

DILEMMAS AND PROBLEMS OF BEING A MORAL EDUCATOR

Aubrey Shaw^{1*} and Sharon Stoll²

¹*Department of Human Performance and Sport Studies, Idaho State University*

²*Center for ETHICS*, University of Idaho*

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Shaw, A. and Stoll, S. Kinesiology is the science of human movement. Within the United States, kinesiology encompasses different sub-disciplines of human movement, e.g., exercise physiology, biomechanics, sport psychology, and philosophy, as well as, the professions of teaching, leading, and training. This paper addresses one issue, the lack of moral education in the preparation of kinesiology pre-professionals. Moral education is imperative for kinesiology students to address issues of right and wrong as well as engage in higher order reasoning however, many problems exist in applying moral education to kinesiology. First, even though 37 states have some sort of requirement that moral education is a part of the general public education curriculum, apparently, no direct teaching of moral values exists in public elementary, middle, and high schools. Students arrive at the university with no background. Second, direct teaching of moral values is nonexistent because: teachers and college instructors are not content experts in moral education, consumer-based education drives and affects students' value of education, and the fallacious argument that ethics should only be taught to the young. Third, moral pedagogy is seldom applied. All of which directly affects kinesiology students in making decisions of right and wrong in a service profession. Therefore, the purpose of this narrative philosophical paper is twofold: to discuss the problems and dilemmas incorporating moral education in kinesiology curriculum and discuss three specific solutions, the: a) creation of moral development courses, b) use of writing intensive courses, and c) development of courses in pedagogy. A narrative philosophical approach discusses theory and supports with real life examples.

Key Words: kinesiology, moral education, ethics, kinesiology majors, service profession

INTRODUCTION

Kinesiology is the science and the study of human movement. Within the United States, kinesiology encompasses many different sub-disciplines of human movement such as exercise physiology, biomechanics, sport psychology, motor behavior, motor learning, sociology, and philosophy, as well as, the professions linked to kinesiology such as teaching, researching, and training. The following paper addresses one important issue, the role of moral education, within the preparation of kinesiology pre-professionals.

Education is only complete when it leads to an individual who can distinguish between what is right and what is wrong (Center for the 4th and 5th Rs,

2020). Kinesiology majors will often make decisions about what is right and wrong throughout their professional lives, including but not limited to their own professional attitudes towards others as well as how they treat others. A kinesiology student may learn the nature of good and evil, wrong and right, through role modeling (family, influential adults, teachers, and coaches), environment (day to day activity with others in the real world) and education, both informal and formal (Stoll, 2011b). In general, education directed toward the nature of right and wrong must be direct and intentional for it to be effective (Garrison, 2010; Lickona, 1991; Reimer et al., 1983). Moral education is the professional activity that directly and intentionally teaches the moral values of honesty, responsibility, and respect for

others. Moral education as therefore applied to Kinesiology is important as it teaches diversity, tolerance, mutual respect, plural values, and ideals of how these values bring about the good life for the professional in their contact with clients and or students (Frankena, 1973).

Moral education is also important because the processes of thinking about right and wrong can challenge kinesiology students to think and engage in higher order reasoning (Piper et al., 1993; Reimer et al., 1983). However, to be a moral educator and prepare these students is not easily attained and many confounding issues work against the actual process. In this narrative philosophical¹ paper, we will discuss three specific problems providing theory and following with a narrative. First, even though over 37 states have some sort of requirement that character education is a part of the public education curriculum, apparently no direct teaching of moral values exists in public elementary, middle, and high schools (Center for the 4th and 5th Rs, 2020), thus kinesiology students arrive at the university with little educational background about moral values. Once they arrive, few university classes are directed toward moral education. Several reasons exist for this lack of moral education: teachers and university instructors are not content experts in moral education, consumer-based education drives and affects students' value of education, and a fallacy exists that ethics, the content of moral education, should only be taught at a young age and is not needed for older student populations. Second, moral pedagogy, the actual teaching process of moral education, does not exist in most public education curriculum and is very seldom in university curriculums (Morgan, 2006; Stoll, 2011b). After discussing the above, we will also examine three specific solutions, the: a) creation of

moral development courses, b) use of writing intensive courses, and c) development of courses in pedagogy.

MORAL EDUCATION

The current culture of moral education is interesting and at the same time depressing. Presently over 37 states have some sort of a provision that moral education, i.e., character education, should be a part of the general education curriculum in public education². However, reality does not equate to expectations or definitions by state departments of education. For example, in public elementary, middle, and high schools little to no direct teaching of moral values exists (Center for the 4th and 5th Rs, 2020; Lickona, 1991), though moral education does exist through other programming, i.e., safe schools (Center for the 4th and 5th Rs, 2020; National Center for Education Evaluation and Regional Assistance [NCEE], 2020). Moral education is the actual teaching of moral values, e.g., responsibility, respect, justice, and honesty, however, if taught, these are not taught through direct curriculum application. This reality directly affects kinesiology majors who have no formal education with moral education. They arrive at the institution of higher education with no training and many arrive having experiences that work against the notion of studying moral education.

We personally know this to be true, not just from research, but from our own experiential, professional education experiences. One of us, (AS), was enrolled in a special education graduate class in her doctoral program. The class was discussing students and their behaviors or simply, their bad behaviors. AS simply stated that perhaps a teacher should teach moral values within the class which would be one more way of attending to the poor behavior. Moral education's

¹ According to Bres (2018), "Many theorists have argued that the meaningfulness of a life is related in some way to the narrative or story that can be told about that life". Therefore, this narrative philosophical paper adds to the knowledge base through storytelling. In addition, the narrative technique is at least thirty years old (Riessman, 1993).

² Character education is loosely defined here. Eighteen states have direct language that character education must be taught. The rest have language about citizenship and responsibility. The education can be in many forms from posters on walls in schools to direct curriculum directed toward character education (Character.org, 2020).

focus is to improve value and purpose of one's action towards others. A special education teacher who had been in the public-school system for quite some time became upset and told AS that it was not her place as a teacher to teach morality. Moral values should be taught to children by parents and is not a duty or obligation of teachers.

The peer's response is typical. Teachers, and even college instructors, often argue against teaching responsibility, respect, and honesty since these are moral values and moral values are often confused and mistaken as religious training (Lickona, 1991). The argument is not a new one. Before the 1960s religious training and moral training were considered the same and often were a part of general education in America. Public schools began each morning with a prayer and Christian Biblical tenets were often used to teach the importance of being honest, trustworthy, and fair. However, by the 1960s, such education was found to be unconstitutional and was no longer common place (Laats, 2012).

Instead, by the 1970s public education offered values clarification as a moral curriculum, which was soon adopted by education professionals and higher education instructors and still exists in many textbooks on curriculum (Kirschenbaum, 2020; Lickona, 1991; Simon et al., 1995). Essentially, values clarification is the practice of ferreting out values and discussing these values (usually social values of hard work, dedication, intensity, and sacrifice) with students in the classroom, with no notion or reference to morality. Unfortunately, moral education is often taught through the social values, but moral values are seldom, if ever, directly discussed (Center for the 4th and 5th Rs, 2020; Lickona, 1991). Thus, unfortunately, even though expectations exist in 37 states for a moral education curriculum, if such a curriculum exists, it is not necessarily moral education focused. Our kinesiology majors, therefore, have little experience with moral education.

All of which is troubling, since research is clear that moral education is important for our kinesiology students to learn the value of honesty, responsibility, and respect. In addition, moral education helps students learn a higher order cognitive reasoning process (Reimer et al., 1983) where they should learn perspective taking or seeing another's point of view.

However, other factors also affect the process of moral education.

COMPOUNDING ISSUES

Confusion or misinformation from teachers and even university instructors about teaching moral education is compounded by how the educational system has become a consumer-based product (EdChoice, 2020). Somewhere in the late twentieth century, education became a business, why it became a business is debated, but education now is a business (Donoghue, 2018).

Unfortunately, when education became a business (Christensen, 2011) students and parents became consumers or customers, and curriculum and pedagogical expectations became directly affected by the old adage of "customers know best" (Gorman et al., 1997). Thus, the consumers know best as to what is taught and how it is taught. Obviously, this sort of perspective is highly flawed for various reasons, the first most important is teacher and instructor knowledge and preparation. Teachers and college instructors spend years studying and earning degrees in their fields. Many of them also learn how to teach and thus should have knowledge of the learning and teaching experience.

By viewing education as a consumer-based product, the educational preparation of these instructors and teachers is inherently devalued since the customer, and not those prepared in curriculum, pedagogy, and discipline knowledge are the experts. If education is consumer based, then how do those who do not know, become the experts of what is known (Gill, 1993)? The irony of this metaphysical question about the theory of knowledge is one that has been addressed since the time of Socrates and his dialogue with his student (Plato as translated by Jowett, 1892/2020). As a new teacher, AS came face to face with this sort of consumer-based thinking and pedagogical irony within the first two weeks of her new university kinesiology teaching assignment.

AS assigned her students a one and one half-page paper to reflect on their teaching as applied to professional responsibility. The theory behind this teaching assignment is directly linked to the thinking, reflecting, and writing linchpin of developing a moral perspective of responsibility and duty in a profession (Gazzaniga, 2006; Piper et al., 1993; Tancredi, 2005).

However, AS was surprised at the push back from her students. They were not especially happy with writing and reflecting, and one student explained, in a lengthy email, that her writing skills would be much better suited to writing one single paragraph. When queried about the one paragraph, the student pushed back again – she saw anything more than one paragraph as just busy work. Philosophically, education for this student is not about the process of learning, but a simple product to meet the assignment and earn the grade.

Obviously, the student is not aware of the research in moral reasoning, neuroscience, and pedagogy that supports the pedagogical style that AS was implementing in the classroom. Instead, this student believes she knows best and she should dictate the expectations of the course. Perhaps Garrison (2010) is correct, the “realism” of education today is the end product of the grade assigned. The road to that goal simply becomes a check-the-box process.

However, consumerism, business, and misunderstanding the pedagogical process of moral education are not the only issues confronting and working against teaching moral education. Moral education as a discipline is seldom taught in universities, and unfortunately ethics as applied, is also not generally taught outside the philosophy department. If ethics is taught through the total university, it may be included as one unit in a professional kinesiology practice course, e.g., sport management (DeGeorge, 2009), or as a unit in research ethics as directed through the Institutional Review Board process.

All of which is also ironical since Zeigler (2007) once said the sole most important study in kinesiology is the study of ethics. He argued that sport ethics should be a standalone course, and its focus should also be incorporated in most if not all of the professional preparation courses. For Zeigler, as well as most sport philosophers, physical education, and sport morally matters (Kretchmar, 2005; Morgan,

2006) and the study of morality and ethics should be studied from a personal as well as professional perspective. The question of: “Who are we?” is directly linked to our professional behaviors. Are we responsible? Are we honest? Are we fair in our dealings with others? Stoll has argued in numerous publications that morality is linked to professional growth as well as professional failure – thus morality and ethics should be robustly studied throughout the professional curriculum (Stoll, 2011a, 2011b, 2012, 2020).

Unfortunately, ethics and morality, if taught, is taught by an instructor of record who seldom has an advanced degree in moral education or ethics. Strangely, the overarching perspective and mistaken current practice of teaching professional ethics lies in the notion that most good people, and of course kinesiology instructors are good people, know what is ethical, and know how ethics functions in leadership. The common justification for this false belief is that we learn ethics at a young age from our good parents and that good parental education will suffice for life. The family then becomes the moral educator and this family experience lays a powerful base for the notion of right. All of which may be true, or not. Thus, the logic becomes everyone knows what is right and what is wrong from these early family experiences (Stoll, 2011a, 2011b, 2012). However, such is not the case for two reasons. Gazzaniga (2006) notes that the second largest moral development period of a person’s life happens between the ages of 16-22. Therefore, moral education must not be limited to the early years of family experience, but in reality, should continue through adulthood and should be actively taught to college aged students (Center for the 4th and 5th Rs, 2020; Lickona, 1991; Piper et al., 1993; Stoll & Beller, 1993). To be clear here, ethics is the “standard of morality that a profession should follow” (Lumpkin et al., 2003) meaning there is more to ethics than what parents teach children³ And formal education in ethics as a professional standard

³ It is true that the first largest moral development growth period is between the ages of two to six, and parents and

care givers are those important educators (Gazzaniga, 2006).

should be taught in the university professional curriculum.

Another fallacy here is the selection of the instructor to teach ethics, which is often based on the notion that being a good person is the same as being a good moral educator. This same fallacious reasoning can also be applied to the failed notion that a moral standard is not necessary to be a good leader, or even a good manager. The process of leadership is seldom ethically considered, rather the end result is valued, i.e., productivity and objective results. In reviewing texts on leadership, seldom is it noted that a good leader should have a clear understanding of moral duty and a clearly defined philosophy of moral leadership⁴.

However, there are exceptions. Robert Greenleaf's (2002) philosophy of being a servant leader argues that a leader should be a servant first – a moral servant. Servant leadership is a bottom-up approach to leadership rather than a top-down approach. However, being a servant leader – or a moral leader – does not come naturally just because one is a good person. At the same time, being skilled as a moral educator does not come naturally, one must study the theory and pedagogy to inspire students to be ethical. A moral educator can do good or harm depending on how leadership is taught – and that is linked to a morally defined curriculum and a pedagogy that supports the moral curriculum that is taught.

AS came face to face with the dilemma of matching pedagogy to curriculum. One of AS's teaching assistants came to her within the first week of school and asked if the requirements could be changed to the previous instructor's class requirements. The TA argued that the present class was a continuation of the previous semester and the pedagogy and curriculum should be the same. AS explained to the TA there was a purpose to reflection (a page and one half) and that research in

neuroscience, moral education, and pedagogy all discuss the importance of reading, writing, and reflection (Gazzaniga, 2006; Gibbs, 2014; Gill, 1993; Hoffman, 2000; Joyce, 2006; Kohlberg, 1981; Lickona, 1991; Reimer et al., 1983; Tancredi, 2005). For cognitive growth about moral responsibility, a student must engage in reading, writing, and reflection. Additionally, the former class was taught through a sport psychology lens. For the record, moral education is different from psychology because the field of psychology generally studies "what is", whereas moral education and ethics studies "what should be". Even though both courses study sport, the different pedagogical directions fundamentally ask different questions and thus examine different concepts.

SOLUTIONS

Many different, possible solutions exist to the problems that are addressed within this paper. However, we, as the authors, will focus only on three possible solutions.

1. Courses in moral development should be required for all majors in our field. If sport ethics is the single most important subject to be taught – we need to teach it.

Courses in moral reasoning and development are needed for the growth of the moral brain⁵. Neuroscientists such as Churchland (2011), Gazzaniga (2006), Joyce (2006), and Tancredi (2005) have argued that we are hardwired for discussions about morality and our own moral growth. In order for this growth to occur, content courses must be directed toward moral reasoning, in which the teacher challenges the student through specific methodology to think at a higher level of reasoning (Kohlberg, 1981). A moral educator needs to read the literature in moral development, neuroscience, and pedagogy

⁴ Leadership texts abound throughout the profession, most all are focused on the managerial tasks of leadership. Exceptions exist, notably Lumpkin, Stoll, & Beller (2011).

⁵ Obviously, there is no specific place known as the moral brain, rather this terminology is often used in neuroscience texts focusing on brain development.

to understand how the brain develops and grows, as well as, study the moral pedagogy for such to occur. The ramifications of moral education in kinesiology are limitless – the very meaning of being human and being in sport is fraught with important questions. We argue that moral education courses should focus on the difficult questions of our profession, i.e., Why do we play? What is the good of competition? Who are we as we compete? What is the meaning of play?

2. Moral Pedagogy: Writing intensive courses are needed.

Moral development, neuroscience, and pedagogy literature discuss in depth the importance of reading, writing, and reflection for the moral brain to grow (Churchland, 2011; Fox & DeMarco, 2001; Gazzaniga, 2005; Joyce, 2006; Reimer et al., 1983; Tancredi, 2005). Obviously, courses must have all three elements. Additionally, Reimer, Paolitto, and Hersh (1983), discuss three different levels or orders of reasoning. First order reasoning is simply asking the state of the issue at hand. Second order is asking the reasoning behind the decision that was made. Third order challenges the student to think beyond one's own position and apply the reasoning to action towards others. (Reimer et al., 1983). In writing intensive courses, the goal should be to achieve third order reasoning so that the students have to consider the whole situation, others, and self, and the moral decision as it affects others.

In addition, writing courses should challenge students to think beyond themselves. Writing allows them to explore this notion and lets them avoid groupthink, or blindly following the group norm (Baumeister & Bushman, 2011). Every kinesiology student needs to challenge personal beliefs to be successful in their own personal and professional life. We argue that only through personal reflection can a student examine the essential nature of why we play and why we compete.

3. Courses in pedagogy are needed.

A moral education curriculum should encompass a pedagogical style that involves critiquing and fleshing out the important professional values of our profession: respect, justice, and honesty. However, to do so is one of the biggest dilemmas as teachers and

instructors are not educated in the area. Shaw in her dissertation discusses the pedagogical styles that one should engage for a moral curriculum to exist. Shaw (2020) states, that

“...a specific pedagogical style emerges from the moral reasoning literature. One must be willing to be interactive with their students and guide their students through discussion. Furthermore, one must ask the right questions to engage students in reflection”.

Furthermore, in *Can ethics be taught* (1993), Piper, Gentile, and Parks discuss how they were hired by the Harvard Business School to use a specific pedagogy to teach ethics. After much push back by faculty, and more angst, the specific pedagogy based in justice, honesty, and respect challenged the students to articulate what they believe and what they would do in different business, ethical situations. Thus, Piper et al. (1993), argue that a student can learn ethics and be a better ethical thinker with a specific moral education curriculum. In kinesiology, what are the professional responsibilities of each student? What are the important social justice issues that impinge on the profession? What are the issues of honesty in the profession? What is our duty as professionals in relation to beneficence?

CONCLUSION

Moral educators often face problems and dilemmas, but we do what we do because we love the field. More importantly moral development educators aspire to challenge student attitudes, beliefs, and ethical thinking to make the world, hopefully, a better place. Solutions incorporating moral education into professional education and practice is important not only to the educational system but for a civilized society. We share here three concerns that we have studied for some time and which one of us met directly in her first year of university teaching. We also offer some basic solutions to the concerns that we addressed. Our paper is a philosophical narrative that addresses a basic issue: moral education preparation for pre-professional kinesiology majors in college and university education.

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***Address correspondence to:**

Aubrey Shaw, Ph.D.
Idaho State University
Department of Human Performance and Sport Studies
Pocatello, ID
Email: aubreyshaw2@isu.edu



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