

Moral Leadership versus Ethically Responsible Behavior

Amanda M. Tallman

Southern New Hampshire University

Operating an organization using a code of moral leadership versus operating an organization using a code of ethically responsible behavior raises significant questions and challenges in modern day society. Should the self-interest of the organization be the only consideration or should the interests of the population to which they serve factor into the leadership of the organization as well? Understanding this concept requires a general knowledge as to what moral leadership and ethically responsible leadership are and how those ideas relate to organizations in modern society. In order to demonstrate these concepts further, this paper will compare two educational institutions and their leadership styles: Goddard College in Plainfield, Vermont will be used to demonstrate the concept of moral leadership whereas Pine Manor College in Chestnut Hill, Massachusetts will be used to demonstrate ethically responsible leadership.

Knowing the difference between what moral leadership and ethically responsible behavior is key in understanding how both relate to higher education in general. While there is no one correct definition on what moral leadership and ethically responsible behavior are, the following are presented as definitions on each concept that will be used in relation to this analysis. Greenfield (1999) defines moral leadership as something that “emerges from, and always returns to, the fundamental wants and need, aspirations, and values of the followers.” Piquemal (2004) takes a slightly broader approach in defining what constitutes ethically responsibility by defining the premise as:

1. A commitment to differences, or to the “relational other,” as defined by Levinas (1981);
2. A respect for persons as defined by Kant (1956);
3. A commitment to reciprocity as defined by Buber (1970); and

4. A sense of care as defined by Noddings (1986).

In order to demonstrate the concept of moral leadership as it relates to Goddard College it is important to understand the fundamental educational philosophy of the college itself.

According to the Goddard College website (2012) Goddard is an institution that teaches on a progressive educational model and actively seeks to respect the individual needs of each student who is part of their independent learning community. All curriculums, with the exception of the psychology curriculum because of licensing requirements, are student designed and each student works directly with a faculty advisor in order to facilitate the learning that will happen each semester in residence. Due to the fact that Goddard College teaches using a progressive, student designed model, this college tends to fall in line with Greenfield's definition of moral leadership in that the College teaches in a manner that caters to the aspiring wants, needs, aspirations, and values of the followers (1999).

Operating a college using a progressive educational model similar to the one used at Goddard College is not without controversy, however. User Jacqueline (2010) cited on the Ripoff Report website that she felt as though Goddard College did not prepare her properly for licensure process in order to become a therapist in the state of Vermont and that a colleague of hers was removed from a similar licensure process in New York state as the state felt as though the degree obtained at Goddard was not valid for licensure. On the Epinions website, user Q2you (2000) expressed that while Goddard's programs may not be ideal for all students, the intent of programs offered at Goddard College is to facilitate higher learning without the traditional bureaucracy associated with traditional colleges and universities.

Pine Manor College, on the other hand, is a higher education institution that is dedicated to making access to higher education easier for women who may not have been otherwise served

at traditional colleges and universities (Khadaroo, 2010). Former president, Dr. Gloria Nemerowicz, took the initiative to turn the college into an inclusive women's college where all students were welcomed rather than remaining an institution primarily intended to serve "privileged white women" (Khadaroo, 2010). In her book, *Education for Leadership and Social Responsibility*, Dr. Nemerowicz (1997) provides an outline of an educational model that blends a traditional college or university education with the individual needs of the students. This model also seeks to provide students with a practical learning experience that will serve to augment the education gained via classroom learning and apply the knowledge gained in a real world setting through an internship.

The educational format as proposed by Nemerowicz in her book was then implemented at Pine Manor College when she took over as president of the college in 1996. As part of this initiative, the College implemented a program that was based on ten learning outcomes and at the end of degree program each student was expected to produce a learning outcomes portfolio to demonstrate what was learned over the course of their college career and help make students more competitive candidates in the job market. In addition, all students are also required to participate in an internship during the first semester of their senior year in order to gain hands on experience in adapting what they have learned in the classroom to the real world. Using the learning outcomes basis for education, Pine Manor College effectively demonstrates a balance between the organizational needs of the college and taking a genuine interest in students, not just in the classroom, but post graduation as well.

Having a proper and useful education is critical to continued success and innovation in modern society. As demonstrated though the preceding examples, the process for providing a quality education differs among institutions depending on the philosophy, mission, and

leadership of the college or university being analyzed. Guiding an institution based on a moral leadership philosophy similar to the style used at Goddard College has been proven to be effective in allowing students the opportunity to study what truly interests them, however the education gained may not be the most practical in the real world for all students. Pine Manor College, on the other hand, uses a more ethically responsible approach in that they teach using a more traditional model melds a series of prescribed courses with practical hands on experience in order to fully immerse students in the learning experience. This demonstrates that the college takes a genuine interest in student success, both during and after their studies at the institution, and as such they work strive to work with students and allow enough flexibility for students to be self directed in their studies. This balance not only fulfills the goals of the institution, which is one important element of ethically responsible leadership, but it also takes into consideration the needs of the students, which is the other important element of ethical responsibility.

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