body senses, as the pathway of external stimuli into internal thinking.
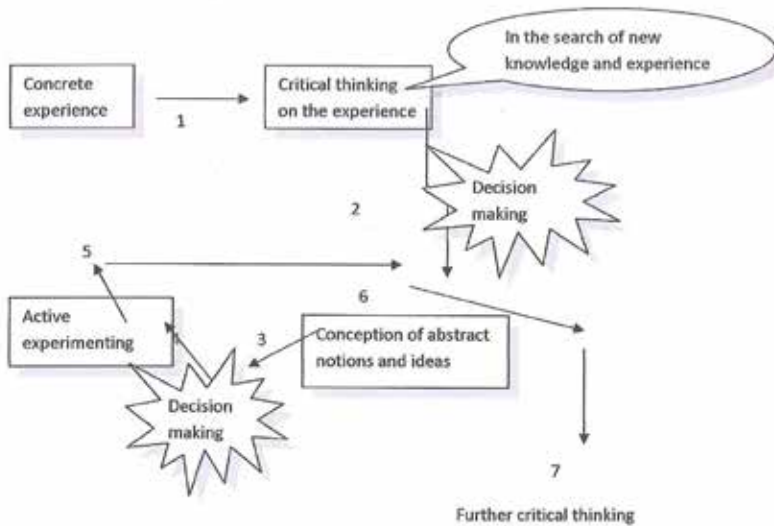

Figure 1: The adults' learning cycle (adopted from Rogers, 1999: 154)

The preparation for leadership is an intellectual and practical process and, according to Gunter (2002: 88), there are many ways to support learning:

- problem-based learning
- experiential learning through fieldwork, simulations and the stories and experiences of practitioners
- supporting partnership arrangements in the development of leadership centres
- evidencing through portfolio approaches to assessment

Since one of the aims of adult teaching is the change of attitudes resulting from chunks of new knowledge, it is important for the teacher to challenge existing perceptions and lead adult students to conception or re-conception of terms and definitions. This can be done in an alternative, heuristic, way by introducing enquiry instead of providing readymade definitions. Heuristics as

a method of acquiring new knowledge may suggest more collaborative work among adult students, especially when course participants represent different types of learners: active learners, experimenting learners, thinkers, theorists (Rogers, 1999: 156, citing Kolb, 1984, Honey and Mumford, 1986).

3. The teaching method

It is now evident that the learners' profile outlines –more or less- the teacher's expected profile as well as his/her teaching methodology. Three seem to be the turning points in adult teaching: active learning, collaborative learning and interactive teaching material (Race, 1999).

Active learners are those who ask and answer questions to the teacher and to each other, spot problems and seek their solution, evaluate their own work and the work of others, find the causes of events though reasoning and take rationalized decisions based on critical thinking (Race, 1999: 231). It is the adult teacher's responsibility to motivate and facilitate passive students to transform into active ones. Race alternates Rogers' learning cycle by replacing the key points of the student's learning process with new ones outlining adults' attitudes [psychological, internal process points] towards the learning process (figure 2).
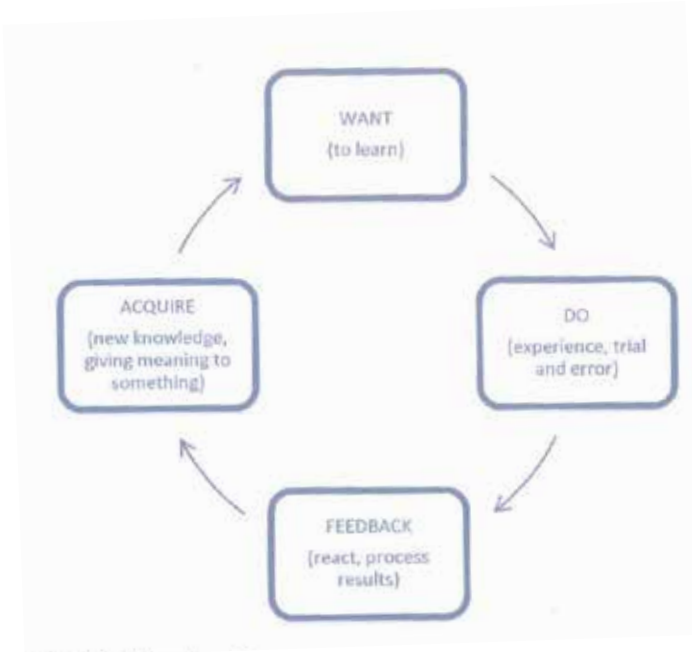

Figure2: An alternative model of learning cycle (adopted from Race, 1999:23)

Active learning presupposes the limited role of the teacher. The teacher moves away from the teacher-centered tradition and develops a student-centered, student-facilitating role: s/he encourages, supports, motivates students to "discover" knowledge through personal study, analysis and critical enquiry in class. Class work is organized in a way to allow collaboration, team work, sharing and exchanging chunks of knowledge, using ICT, be creative and productive. Active learning engages everyone in the pursuit of knowledge so as to replace passive learning.

Race (1999:220) proposes a combination of traditional and open education teaching methods to help students of various learning styles: quick learners, slow learners, absent-minded or even absentees, poor language users, indifferent students, over-stressed learners and those with limited concentration.

The facilitating role of the adult teacher is supported by flexible *interactive teaching material* (Race, 1999: 61- 80) and extended ICT use which replace the traditional set book. This can include a study guide (with study techniques), a short study manual (in a variety of presentation ways or styles), a resource package, recapitulation and reviewing exercises, feedback and error analysis, formative and summative evaluation options.

B/ Designing a University course on Ethical Leadership

This chapter discusses the background and characteristics of School Leadership today and the need for the introduction of Ethics in it. In doing so, it emphasizes on the political challenges underlying the School Leadership field, as these render responsible for [positive or negative] change in education.

1. The field of Leadership in Education today

A number of authors (Gunter, 2001, Hargreaves and Shirley, 2009, Sahlberg, 2012) take a critical stance towards the changes the New Public Management Era brings in education; they support that these changes actually express a new order in the societal way of thinking and acting.

Hargreaves and Shirley (2009) argue that educational systems globally have gone through three distinct phases: innovation and inconsistency, markets and standardization and performance and partnership; they are still in the search of the "fourth way" which will provide "the inspiring future" for the long desired educational change.

One of the major characteristics of the New Era is of standardization. Samier (2008a) argues that School Management and Leadership theory and practice "adopts abstract mathematical models of phenomena as more real than the phenomena themselves, as substitutes for authentic experiences". Over-standardization introduced by international agencies, such as the OECD, has already

received severe criticism by educationalists (Sahlberg, 2012). Over-standardization is considered a conscious political action, although it is often disguised by the propaganda on the quest of efficiency or it intentionally "kitscifies" the theory of leadership (in other words, an oversimplified and intellectually lacking theoretical background on effective leadership) (Samier, 2008a). This "distortion" creates a politically normative scope and ethic in Educational Leadership; in other words, it has never been "a pursuit of truth" and a wish for amelioration (Samier, 2008b:12).

Another feature of the New Era in Educational Leadership is the purposed blurring of the terms administration, management and leadership and the tendency to include all three of them under the umbrella- term leadership, despite the fact that their differences have repeatedly spotted by many authors since last decade (see, for example, Dimmock, 1999). Gunter (2002) also attempts to provide a distinction between management of previous decades and leadership of the most recent literature.

It is worth noticing here that the bureaupathologies of older times, (autocracy, objectification, abdication of responsibility and the slowing down and complicating of decision-making, Samier, 2008a:13) are still persistent in the educational systems today. These pathologies, along with other consequent ones (obedience to authority, sanctions for disobedience, conflict avoidance and passivity, Samier, 2008a) are still evident in concentrated systems of today (i.e. Greece) mingled with policies of "rationalization" and "normatization" of procedures aiming at the so called "better results according to international rankings".

2. Ethical Leadership in Education

Brown et al (2005) provided a concise definition of what is defined as Ethical Leadership in the relevant literature: *"the demonstration of normatively appropriate conduct through personal actions and interpersonal relationships, and the promotion of such conduct to followers through two-way communication, reinforcement and decision-making"*.

Further on, Brown and Trevino (2006), based on Bandura's (1977, 1986) work (as quoted in Argyropoulou, 2011), clarified the three major "areas" where ethical leadership can be seen: *the self*, that is, personal traits and integrity, *the contextual relations and influences*, that is, the leaders' relations and communication with their followers and the situations in which the leadership was realized, and, finally, the *impact ethical leadership may have on followers*, by stressing the idea of social learning through role modeling.

What is the connection between Ethics and Education? School leaders in most educational systems have a double identity, the one of the educator and

that of the civil servant, a fact that [by itself] creates a variety of dilemmas for the school leaders; particularly, dilemmas that question the notions of common good, legitimacy, moral responsibility ("the inner values of the individual and his or her specific commitments within the complex social life of modern world", Starratt, 2004:28), accountability, etc

Fullan (2003:1-3) strongly believes that approaching leadership through the perspective of "Ethics will offer the educational change we expect in terms of quality learning and humanistic culture, not in terms of curricula, indicators and statistically measured school achievement". Starratt also (2004: 9) argues that school leaders of today should "move beyond …notions of technical efficiency to seeing it [i.e.: leadership] as a moral activity that engages the full humanity of the school community".

Ethical Leadership is based primarily on the Aristotelian approach to Ethics and morality and uses enquiry, the "Socratic" method, to analyze and discuss the dilemmas imposed on Education by the modern socio-politico-economic challenges, which demand a special way of handling and of making decisions. Starratt, also points out that a school leader's work is *intellectual and moral* at the same time (Starratt, 2004:3); which means that his/her decisions should be intellectual and moral and cannot be taken in isolation. Their decisions echo ideas and approaches from a range of fields, such philosophy, philosophy of education, psychology, sociology, sociology of education, pedagogy, etc. This means that the issue of Ethical School Leadership should be seen holistically through various discussion "lenses".

It is evident from the above discussion that a number of dilemmas and their approach and/or decision making have also to do with teachers, not only school leaders. Teachers face problems of the same kind but in smaller scale in their classes. Given that teachers develop leadership of their own (Teacher Leadership, Harris and Muijs, 2003, Lieberman and Miller, 2004), ethical leadership is also a field of interest for them; consequently, ethical leadership courses should be targeted at teachers, as well.

3. Themes of Ethical Leadership in Education

Literature on Ethical Leadership in Education includes a variety of themes: a. the virtues (responsibility, presence, authenticity) an Ethical School Leader should possess (Starratt, 2004), b. the conflict of moral principles, the areas of "friction" in everyday school life (i.e. lying, meeting standards and/or benchmarks of curricula and testing, knowing in depth and implement the principles of the curricula) (Strike, 2007, Shapiro and Stefkovich, 2011), c. decision-making on delicate school issues such as, intellectual liberty, individual freedom and

the public interest, equal educational opportunities, diversity, accountability, evaluation, authority, control and others (Strike, 2007, Strike, Haller and Soltis, 2005, Shapiro and Stefkovich, 2011) d. the levels of moral purpose of school leadership (Fullan, 2003), e. creation and implementation of multiparadigm approach to decision making (Shapiro and Stefkovich, 2011).

4. Teaching an Ethical Leadership course

Almost all of the authors mentioned in the previous paragraph have written their books to address educational leaders when they are prepared to lead; these books include the "pedagogy" of Ethical Leadership but they can hardly be called set books as the authors' work assumes that school leaders, aspiring or in practice, are expected to do their own study journey through their own learning process[1].

A common characteristic of all these books is the presentation of material in the form of cases to be studied, an idea stimulated by the merits of reflective practice (Dewey, 1902). Authors point out their care to include authentic dilemmas on modern school environments, to "structure the dilemmas with key questions to assist readers to think" in different ways than before and, thus, to open the students and practitioners' minds" (Shapiro and Stefkovich, 2011).

Case presentation, or scenarios, is a useful practical tool for class teaching in educational management and leadership courses as they function as "simulators" of the real school world. Case-studies conceived and used this way fall into Bassey's first type: story-telling and picture-drawing. Teaching staff need handful material to illustrate a point or a theory but since this is unavailable at the time needed a simulated scenario offers a readymade solution. According to Strike, Haller and Soltis (2005) "the role of the instructor is Socratic"; by drawing out questions from students and criticizing their responses, s/he help them "formulate more adequate and more thoroughly considered views" which will lead them eventually to formulate the moral principles underlying the given case.

However, as Starratt (2004: 136) notes, university programmes "focus on the professional components of leadership", thus, leaving little space for attention to ethical matters, as the latter are not usually –electively- included in the professional components. He supports that ethical leadership preparation courses should "have to move beyond the simplistic notion of having students analyze cases involving complex ethical issues and challenges". Though he finds that a useful initial exercise for bringing attention "to the need of ethical clarity when arbitrating moral conflicts in schools", he argues that if the analysis stays at this initial level, students tend to keep in mind only the negative issues, what they

should avoid or prevent, "rather than using the cases …. to analyze the larger moral issues that … leaders have often been blind to". Alternatively, he offers three sets of self-reflective questions on each of the three virtues (responsibility, authenticity, and presence) of the ethical school leader to be included in a scattered way throughout the course (along with case study, story-telling, picture-drawing).

Fullan (2003: 62-64, quoting Reina and Reina, 1999) calls for ways of self improvement by providing a series of competences and their subcomponents the individual should try to exercise acquire, a fact which he admits is very difficult to do.

Strike's book (2007) is more theoretical in the sense that –while or after discussing a given case that runs throughout the book- it provides moral guidance on decision making in the form of conclusions. Thus, it answers the prime questions he has posed in the beginning of the book as to what is good and what is right or how we shall live well together within the school.

Shapiro and Stefkovich's (2011) book, though implementing the case study practice, provides an authentic path of analysis, in the form of a conceptual model. The prismatic multiparadigm of decision making (ethics of justice, ethics of critique, ethics of care and ethics of the profession) takes the students a step further: to examine and formulate their own professional codes of ethics in the light of individual personal codes of ethics and the standards of profession and then to call on these codes to help students be placed at the center of the ethical decision-making process.

The actual course: a proposal

The theoretical background presented in the first part of this paper has served as the platform for the designing of the university course on Ethical Leadership, which we propose below. Our proposal regards three pillars: a. the course structure and resource management, b. the teaching methodology, c. the students' evaluation and outcomes.

A/ Features of the course implementation and the target group

1. The course identity and the participants-some restrictions

The proposed course on Ethical Leadership takes place within an institutionalized framework; it forms part of the undergraduate curriculum for Early Childhood teacher trainees in the School of Education, University of Crete, Greece. It is a limited student number course, elective and research-oriented[2]. It addresses

mature (3rd and 4th year) students who are in the middle or towards the end of their internships in preschools/kindergartens. They are usually in their early twenties but quite often there are mature students of 25 years and above, either ones who have retarded their studies or others who have completed another degree before or even ones who have decided to study at a rather late age. So, according to Roger's categorization above (page 3) they fall in the first adult group.

Students choose the course by entering an electronic register platform on specific days and time announced by the Student Registrar officer. Registration is done on a first-come first-served basis. Students are eligible to register for the course if they have previously attended the course prerequisite, Organization and Management of Education. The prerequisite serves as the minimal knowledge for someone to study and work in the School Leadership paradigm, yet there are several gaps and fragmented knowledge of the field when students enter the Ethical Leadership course.

Every year the course content is made available to students beforehand on Students electronic platform, called *Student Web*. This availability aims at their information and the expectations from the course, both students and teachers' expectations.

There are many reasons for students selecting the course: the prevalent is that "they need a course of this type to completion the their studies" and since the electronic platform opening time is rather limited they just enter and get register to any available course provided that they have fulfilled the prerequisites. This means that their own motivation and interest to work on the given research theme is often very low. There is only a very small student number who select the research courses for their content or the teaching person and these are students who are alert to get registered first. This detail is important as it adds to the fact of limited or fragmentary pre-knowledge to serve as the starting point for the course including terminology and epistemological paradigms. While research course attendance is obligatory, students are free to attend to general [often prerequisite] courses. This also creates another learning gap for the students entering the research courses. Moreover, the nature and the content of the Ethical Leadership course are difficult to conceptualize and/or combine with existing knowledge from other subject areas. Course content design and teaching methodology has to take these restrictions into consideration.

2. The course aims

 The aims of the course can be divided in two sets: Set 1 includes the teaching and pedagogical aims, that is : a. to familiarize students with the notions and the content of Ethical Leadership, the application of Ethical Leadership in

Education and its theoretical issues, b. to help students observe and recognize early childhood educational situations where conflict is based on underlying ethical issues, c. to help them form a coherent view of their roles [and the limits of this role]as early childhood educators and future educational leaders, d. to provide students with necessary keys and tools to analyze ethical dilemmas and proceed with ethical decision-making. Set 2 is more research-oriented to fulfill the needs of a research-based course: a. to build the necessary capacities to critically review the existing literature and construct a sound theoretical background for a research paper, b. to conduct small-scale research in Early Childhood Education settings, c. to acquire write-up –for-research capacities. The rationale behind these aims is a. to prepare students for executing research and write-up their final year thesis, b. to prepare future teachers to be researchers[3] as well.

3. The course expected results

Students are expected to be able to conduct their own research and by the end of the course to be able to present it orally and in written form. Oral presentation includes the construction of an interesting, creative and viewers-friendly power point presentation, while written work the dissemination of their research project in the form of a research paper suitable for a research journal publication, according to specific guidelines.

4. The course structure

The course is structured in levels ensuring the simultaneous development of knowledge and skills. As it takes initial students' background into consideration, it starts from "point zero". Point zero represents a reluctant student, with minimal knowledge of school leadership issues, often time- and other obligations-pressed, disinterested and accustomed to a passive attendance in the auditorium.

Point zero is perhaps the major challenge in teaching this course. The only possible asset is the students' encounter with a totally different course title.

Level 1 includes a rather traditional, lecture type, introduction to the educational leadership paradigm and necessary terminology. Level 1 has been codified as initial teaching level. During this phase, which usually covers two or three teaching sessions of three hours each[4], the teaching person also outlines the research subject and the research methodology without going deep down research details or research limitations. However, emphasis is given in the distinction between management (plus administration) and leadership and the aspect of the managerial and the leading roles.

Level 2 has two distinct parts: part 1 is the discussion on Ethics and the Ethics paradigm; it draws from theory and literature but it introduces enquiry as a teaching method. In this phase students are encouraged to answer questions asked in class by the teaching person or even ask questions to each other through an ice-breaking exercise. Part 2 forms a transitional phase: enquiry is practiced in class session on a self ethics-ground probing exercise to challenge students' "own ethical principles and moral values as human beings, as educators and as citizens" (Starratt, 2004: 136). Full class questions are few (2 or 3) and serve as an example for a more complex ethical enquiry exercise. By the middle of part 2, students are introduced to Starratt's three ethical leader's virtues (see above, page 7). Three sets of questions, on authenticity, presence and responsibility respectively, proposed by Starratt (2004: 136-140) as basic enquiry material, are used to start a critical discussion, which can be extended to two or three sessions. Students are encouraged to form small groups of four or five, like the ones they ask young children to do during their teaching practice in kindergartens. They are guided to pick their group members from people they have not been well-acquainted yet and get to know each other. They are also instructed to appoint a spoke-person for their group to communicate the group discussion findings to class. Students are given each set of questions in every session and are ask to go further than that by relating the given questions to their own teaching environment. They are reinforced to probe deeper by reflecting on their own teaching practice exercise during that or the previous week. Emphasis is put in associating theory taught and practice instants. The rationale behind these techniques is to attempt to form their own scenarios and learn from the study of their cases instead of using readymade scenarios. This also serves a first-hand action research and self reflective exercise and it draws their interest to improve their own practice. After discussing and reflecting for a given time, the group's spoke person informs the class about their results. This leads to a renewed full class discussion and the discussion results are disseminated to everyone in paper.

Apart from the class work described above, students are given short assignments throughout Level 1 and 2 to reinforce the lessons learnt and get motivated for the next step. These short assignments may include term definitions, literature research strategies, short paper reviews, compilation of advice offered by specialists for team work, etc. Meanwhile, interactive supporting material has been disseminated in the form of power point presentations, platforms for creative presentation of materials, ways of indexing information from literature. Emphasis is given on art and creativity as these two form essential

parameters of the Kindergarten national curriculum; hence, extra weight is put on art, music and dance, as experiential expressions[5].

Level 3 comes when students are almost in the middle of the semester. More cognitively- mature and, thus, more self-confident, research-focused, motivated and interested than in the beginning of the course, they are presented with the rough description of their own research project. This final level is the longer one as it comprises of six to seven sessions/weeks.

5. The "Contract of research work behavior"

There is a common thematic framework for all class members, so equality and equity in evaluation can be maintained. There is also a common "contract of research work behavior" which students are asked to discuss and accept before they start to work (see, also, Kokkos, 1998:170). Actually, this contract is a consensus [among them and between them and the teaching person] on what, how, why and how long to work on. The main streams of this contract are:

> ➢ Each project will be executed by a small-size team of 3 to 5 people: only odd student numbers are accepted. Team work will include but individual work on an equal and trustworthy basis but the final version and the work deliverables will be the product of collaborative work.

The consensus discussion revolves around collaboration and communication as good practices: discussion is made robust by literature evidence on co-operation, experiential learning and group project development; necessary material on this area is provided. Students are explained that they need to acquire collaborative and communicative skills for two practical reasons: first, they teach young children to work in small groups, and, second, in real life kindergarten/school they have to co-operate with fellow teachers and Headteachers. Consequently, it is wise for them to live the experience of collaboration and communication with people they little know, see the problems and the benefits for themselves and evaluate and get feedback from the process before they attempt to teach others through it. They are also asked to elect a coordinator for their team; s/he will be responsible for the team's communication with the teaching person and/or the coordinator of other teams. By no means does the coordinator enjoy any privileges.

An issue of concern for the team members has been their physical communication as they have a strict timetable and a number of deadlines to manage. After a short motivating discussion students were encouraged to find alternative ways for communication by using ICT. Suggestions for electronic and/ or

virtual presence were finally shaped into Facebook chat communities which will replace presence when pressing project would be on the way[6].

> ➢ They will have to conduct action research using the kindergarten they are assigned to do their teaching practice as their case study environment. However, they must find a team's special codification methodology not to disclose their research participants' identity.

Guidance was given as to what and how to research. It was agreed that the content of the research will be kindergarten teachers and Headteachers' observance of three major ethical themes: lying, knowledge and implementation of curriculum principles and values and creativity. All three themes were mingled in a way to challenge practitioners' ethical leadership characteristics: to research whether practitioners know the curriculum principles and values and implement them in their teaching, taking the issue of creativity as an example, and challenge their ethical behavior in examining their attitudes towards lying in school.

At this stage, students are eager to know more about qualitative research methodology. Three main methodological issues were presented here: case study research in educational settings as a research strategy, action research, observation, interviewing and content analysis. Students are briefed on these issues, explained as to which part of their research and how they are to use each of them, provided further resources for self-study and asked to provide a short example [of each] for assessing their understanding [on meta-cognitive level].

The objective of this particular level is to observe real world practice, spot [un]ethical behavior and reflect on it using the Socratic enquiry; then, go further, and make decisions according to Shapiro and Stefkovich's multiparadigm by replacing the real agents ["get into research subjects' shoes", experience] and offer alternative behavior patterns, where possible.

Another objective is to practice ethical issues on the spot. Understanding and implementing research ethics and anonymity opens a wide discussion on individuality, diversity, individual rights, trustworthiness and the making meaning of research. Again students are encouraged to find examples and critically discuss them. At this point students are mature to get involved into serious discussion and are [and should be] encouraged to let do so alone, thus, developing and evolving their communication skills. The teaching person, then, acts as a facilitator in a semi-structured conversation, though s/he intervenes and guides it where necessary so as to stick to the objective.

> ➢ Assessment criteria and deliverables are decided upon.

Deliverables of each team include a. an oral power point presentation b. a written paper of the team's research work.

The assessment criteria regard both originality of the research project, appropriate research methodology, creative power point presentation and proven collaborative and communicative skills.

The originality of the research project concerns the chosen aspect of the given theme; teams should have to avoid repeat the same research aspect. Appropriate methodology refers to the selected methods and tools for the specific research theme aspect and whether these methods and tools have been complete; for example, if the team decides to use semi-structured interviews a research tool, the structure, number and sequence of the interviewee's questions and the question relevance to the researched aspect are examined. Moreover, the paper quality is assessed according to the guidelines provided for the students.

The team gets one grade for their work. This means that all team members will share the same grade[7], a fact that works as a *security-valve* for their cooperation: it secures that everyone within the team will share the same-more or less- workload and that they will have to take their share based on each one's skills and capacities so as to "produce" the best result possible. Self-delegation of responsibilities is a maturity-oriented exercise to live and experience and, thus, to balance their contribution and behavior accordingly. In other words, they are made responsible for possible cheating, as well as managing other conflicting or rule-violating behaviors and are treated as adults.

Students are also asked to present their work as a team using a creative power point. During oral presentation each student presents his/her own part of delegated work and answers questions concerning this part. Creativeness of power point presentation has to do with the choice of content visual representations (videos, music background, visual slide effects, pictures, graphs, etc) serving as starting points for the students' speech rather long detailed texts read by the speaker. Students have already got acquainted with examples of creative presentation work and websites for power point creation during Level 3. Oral presentation aims at helping students to be exposed to critical peer communities, overcome their shyness and learn to deal with a larger adult audience. Exposition to adult audiences and appropriate language-gender use is a significant skill for Early Childhood teachers, as their classes/audiences consist only of very young children.

Collaborative and communicative skills are the hardest part to prove. It has been decided that major criteria for their assessment would be the way they [themselves] will choose to prove them (and the rest of the teams will decide upon), as well as the demonstration of their Facebook chat platform. At this

point, students were very inventive; they demonstrated sample pictures of their working together in informal settings, discussing or even creating supplement materials for their final presentation. Some teams included drama techniques and role playing to make their presentations vivid.

➢ Formative evaluation of the work progress and feedback

Since this work pattern is new to the students, they have asked for formative evaluation of their work and feedback. It has then been decided that in a period of three week each team would present chunks of their project in class and have an evaluation discussion. The class would serve as critical friends, reading or viewing material and discuss options. Exchanging of ides was reinforced but copying each other's ideas would be penalized. The teaching person would chair the teams' "round tables" but would not interfere with further guidance, unless new material or literature would have to be provided. The free, open, team discussions were unanimously agreed, as they provide a democratic and collaborative platform for problem solving and decision making.

➢ Agreement for Deadlines and Self-Evaluation questionnaire

The timetable for power point presentation and final paper submission is agreed. Students are also explained the details and the benefits of the self-evaluation exercise before there is an agreement to proceed with it on a fixed date after the end of the course but before they get their final grades. It is explained that their self-evaluation is part of their summative evaluation[8] process and its results will be discussed in a plenary session of all teams and be publicized, if all come to an agreement at the publication issue.

6. The students' Self-Evaluation: a "parlour" game with individual players. Research within the research.

As the whole course design and the research design [for the teaching person and the students, respectively] fall into the category of action research, as described above, and aim at the understanding and the consequent improvement of practice of both, a self- evaluation exercise seems to be a indispensable part of action research (it can also considered as an evaluative case-study of this specific cohort). Teaching people may evaluate themselves by using a number of judging criteria such as those in Lomax (2006: 137). The same criteria-more or less- can be employed in the construction of a students' self-evaluation semi-structured questionnaire. Additionally, this questionnaire as a tool can contribute to the teaching person's self-evaluation and critical reflection.

The students' self-evaluation questionnaire, based on Lomax's "Criteria for judging action research" (2006), has been structured upon seven reflection

strands and their outcomes: purpose → action for improvement, focus → doing it oneself, on one's own practice, relations → democratic, aim→ to generate theory, method → critical, iterative, validation→ peer, audience→ professionals, users.

Care has been taken so as the questionnaire structure to facilitate students' understanding of their outcomes from the course. Throughout the course students were urged to revise on the course aim and purpose, the pivotal components of ethical leadership paradigm, as well as the outcomes of the course. The questionnaire provided a way of recapitulation of what has been learn, experienced and felt during course progression. Below there is a short presentation of the main findings from the Students' Self-Evaluation questionnaire with emphasis on a. their feelings in the beginning and by the end of the course and b. the outcomes.

The self-evaluation questionnaire analyzed here was answered by the 2013-2014 spring semester cohort. There were 16 students registered in the course, but 15 answered the questionnaire [one was ill on the day of completion].

The course students were all female, 20-23 years old; only two were mature students, 36-37 years old. It is worth mentioning that the overwhelming majority of the students admitted that they their reasons of selecting the course were others than their pure interest: either they wanted a research course to complete their studies or they managed to get on the registration platform on time. Only four answered that they chose it because of its content and/or the teaching person.

On the whole students found the course content innovative: ten emphasized on the new and interesting content, while six were attracted by the course methodology, especially the options they had for critical thinking, experiential learning and role playing. Two were the features that made an impression on them: the team work and presentation of deliverables and open, "democratic", class discussions where the teaching person was merely an observant or a chair to the plenary session rather than a "boring lecturer". However, students pointed out that during the introductory sessions (N.B. the analysis of the theoretical background and the paradigm) they felt bored; some of them were also panicked because they found the introduction very difficult to understand, "information they have never met before" and thought that they would fail the course. Students had to probe deeper in their feelings when answering Question 3. Their feelings in the beginning of the course were described as: indifference (2), reservation (2), insecurity (6), stress and confusion (5) interest (3). The majority of descriptions include negative feelings which call for a more demanding and well-designed teaching and put stress on the teaching person, as well. However, their feelings at the end

of the course have improved: four have claimed relief and joy for their success and twelve express their satisfaction in completing the course, which may reveal some kind of relief from a stressful situation; only six felt happy and two lucky with the experience they lived during the course. Nevertheless, all of them admitted that they gained "differentiated" knowledge, meaning that learned different things that they ones they have been used to so far. Feelings at the final stage are more positive compared to those in the beginning of the course, a sign that the course aim of improvement may have been fulfilled.

Question 4 recapitalized the level of students' appropriation of the course aims, purpose, outcomes and evaluation criteria. It should be noted here that there still were two students who failed to realize or –perhaps- remember which evaluation criteria had been agreed upon in the "contract of research work behavior".

Questions 5 and 6 demanded a detailed account of the personal benefits from the course. Answers were semi-forced in the sense that they have been categorized beforehand and the respondents to split the benefits in four areas: cognition, emotions, social competences and professional skills. Their responses regarded the way of work, the research methodology the research design, the organization of the research process, the research implementation, and the production of the course deliverables (see: Annex).

Responses were rich in content and include a variety of benefits and they could be the subject of another paper. For economy's sake, indicative examples are chosen from each category:

Cognitive domain: distinguish between management and leadership roles, understand what ethical leadership is, learn how to design research based on theoretical background or a given paradigm, learn how to build a research questionnaire[9], realize that research design and implementation is a long, hard and time-consuming task, learn how to de-construct a research tool, analyze data and synthesize data-driven results, learn multiple ways of researching one thing, to emphasize on quality.

Emotional domain: cope with own different feelings at different work levels and stages, i.e. stress, lack of patience, happiness when being inventive or creative, being tired or disappointed, being satisfied and relieved, to be on time.

Social domain: learn to work with other, to share, to convince and be convinced, to communicate efficiently and effectively with others, to cope with other people's feelings [stress, disappointment, panic, happiness, etc], to coordinate a group, to delegate and accept delegated tasks, to be conciliatory and/or to settle differences or arguments, to make new friends, to persuade people to take part in a research project as research participants (research subjects), to

follow rules, to co-present work with others on a fair basis, to approach difficult personalities and work in alternative environments.

Professional domain: to deal with professionals at workplaces, to understand and comply with profession regulation, to speak for [advocate] the profession, to be authentic, to self-improve within the workplace, to be effective, to organize a team to work on a project, to be responsible, to be inventive with resources, to understand the values of the profession, to care for others, to use ICT in my work, to be a partner, a colleague [collegiality].

Questionnaire analysis results indicate that the major course aims (see above, page 11) and the rationale behind them (learning by doing, learn at an early, quasi-professional, stage) have been fulfilled to a considerable degree. Nevertheless, there are obstacles that have to be overcome: for example, the anxiety and stress in the beginning of the course, though creative to a point and experienced as part of the actual professional life, should be alleviated by providing students stress-management techniques.

Conclusion

This paper suggested a way of constructing and implementing a university graduate course on Ethical School Leadership. It is argued that Ethical Leadership concepts and values are necessary for everyone entering the teaching profession and aspiring [later in their career] for a Headteacher/School Leader post. Leading skills formulated on these concepts and values are particularly important in modern School Leadership contexts facing divert problems with multiple ethical implications and demanding immediate decision taking.

The innovation this course design and implementation attempts to introduce is to provide students with a free, democratic environment and to guide them to learn in their own way and to evaluate their learning experiences [outcomes] in order to make them critical minds and teachers, able to assess the school democracy, equality and equity; to avoid the traditional teaching method and to propose a modern combination of traditional and open learning method and material; to motivate students to research in their career by   (teacher-researcher) by engaging them in a "research wizard" role, an interested internal researcher of his/her own profession and –at the same time- an disinterested researcher who forms objective, distant judgment by observing their profession from the outside. The second innovation of this proposal is the lived and researched action: students live, structure and research their own real professional life cases, instead of discussing readymade scenarios.

Challenging the usefulness, the validity and the methodology of this university course proposal by critically discussing and/or duplicating it in other [national or regional or different learning] contexts would be the most desired benefit of this attempt.

> Every experience is a moving force. Its value can be judged only on the ground of what it moves toward and into.

> John Dewey (2008, p.21)

Notas

[1] To profit from relevant literature a committed reader should possess other qualities as well, such as mindful reading skills, a dialogic approach to the knowledge provided, reading between the lines, probing into information, etc.

[2] The course design tradition in the University of Crete, Greece, provides for two types of courses for teacher trainees: a. large student number courses taught in auditoriums/amphitheatres, usually introducing to the theoretical framework of each discipline, b. small student number (15-18 students) elective courses, focusing on research in a specific discipline field. Courses fall into two categories: compulsory and elective and students are obliged to take a fixed number of compulsory courses and a number of elective courses in order to gather the required ECTS and complete their studies. Internship in schools is a vital part of the compulsory courses in years 2, 3 and 4. In year 2 they observe the teaching process in a class and take down notes to serve as feedback for class discussion and evaluation. In year 3 they help the class teacher with pre-assigned tasks and in year 3 they take over teaching one full day every second week. Back to university class they attend the relevant classes of Teaching Methodology with a professor and they are supported to prepare their lesson plan and activities by practitioner who helps the university professor and acts as the students' mentor.

[3] "The teacher as a researcher" notion and its application to Early Childhood settings is outlined in Syrjala's article (1996).

[4] The course duration provided by the curriculum is 13 full class sessions of three hours each, one session every week and it covers an academic semester (which means a total of 13weeks per semester). The course is usually offered during spring semester, as the course prerequisite is taught during the winter semester. Teaching is implemented in a teamwork-friendly classroom where students can attend a lecture and can also form small groups of 4 or 5 and work together as teams. This flexibility is made possible by the suitable classroom size [not an auditorium] and by easily moved around sitting/working facilities.

[5] For example, instead of lecturing students on the ways of forming groups or the importance of group work for effectiveness of outcomes and having a passive and rather indifferent audience, fragments of a dance performance, including one dancer or a group of dancers, can be projected on a screen wall. This is a seemingly irrelevant exercise. However, students are called to comment on coordination, effect and their feelings from viewing/outcome; they are also asked to justify their answers and exchange opinions on the collaborative work that underlies the performance as a final result. Only towards the end of the exercise are students called to associate the underpinning principles with their own work by comparing and contrasting and making references to the material they have studied so far. They are all get involved in a less boring [than passive listening] way in building knowledge through experience, critical discussion and reflection.

[6] Reluctance for live discussions among team members were lately replaced by regular live team meetings, as students admitted that they liked meeting a lot more that chatting on the Skype (see, self-evaluation question no 2).

[7] For example, if the total team grade is 8 out of 10, this means that every team member will take an 8 as his/her final degree for the course.

8 There is no further explanation and/or justification on the evaluation content or process for two main reasons: students have already been acquainted with the evaluation subject in other courses during their first two years of study, and, second, it is the university's practice to run evaluation procedures for both students and teaching staff by the end of every semester.

9 Students refer on the questionnaire they had to construct in order to implement their own Ethical Leadership research to in-service kindergarten teachers.

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ANNEX

Students' self-evaluation grid

AXIS 6: DOMAINS	COGNITIVE	EMOTIONAL	SOCIAL	PROFESSIONAL
Working Approach				
Research Methodology				
Research Design				
Research Procedure Organization				
Research Implementation and Writing-up				
Deliverables (paper and ppt)				

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