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Developing a Framework for Ethical Leadership

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Abstract Interest in ethical leadership from academics and practitioners has grown enormously in recent years. This article addresses this literature through a framework that identifies three interlocking questions. First, who are ethical leaders and what are their characteristics? Second, how do ethical leaders do what they do? Third, why do leaders do as they do and what are the outcomes of ethical leadership? Different dimensions to ethical leadership are examined and presented as three interlocking circles; Virtues, Purposes and Practices. This framework presents an integrated approach to ethical leadership and argues that future research take this holistic framework and apply it to different sectors or contexts.

Keywords Ethical leadership · Ethical theory · Ethical practices

Introduction

The ethical dimension of leadership has, increasingly, been of interest to both the general public and to scholars, motivated partly by the corporate scandals that have involved the unethical behaviour of top executives in leading organizations throughout the world and has generated responses from both the academic and practitioner communities (see, for example, the Index of Leadership Trust developed by the Institute of Leadership and Management and *Management Today*). Notwithstanding recent concerns, the relationship between ethics and leadership has been explored by management academics for some time and constituted early definitions of leadership (Barnard 1938; Burns 1978; Selznick 1957). Part of the role of leadership, it was claimed, included creating the 'moral organization', promoting development in others, and institutionalising values within the organization's culture. More recently, Whetstone (2005) has presented a framework for organizational virtues that is based upon the relationships between mission, culture and leadership.

There are a number of key issues and questions that emerge in the literature. For example, what is distinctive about the ethics of leadership in contrast to other areas of ethics (Ciulla 2005)? Do leaders stand apart from normal ethical considerations? Is there something unique about leadership such that leaders need demonstrate ethical standards over and above the norm in the way that certain of the professions might (see Carlisle and Manning 1996)? Ciulla argues, for example, that what is distinctive is the concept of vision; 'Visions are not simple goals, but rather ways of seeing the future that implicitly or explicitly entail some notion of the good' (2005, p. 325). Other areas of distinctiveness might include their obligations to others, particularly their followers, as a result of the leaders' special position in terms of power, status, and authority. Ciulla also argues that leadership is distinctive because of its range—moral failure impacts a large number of people. At the same time, and discussed extensively in the political science and philosophy literature, do the requirements of ethics not apply to certain roles such that the judgements of ethics are, in some sense, deemed inappropriate (see the discussion of the 'Dirty Hands' of politicians introduced by Walzer and discussed in Coady 2008; Mendus 2009).

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Second, we are interested in what is the relationship between being a good leader in a moral sense and being an effective leader; a simple distinction but one that raises interesting issues. In the literature, there is often a distinction between moral excellence and technical excellence (see Ciulla 2005; Price 2008). A different view suggests that, depending upon our approach to virtue, the two are compatible and that Machiavelli's virtú combines both virtue and skill (see Macaulay and Lawton 2006). A further view argues that leadership is about 'being' rather 'than 'doing' (Cunliffe 2009). We propose, below, that the different views can be reconciled through the interlocking of Virtues and Purposes.

Third, how are self-interest, the interests of the organization and the interests of the wider community reconciled? How are the interests of shareholders and wider stakeholders balanced? Does a psychological approach to leadership privilege the individual at the expense of others? Has there been too much focus on the self such that ethical leadership becomes unattainable? (Knights and O'Leary 2006). Indeed what is the concept of the self in leadership studies (Ford 2006)? What is the context within which ethical leadership takes place (see Knights and O'Leary 2006) and can the concept of a social practice help in locating that context (see MacIntyre 1985)? We discuss the concept of a practice below and propose Practices as the third interlocking circle in our framework.

These are all 'big' questions and they have been addressed in different ways; at this stage it is appropriate to offer preliminary remarks concerning the nature of leadership and then to outline the scope of the article. We identify three dimensions to leadership: Leadership **in**, leadership **of**, and leadership **for**. Leadership **in** involves activity; in this context those who lead may be motivated by the desire to explore new territories (geographical or otherwise), whether exercised in the practice of science, of art, music, sport or a whole range of other activities. Leaders are driven by curiosity and may stretch rules or conventions to see where their imaginations will take them. Leading is not being bound by convention, it is being curious for the sake of it, seeking new challenges; it may offer its own reward and not necessarily be concerned with the outcome since that can rarely be predicted. From this perspective, being recognised as a leader in whatever field requires peer recognition yet such individuals may not crave followers or be interested in setting an example to others. It is likely that such leaders will be concerned with excellence in that activity and will attract followers. The pursuit of excellence is compatible with a virtue approach to ethics.

In contrast, leadership **of** may include setting an example to others, motivating them and inspiring them to follow in pursuit of some set of goals. It involves engagement in a set of relationships, and will involve responsibilities to, and for, others. It will be compatible with a deontological approach to ethics. Leadership **for** will involve the pursuit of some organisational or societal goal; it may be concerned with creating a vision of an ethical purpose. If leadership is about outcomes then it will be compatible with a consequentialist approach to ethics.

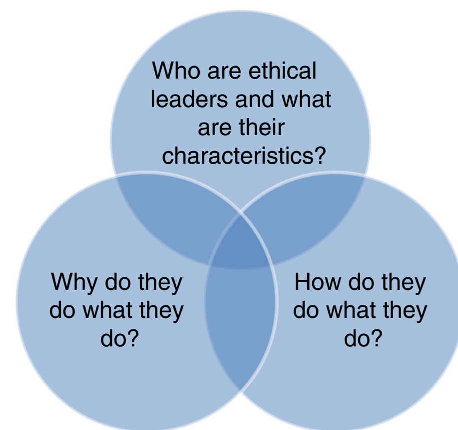

Fig. 1 The who, how and why of leadership ethics

Thus, this article focuses on a number of key questions;

1. Who are ethical leaders and what are their characteristics; the article examines key definitions of leadership and ethical character and virtues, including integrity and authenticity.
2. How do ethical leaders do what they do; this section of the article examines how leaders treat others and what are their relationships with others and in what contexts do these relationships take place.
3. Why do ethical leaders do what they do, for what purpose; what is the relationship between leadership and outcomes, both for individuals and the organization.

Figure 1 captures the relationship between these three questions; between who, how and why.

We suggest that the three circles will interlock and will not necessarily form discrete areas of ethics. For example, a public official will need to be of good character exhibiting, for example, honesty, selflessness and objectivity. These will be exercised in their relations with patients, clients or consumers through non-maleficence and beneficence in order to promote justice and the common good (Beauchamp and Childress 2008; Lawton et al. 2013). We use these three dimensions to frame our discussion of the literature and then propose a research framework that maps onto these dimensions.

Who are Ethical Leaders and What are Their Characteristics?

One much-used definition of ethical leadership is the one offered by Brown and colleagues, which proposes that ethical leadership is "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" (Brown, Treviño and Harrison 2005, p. 120). Here, ethical leadership involves some aspect of personal conduct, deemed ethically appropriate, in decision-making and developing relations with others, such that these others are inspired to follow. Yet prior to the question of what do leaders do, is what kind of person they are. Much of the literature has focused on the use of a virtues approach. However, we need to know what we mean by person—is there a difference between an individual qua individual and an individual qua position holder, in an organisation or otherwise? Thus a distinction has been made between the moral person and the moral manager (Treviño et al. 2000; Brown and Treviño 2006), raising the question is the good manager necessarily the good person and vice versa. According to this account the ethical leader reflects both the moral person in terms of individual virtues such as honesty and integrity, and the moral manager in terms of setting an example, communicating ethical standards and so on. We also introduced earlier the distinction between moral excellence and technical excellence; whereas virtue is bound up in ideas of morality, offering perspectives that shape the way we live, competence embodies notions of learned skills and technical efficiency. Competence highlights action rather than character, as it is "built around the fundamental principle of demonstrating capability" (Naquin and Holton 2003 p. 25). However, Machiavelli's virtù, which has been largely ignored in the literature (see Macaulay and Lawton 2006), may reconcile the two. Virtù was considered, more generally, as the skills and excellences of leadership including military prowess and diplomatic sensitivity and was not a moral construct as such yet still required right action. "Machiavelli's conflation of virtue and skill arguably fits in more comfortably with notions of managerial (or leadership) competencies, than the more moral character traits of virtue theory." (Macaulay and Lawton 2006, p. 704).

Our discussion of leadership 'in' suggests that technical excellence may not necessarily be ethical in character. Judging technical excellence, or competency, and the extent to which it is ethical or not, will depend upon the practice within which it is found and we discuss this below. At the same time there may be a tension between leadership 'of' and leadership 'for'; if leadership 'for' is to 'make the trains run on time' does it matter how this is done? Thus, our three perspectives on leadership are compatible with different versions of ethics but do not require ethics.

Virtues

The concept of virtue, derived from Aristotle (1947), has featured prominently in the discussion of leadership ethics (Arjoon 2000; Bragues 2006; Cawley et al. 2000; Sarros et al. 2006). Aristotle identified a number of moral virtues—courage, temperance, pride, good temper, friendliness and truthfulness—that as excellences of character enabled man (sic) to live the good life. Virtue, both moral and intellectual, is the means by which we become fully human because it allows us to achieve our natural end, the eudaimonic good life. Eudaimonia has been variously translated as 'happiness', 'bliss' or 'well-being'. "Virtues are character traits which we need to live humanly flourishingly lives" (Oakley and Cocking 2001 p. 18).

Virtues are central to character (Sarros et al. 2006), and in leadership character is seen as "moral excellence" (Hendrix et al. 2004), and can be developed (Peterson and Seligman 2003, 2004); Mendonca 2001). Typically, such virtues include humility, courage, integrity, compassion, humour, passion; and wisdom (Sarros et al. 2006); honesty, fairness, kindness (London 1999); or altruism (Engelbrecht et al. 2005); determination, tolerance, enthusiasm and responsibility (Guillen and Gonzalez 2001; Solomon 1999); love, forgiveness, and trust (Caldwell and Dixon 2010).

Clearly, there is a danger of providing lists of virtues to pick-and-mix from. However, two virtues that appear prominently in the literature are integrity and authenticity.

Integrity

Many authors see integrity as fundamental to ethical leadership (Brown et al. 2005; Engelbrecht et al. 2005; Parry and Proctor-Thomson 2002; Heres 2010; Huberts et al. 2007; Keating et al. 2007; Kolthoff et al. 2010; Resick et al. 2006). Brown and Treviño (2006) assert that subordinates are accustomed to thinking about their leader in terms of ethics and integrity.

According to Badaracco and Ellsworth (1991), the word integrity suggests wholeness, coherence, and a sense of moral soundness, in which the core values are honesty and justice. These authors hold that leaders with integrity will try to keep consistency and coherence between their beliefs and the way they act. Integrity is also about demonstrating exemplary moral behaviour (Brenkert 2004), consistent with laws and codes (Dobel 1999), and in accordance with moral principles, norms and values (Fijnaut and Huberts 2002).

Integrity is demonstrated in daily behaviour and recognized as a key factor in ethical leadership behaviour (De Hoogh and Den Hartog 2008; Den Hartog and De Hoogh 2009). It reflects the coherence of the leader in his/her behaviours by which he/she obtains credibility. Simons (2002) defined behavioural integrity as "the perceived pattern of alignment between an actor's words and deeds" (p. 19). Behaving with integrity entails the ability to determine the ethically correct course of action in a given situation (Keating et al. 2007) and the ability to both determine and engage in morally correct behaviour (Den Hartog and De Hoogh 2009). Integrity is also considered a fundamental component of character (Petrick and Quinn 1997), and has been recognized cross-culturally as one of the pillars of ethical leadership (Resick et al. 2006). A major research programme, the GLOBE project (Global Leadership and Organizational Behaviour Effectiveness) was designed to explore the effects of culture on leadership, organizational effectiveness, economic competitiveness of societies, and the human condition of members of the societies (House et al. 2004), in 62 different societies during the mid-1990s. The framework for cultural values was derived from Hofstede's (1980, 2001) cultural dimensions viz uncertainty avoidance, power distance, institutional collectivism, in-group collectivism, gender egalitarianism, assertiveness, future orientation, performance orientation, and humane orientation. Concerning leadership in general, House and his colleagues found that charismatic/value-based leadership and integrity attributes were positively endorsed as contributors of outstanding leadership by all cultures included in their study (House et al. 1999).

Integrity is also considered as part of the conscientiousness trait of personality in relation to leadership. According to Hogan et al. (1994), conscientious individuals have integrity and generate trust. For (Engelbrecht et al. 2005), integrity implies virtue, honesty and sincerity. Palanski and Yammarino (2007) identify four behavioural aspects of integrity: integrity as consistency of words and actions, integrity as consistency in adversity, integrity as being true to oneself, and integrity as moral/ethical behaviour. It is interesting to note that it could be argued that the first three behaviours may not, in fact, require ethics at all. They also highlight that integrity is expected to be accompanied by similar virtues such as authenticity, honesty, trustworthiness, fairness, and compassion; and moreover, these other virtues may form a boundary condition for integrity. Accordingly, then, integrity involves wholeness, consistency, coherence and involves acting in accordance with principles, norms and values, or in accordance with laws and codes.

Integrity, then, seems to consist of both a character trait and behaviour; it is both a possession and an action.

Authenticity

Authenticity is about knowing oneself and acting transparently in accordance with one's beliefs and values (May et al. 2003; Avolio et al. 2004). Self-awareness, self-control and consistency and coherence in behaviours are key features of the authentic leader (Avolio and Gardner 2005; Shamir and Eilam 2005). For Luthans and Avolio (2003), *the authentic leader is confident, hopeful, optimistic, resilient, moral/ethical, future-oriented, and gives priority to developing associates to be leaders. The authentic leader is true to him/herself and the exhibited behaviour positively transforms or develops associates into leaders themselves* (p. 243).

Yet the notion of 'being true to oneself' may be problematic. The idea of the one, and consistent, self is usually taken for granted and yet, at the same time, the notion of the self as a series of self-contained multiple selves sometimes in competition with each other may also obtain (i.e. we move, occasionally uneasily, between different roles of, for example, father, spouse, brother etc.). Identity may be fragmented and multiple, containing contradictory selves and, within organisations, competing discourses (see Ford 2006).

For (Walumbwa et al. 2008), authentic leadership is more than being true to oneself, and they developed a multi-dimensional model of the authentic leadership construct, in which four elements are defined: self-awareness, relational transparency, internalized moral perspective, and balanced processing. Their construct built upon previous definitions of Luthans and Avolio's (2003), (Gardner et al. 2005) and Ilies et al. (2005), resulting in the following definition: authentic leadership is *a pattern of leader behaviour that draws upon and promotes both positive psychological capacities and a positive ethical climate, to foster greater self-awareness, an internalized moral perspective, balanced processing of information, and relational transparency on the part of leaders working with followers, fostering positive self-development* (p. 94).

Leadership is perceived as relational and the idea of authenticity transcends the self and, as such, is recognized and legitimated by others. Thus, Shamir and Eilam (2005) argue that to be an authentic leader it is not sufficient that the leader has a high sense of self-awareness and consistency, authenticity emerges from the narrative process in which others play a constitutive role. Leadership is co-constructed on an ongoing basis (Fairhurst and Grant 2010; Grint 2005). This is distinct from the possibility of self-centred forms of self-fulfilment that Taylor identified as part of the post-modern malaise (Taylor 1991).

On these accounts then, both integrity and authenticity are about doing, not just being.

How do Leaders do What They do and How are Their Relations with Others Constituted?

For MacIntyre (1985) a virtue requires some prior account of social and moral life and virtue is a complex, historical and multi-layered concept. Virtue requires a practice, an account of what constitutes a moral tradition. The paradigm of human excellence will depend upon the context—the warrior (Homer), the Athenian gentleman (Aristotle) or, more recently, the sportsman or woman, or the entrepreneur. MacIntyre argues that we cannot identify, for example, the Homeric virtues until we have identified the key social roles in Homeric society. Therefore our concept of leadership comes after our understanding of key roles in our society. For MacIntyre, the virtues are grounded in human practices and consist of internal goods such that standards of excellence are appropriate to the practice of, for example, administration, farming, or medicine. External goods exist outside, and independently, of that practice and include fame, money, power, and reputation. Virtues are those qualities that enable us to achieve internal goods. Not all practices must be good and it is not always clear what makes up a practice. Is leadership a practice, is business a practice? These questions are unresolved (Beadle 2008; Moore 2005 but see Beabout 2012). MacIntyre also distinguishes between a practice and an institution and he identifies institutions with the potential to corrupt this practice. Thus medicine is a practice and a hospital is an institution, education is a practice and a university is an institution. 'Without justice, courage and truthfulness, practices could not resist the corrupting power of institutions' (MacIntyre 1985, p. 194). At the same time the idea that only those involved in a practice can understand and, therefore, pass judgment on the practice is contestable (Kieran 1995; Moore 2008).

If we assume, for the moment, that leadership constitutes a practice, what might be the internal goods of leadership? A concern with how leaders engage with others has been a major theme in the literature, focusing on both the nature of relationships with others and the content of that relationship. Underpinning such relationships is a focus on responsible leadership (Freeman et al. 2006; Maak and Pless 2006). According to Enderle (1987), "when managers put the question of ethical responsibility seriously, they become more sensitive to the voices of those who will be affected by their decisions" (p. 658).

Maak and Pless (2006) propose a relational understanding of the concept of leadership. They define responsible leadership as the art of building and sustaining relationships with all relevant stakeholders. Relational leaders are described as the 'weavers' and facilitators of trusting stakeholder relations (Howell and Avolio 1992), who have the capacity to assess complex situations and problems from the perspectives of different stakeholder and recognise that these stakeholders may have diverse and conflicting objectives. Such leaders balance the relationship dynamics aligning the different values of the various parties in a way that serves the interest of all.

A key question is how and where to draw a boundary around those whom will be affected. The concept of the 'other' is engaging scholars. Knights and O'Leary (2006) argue that leadership theories tend to be overly focused on the 'autonomous subject of Enlightenment thinking' and leadership is seen to be the property of individuals not that of social groups or institutions, which results in individualistic theories of leadership. These authors build on Levinas work about the ethics of responsibility, in which the notion of the self is generated not by the self but rather through engagement with the *Other*, an engagement that is defined by a sense of responsibility (Levinas 1966). According to Knights and O'Leary, leaders' ethical responsibility is in their relations with others.

Similarly, Painter-Morland (2008), for example, argues that the responsibility to nurture and encourage a relationally responsive ethical attitude among the members of an organizational system is shared by all who participate in it. Painter-Morland holds that leadership is socially construed from complex interactions between individuals and groups, in which creating and sustaining relationships of trust is how to deal with complex organizational systems within dynamic environments. Not only that, but also concepts such as trust are important insofar as they may enhance the effectiveness of the organization. High trust may lead to low transaction costs—ethical business practices are not only important in themselves as part of exchange relationships but also for organizational outcomes. Leadership of, and as we argue below, leadership for, both find expression within an institution. Institutions may nurture the relationships between the leader and their followers and not, as MacIntyre has it, corrupt the practice of leadership.

However, one of the characteristics of ethical leaders is a concern with how their decisions affect others (Murphy and Enderle 1995). When managers take this into account, they became more sensitive of others needs inside and outside of the organization. In order to make ethical decisions, leaders require the use of ethical concepts and principles (Dukerich et al. 1990) in their moral judgments. At the same time is there something distinctive about the scope, scale and types of decisions that leaders make? Decisions by leaders may be far-reaching and wide-ranging, non-routine, complex, with high stakes, and require the exercise of judgment and not just the application of rules.

Why do Leaders do What They do and What are the Outcomes of Leadership?

Much of the literature has focused on the relationship between leadership and effectiveness in bringing about a number of outcomes. The main foci have been with:

(i) individual outcomes for employees such as followers' voice behaviour (Walumbwa and Schaubroeck 2009), follower job satisfaction, commitment and perceptions of ethical climate (Neubert et al. 2009; Rowold et al. 2009), subordinate's job performance (Piccolo et al. 2010).
(ii) individual outcomes concerning the leader themselves, such as promotability (Rubin et al. 2010).
(iii) group level outcomes such as organizational citizenship behaviours -OCBs (Mayer et al. 2009), and group counter-productive work behaviours—CWBs (Detert et al. 2007).

Thus, leaders, acting fairly and with consideration for others may elicit positive responses in employees' attitudes and behaviours (Brown et al. 2005; Brown and Treviño 2006). According to Caldwell and Dixon (2010), leaders who exhibit love, forgiveness, build relationship with employees based on trust, and treat them with dignity and respect, enhance employees' self-efficacy, as well as, commitment and loyalty (Cameron et al. 2003) and performance (Cameron et al. 2004).

Kalshoven et al. (2011) build upon the behavioural perspective of Brown et al. (2005), and developed a new measure. They suggested, following De Hoogh and Den Hartog (2008), that ethical leadership is a multi-dimensional construct. That is, it involves different behaviours that may have different antecedents and outcomes, which as a whole, describe ethical leadership. Their aim was to evaluate which types of leader behaviours may be seen as ethical. Kalshoven (2010) developed the Ethical Leadership at Work (ELW) questionnaire in which seven dimensions of ethical leadership are developed and tested: fairness, power sharing, role clarification, people orientation, integrity, ethical guidance, and concern for sustainability. In line with this multi-dimensional construct, she found different relationships between the various behaviours of ethical leadership and outcomes. For example, fairness and power sharing were positively related to employees' organizational citizenship behaviours (OCBs). In general, she found that ethical leadership is positively related to leader effectiveness, trust in the leader, employee effectiveness, OCBs and satisfaction with the leader. Kalshoven also tested for the antecedents of ethical leadership using the Big Five model of factors of personality (McCrae and John 1992) finding that conscientiousness and agreeableness were the most related to ethical leadership. Thus, ethical leadership can be understood as a more complex construct involving a broader set of ethical behaviours.

However, outcomes at the organisational and societal level have been more difficult to identify. The concept of purpose is crucial to Aristotle's account, and yet modern scholars have, we believe, sought to identify virtues in organizations at the neglect of a discussion of purpose. Virtue is the means by which we become fully human because it allows us to fulfil our particular human end, the eudaimonic good life. This concept relates to Aristotle's teleological belief that something can only be understood and fulfilled once it has reached its natural end. There is a purpose to it. The good life can thus be recognized, understood and, most importantly, attained. Aristotle's virtue theory, therefore, necessarily prioritizes the good over the right, a distinction that remains crucial to virtue ethics today (Mangini 2000; Oakley and Cocking 2001). Macaulay and Lawton (2006) hold that not only is virtue necessary for good governance, but it is also political in a broader sense, as it cannot be cultivated or practiced outside of the polis. Man can only achieve eudaimonia inside the polis because it is only this particular form of association that facilitates the development of his human self.

There have, however, been a limited number of attempts to link virtue to organisational purpose. Arjoon (2000), Bragues (2006), and Flynn (2008) offer frameworks to understand business and leadership ethics from the point of view of virtue ethics. According to Bragues (2006), the greatest ethical imperative for business (from an Aristotelian point of view) is to give individuals opportunities to participate in the management of the organisation and to contemplate wider implications. "Affording individuals chances to apply their leadership skills and engage in philosophic reflection constitutes the most important mission of Aristotelian business ethics" (Bragues 2006, p.355). Arjoon (2000) developed a meta-theory of business based on virtue theory which links the concept of virtues, the common good, and the economy into a unifying and comprehensive theory of business. According to Arjoon, leadership falls into the realm of ethics where true leadership is ethical leadership. Arjoon holds that true leaders should have a clear vision of the common good and the means to promote it, and that leaders are supposed to lead people to attain some goal or objective, and this objective, from a virtue theory perspective, must be the common good. Finally, Flynn (2008) argues that leadership is placing business at the service of society. Flynn proposes that leaders should recognise the psychological, social and spiritual values, and associated needs, of individual workers and their families, in which the character of the leader is essential. Clearly, the problem with such views is their normative character, and it raises a whole host of questions concerning the extent to which individuals seek purpose from their work places.

The notion of ethical stewardship has been used in this context. Ethical stewardship is described as an "ethically superior governance model that creates long-term organizational wealth by generating increased employee

commitment" (Caldwell 2009, p. 161). According to Caldwell and colleagues, leaders engender commitment when they build trust and ensure the welfare, growth, and 'wholeness' of all stakeholders (Caldwell et al. 2002).

However, we concur with Kempster et al. (2011) that there has been too little discussion of the relationship between leadership and organizational purpose. From an ethical point of view, the focus on the individual agent, and his or her actions, is appropriate. To examine the ethics of the organization is more problematic if ethics is to be found in the processes, and the relationships, through which the organization achieves its goals. Morality may be said to establish the conditions, not the goals, of conduct.

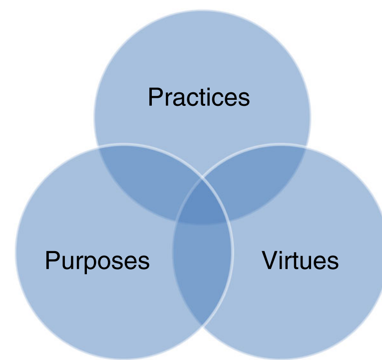

Fig. 2 Research framework

Discussion

We recognise, with other scholars, that there have been neglected areas of ethical leadership research; in particular, research on antecedents (Kalshoven et al. 2011; Eisenbeiß and Giessner 2012), purpose (Kempster et al. 2011) or indeed, ethical theory itself (Ciulla 2005; Rost, 1995). Different approaches have been taken to the study of ethical leadership and in so doing have raised a number of fundamental issues. The development of measures to explore the ethical behaviour of leaders and the subsequent use of these measures has led to some interesting findings. Thus, some studies have endorsed the idea that certain dimensions of ethical leadership are cross-culturally endorsed (Resick et al. 2011; Den Hartog et al. 1999). Other studies have found divergence based on the individualist-collectivist dimension (Keating et al. 2007; Martin et al. 2009). Some authors take a non-Western approach to study the ethical dimension of leadership, for example, Kemavuthanon and Duberley (2009) who use a Buddhist view of leadership in a case study in Thailand or Prince (2005) examining Taoism and leadership. Other scholars have offered an integrated, holistic approach (Eisenbeiss 2012). Drawing on different religious and ethical traditions Eisenbeiss (2012) identifies 4 ethical orientations for leadership; 1) humane orientation, 2) justice orientation, 3) responsibility and sustainability orientation, and 4) moderation orientation.

However, the question of the universalizability of ethics is not new and raises key questions concerning the foundation and source of ethical beliefs, values and justifications of ethical behaviour. Thus studies have moved beyond a focus on individual attributes and have introduced cultural, political and social norms. This resonates with our earlier discussion of the relationships between virtue, the practice and the norms of particular societies. However, we need to separate questions of fact and value. Cross-cultural studies demonstrate the existence of common ethical attributes and also differences; this is not the same as endorsing a particular set of values. Dworkin (2012) argues for the unity of value but he distinguishes between moral judgments within a system of values (first-order or substantive) and judgments about a system of values (second-order or meta). We need to be clear about the kinds of claims that are being made, empirical or normative, and the extent to which 'living well' can be found within organizational life as those who seek to link virtue to purpose seek to demonstrate. Can individual purpose be identified with organizational purpose in much the same way as individual purpose was embedded within the Athenian polis?

Clearly, there have been a range of different approaches adopted and it is difficult to get a sense of research into ethical leadership as a coherent body of study. We suggest the following framework, Fig. 2, to draw together the different dimensions to ethical leadership. These dimensions interlock in terms of the who, why and how of leadership. Authentic leaders act with integrity through their relationships with others to achieve ethical outcomes. Ethical outcomes require virtuous leaders who engage with others responsibly and build trust.

We argue that a discussion of the virtues cannot be separated from the context within which they are practised. We also suggest that the exercise of different virtues will be appropriate to the different roles that leaders play. For example, the creation of a vision and purpose may require courage and moral imagination; ethical decision-making, as part of a practice, may require judgement, competence and prudence; inspiring others may require honesty, transparency and providing a moral exemplar. In this sense virtues cannot be separate from practices and purposes. Our holistic approach to ethical leadership might best be understood in terms of distinct types of activities where the interplay of virtues, practices and purposes will lead to different forms of ethical leadership. This could, for example, be found in sectoral differences; the professional

practices of public officials, not to break the law, to act on behalf of the public, to treat citizens equitably and impartially, and so on, will require different ethical considerations, particularly in terms of purpose. Context will have a bearing on vision — e.g. public officials both elected and appointed subscribe to the notion of acting in the public interest, and will have a view of what that actually means. The justification for their actions may be different than for those in other sectors. We need more on the nature of explanation and justification. Thus ethnographic research might ask 'Why did you act in the way that you did and what reasons can you give for acting in such a way? Or 'Why did you make the decisions that you did'? In her study comparing the understanding of ethical leadership between public and private organizations in The Netherlands, Heres (2010) found both similarities and differences. Concerning similarities, she found that in general, managers of both type of organizations view ethical leadership as grounded in the person of the ethical leader. That is, ethical leadership is highly associated with the 'moral person'. The traits in which there seem to be a general agreement are authenticity, openness, and moral courage. She found differences in ethical leaders' traits in a preference for altruism and concern for the common good in public sector managers, and for honesty in private sector managers.

A virtues approach has much to commend it, particularly if it is drawn more widely than Aristotelian virtues. Whilst virtues may focus on the individual they will be found in organizational practices that provide a context. At the same time, they will be shaped by the wider purpose of the organisation. Thus, practical wisdom is needed in organisations that link particular activities to organisational ends and the good life (Beabout 2012).

Conclusions

A number of authors have argued for more ethical theory (Ciulla 2005; Rost 1995). A different issue is to what extent are their limits to the scope of ethics (Coady 2008). Why should it be applied to everything as though it is an umbrella that covers all our activities? Do we stop and think of ethics in our day-to-day activities e.g. going shopping, playing sport, playing chess etc. Coady (2008) makes the distinction between morality and moralism, which he considers a vice, which includes judging others in the light of the moralizer's own considerations. We have argued that leadership can be examined from an ethical perspective and that different dimensions of leadership are compatible with different approaches to ethics.

We asked a number of questions in our Introduction and we turn to our responses to these questions.

Question 1: What do Leaders do and What are Their Characteristics?

Clearly there is a wealth of research in response to this question, and a measure of disagreement. We pointed to the notion that leadership is concerned with a vision, with imagining some future state, and from an ethical point of view this involves some notion of the good life. Rather than this idealist approach we may take a more pragmatic view and consider more modest ambitions i.e. in health organizations this might be 'do no harm', in other organizations it might be ensuring that all employees are treated with dignity, respect and justice. From these more humble ambitions might flow the achievement of 'grander' ambitions.

We might also consider further the extent to which leadership is, in MacInytre's terms, a practice. We cannot fulfil ourselves through having merely instrumental relationships. The implications is that leadership has its own intrinsic rewards irrespective of consequences and these rewards might be, for example, the sense of playing a part in the development of others – the professor who sees the development of their former Research Assistant into a professor in their own right. If leadership constitutes such a practice then it may be corrupted by an institution. Our framework allows for external goods that might consist of, for example, the public interest, which actually provides a context for the practice rather than corrupting it.

Question 2: How do They do What They do?

What can leaders be held responsible for? One argument is that the capacity to take responsibility when and where needed should be nurtured throughout the organization irrespective of the existence of a formal organizational hierarchy. Yet we need to know more about what kinds of decisions do individuals within organizations and at different levels make? We need more research on the links between leadership and ethical decision-making (O'Fallon and Butterfield 2005; Tenbrunsel and Smith-Crowe 2008; Treviño et al. 2006).

At the same time, discretion requires judgement and thus an element of leadership where individuals assess, decide and act in ways that are not predetermined by rules and regulations but require initiative and responsibility is important.

Question 3: For What Purpose do They do it?

When assessing the impact of ethical leadership, as distinct from leadership per se, then we might consider, for example, personal freedom, human dignity, social harmony, or environmental sustainability as indicators of

impact? At present the effectiveness of leaders is determined by organisational factors rather than ethical factors, notwithstanding the fact that the concept of ethical performance is extremely tricky. At the same time whilst we might expect our public sector organizations to promote and pursue an ethical agenda is it enough that businesses are comply with that agenda? We concur with Mumford (2011, p. 5) that "…we need a better taxonomy of the key outcomes associated with leadership."

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