A BLUSHING ROMANCE:
FRAMEWORK FOR AN ETHICAL EXPOSITION OF
A RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN EDUCATIONAL AND
COMMERCIAL INTERESTS

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ABSTRACT. The incidence of partnerships between business and education is growing at a phenomenal speed. This article gives pause to this near frenzied activity by examining the case of a commercial interest seeking to partner with several educational systems. After the Andersen Ethical Decision-making Model is described as an instrument of discernment for educators, it is used to begin an ethical exposition of the advantages and potential conflicts of interests and values of the case proposal. The author then briefly discusses the usefulness of ethical analysis to sort through similar education and commerce sector relationships.

RÉSUMÉ. La fréquence des partenariats entre le milieu des affaires et le milieu de l'éducation croît à une vitesse phénoménale. Cet article donne à réfléchir à cette activité frénétique en étudiant le cas d'un intérêt commercial qui cherche à établir un partenariat avec plusieurs systèmes éducatifs. Après avoir décrit le modèle *Andersen* de prise de décisions éthiques comme instrument de discernement pour les éducateurs, celui-ci est utilisé pour présenter sur le plan éthique les avantages et les éventuels conflits d'intérêts et les valeurs de cette étude de cas. L'auteur analyse ensuite brièvement l'utilité de l'analyse éthique pour faire le tri de partenariats analogues entre le milieu de l'éducation et le secteur commercial.

With increasing frequency, the legitimacy and the economic necessity of nontraditional supports to educational services have become subjects of dialogue, consternation, and ethical scrutiny by school administrators and trustees. Varying degrees and directions of concern have been expressed by social commentators and educational policy makers (e.g., Underwood, 1993; Farrell, 1991; Molnar, 1990). Some educational institutions have entered into arrangements with commercial interests while others have not. Of course, some educational leaders have clearly defined and long established professional and organiza-

tional boundaries that determine what kinds of relationships are permissible and profitable. But, some "blushing" may be detected on the part of other educational policy makers. They seem to be uncertain about how to deal with the complex forces and affections surfacing in response to advances from a member of the "opposite sector." While they may be inclined to pursue the possibilities of a relationship, they are wary about just how fast to move and how extensive intrasector relations should be. From the perspective of the business world, a relatively new realization has come that educational institutions hold great market potential and that commercial interests may, indeed, be furthered by renegotiating with school personnel forms of relations that were previously assumed to be off-limits.

How does one know if a particular proposal is "right, good, proper, or virtuous"? How should these arrangements be assessed? For many school boards, the various configurations of commercial and educational relations are at an early stage of courtship: Each party wonders what onlookers will think, what their potential partner's actual interests and intentions are, and what the limits and legitimacy of their intersection might be. Our opinion is that the absence of explicit ethical analysis normalizes unnecessary confusion in school systems; but the consideration of ethical questions, such as outlined in this article, may displace the confusion with confidence.

This article explores a specific proposal made by a commercial interest to several school jurisdictions throughout Canada. Our use of this particular proposal is intended to focus readers' attention on the use of an ethical decision-making process to work through an illustrative case, rather than to draw attention to the commercial venture itself. It is interesting that this particular proposal met with varied responses. These responses could be considered in the light of economic, general policy, and ethical warrants. A modified version of the Arthur Andersen and Company (1992) ethical decision-making framework is proffered as an instrument for sorting through the conflicts of interests and values of this commercial proposal. The Arthur Andersen framework is chosen because it has been widely disseminated throughout North America, through business schools, and because it has been well accepted as a useful business ethics instrument. In other words, both education and business interests should be able to appreciate and affirm the elements of this analytical framework, as it is applied in this article.

THE COMPUTER OFFER: DECENT OR INDECENT PROPOSAL?

In early 1992, a Canadian retailer offered computers for classrooms in exchange for customer cash register receipts. This large grocery chain offered to donate a microcomputer to each school that raised $150,000 in sales receipts. The offer was enthusiastically taken up in several large urban school jurisdictions (Chandler, 1992) and by a number of other jurisdictions. Some jurisdictions, however, declined to participate. A number of school systems had received a letter outlining the plan after the program advertising had begun. In many instances, representatives of the grocery chain and a local computer company had met with the school system administrators to explain and to discuss the proposal. Those accepting the proposal did so based on their view that the offer of free computers would give schools an alternative means by which to increase the technology hardware in their schools, without incurring school system funding. Students would clearly be the beneficiaries of the receipt contributions. In this even and reciprocal relationship the company's initiative to offer technology that is important for students was welcomed. To others, the proposal provided their school systems with an excellent opportunity for community involvement and tangible goal setting in a way that would clearly benefit the children and their learning. The only effort required would be to let their various constituents, who shop anyway, know that they would like to collect the receipts from them.

On the other hand, a number of school jurisdictions rejected the proposal on the grounds that it entailed direct advertising. In short, they perceived that the grocery store giant was mainly interested in promoting its corporate image and having students encourage people to shop exclusively at its stores. The offer of computers for schools was conditional on a certain level of sales, with no computer offered if that level was not reached. Further, some school systems were concerned that the retailer's self-promotion was central to the advertising. They saw minimal educational benefit from their participation in the program as there was a large discrepancy between the price of a microcomputer (about $3,000) and the $150,000 worth of cash register sales receipts. In other words, the actual contribution by the company was assessed to be too small to merit entering into the relationship. Some rejectors expressed concern that there was a need to sustain fidelity with local merchants who had supported schools in various ways over

the years, and that the effect of the diversion of sales from a local economy was too high a price to pay. Other boards appeared to see the proposal as a policy matter. Typically, the policy-driven approaches were to determine: (1) the educational soundness of the offer; (2) the direct educational benefits resulting from participation; and (3) whether advertising directed toward school constituents was intrusive. To overcome these policy contraventions, some school systems counter-offered with alternate arrangements which were rejected by the retailer. Others deliberated on the particulars of their school system to ensure that schools in high socioeconomic areas would not enjoy an unfair advantage over schools that were less able to raise funds locally. The commercial suitor was embraced by some and spurned by others. The question of whether either set of school jurisdictions was right or wrong is a question for retrospection. Rather than proclaiming judgment on the ultimate decisions of these boards, the attention of this paper is on the ethical processes and considerations that might be transferable from this past proposal to the various proposals that are assuredly going to emerge, with increasing frequency, in the years to come.

TRANSFERABLE FRAMEWORK FOR AN ETHICAL EXPOSITION

The last few decades have seen increased societal concern about the level of ethical behaviour shown by corporations and, in some instances, by educators (Hunter, 1990; Lewis, 1990; Natale, 1990). Ethical questions are an essential part of all human organizations because the goals of the organizations are determined by human values (Hodgkinson, 1991). For our purposes, ethics refers to the discipline that concerns itself with decisions about rightness and wrongness, goodness and badness (Runes, 1977). The overall normative constraints and motivations of policy-making processes are typically assumed to be grounded in the ambition to be ethically wise and virtuous, consistent with obligations, and responsible. A systematic analysis of such offers as the one made by the grocery chain will, it is hoped, increase the appropriateness of case-specific policy and of boards' subsequent responses to other commercial proposals.

As indicated, the modified version of the Arthur Andersen and Company (1992) ethical decision-making framework (Figure 1) has been widely disseminated throughout North America. According to Peek, Peek, and Horras (1994), the "Arthur Andersen & Co. has made a significant contribution to assist and encourage the teaching of business ethics. They provided assistance initially through workshops and cur-

riculum materials; currently they are using campus coordinators to disseminate information and materials" (p. 189). The model was developed for the accounting firm's distribution by Manuel Velasquez (Andersen, 1992, p. 10), in order to provide a basic procedure for evaluating and resolving an actual or potential moral problem.
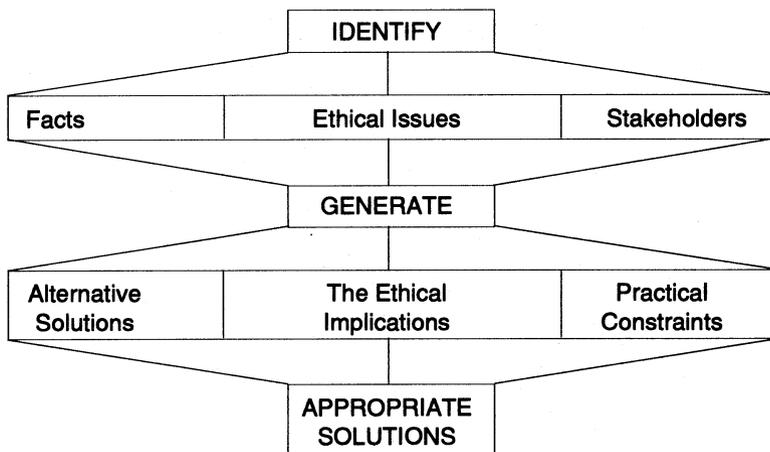

FIGURE I. Arthur Andersen Seven-Step Moral Reasoning Model

According to the original Seven-Step Moral Reasoning Model, the decision- or policy-maker will: (1) identify the key factors that shape the situation and raise the ethical issues; (2) define the ethical issues and separate these from other nonethical issues; (3) identify the key individuals or groups affected by such a decision or policy; (4) generate a viable course of action that could be taken; (5) evaluate how each alternative affects the stakeholders and determines how ethical each alternative is; (6) generate the practical factors that may limit the agent's ability to implement an alternative; and (7), after weighing the above considerations, determine exactly what steps should be taken to implement the selected alternative. This approach provides for at least four basic levels of ethical analysis. The process template for examining a case, such as the computer for schools offer, consists of four interrelated levels of analysis: 1) Identification and description of decision information, assessment of stakeholder values and interests, and delineation of ethical and nonethical issues; 2) Establishing criteria for ethi-

cal decision-making; 3) Generation of alternate scenarios, projection of ethical implications, adjustments that consider practical constraints; and 4) Ethical evaluation and reflection on appropriateness of solutions and action.

While analyses may occur at many spheres (individual, professional, local, organizational, societal, and global), attention is delimited to local and organizational levels of consideration. An ethical analysis template such as provided by Andersen can serve boards who face similar offers or, perhaps, wish to initiate joint ventures.

An exposition of this particular case could be approached from many perspectives. This article will provide examples of questions and considerations that may help school leaders make sound and justifiable policy decisions in areas of unfamiliar territory for school jurisdictions.

BEGINNING DECISION PROCESS

An exposition of policy and practice problems requires attention to problem definition and to the facts, perceptions, and subtleties embedded in the circumstances. In this case, the fundamental question is taken to be: Should a school jurisdiction endorse the retailer's sales receipt program in return for the prospect of gaining one or more of the $3000 micro-computers? Though this question is not an exclusively ethical problem, it ought, at least, to be considered from an ethical perspective.

The need for a well-considered response to such a question is important in light of the urgent economic pressures facing schools and the need to test the legitimacy of alternative funding sources. This proposal is just one of many. School-business relationships have become common as financial climates become increasingly tight for schools and as commercial interests attempt to develop new marketing strategies. The types of commercial and educational relationships include such varied activities as: school personnel-as-agent fundraising packages, corporate special event or equipment sponsorship, large philanthropic gifts, donations of prizes, joint education-business ventures, educational partnerships, work experience programs, capitalization arrangements, and mentorships. The media have drawn our attention to a number of arrangements. For example, a number of school boards have made deals with a soft drink company. In this type of relationship, a soft drink company was ensured a monopoly on soft drink and juice vending machines for the payment to one of these boards of 1.14 million dollars, over a three-year period.

Obviously, partnerships that go beyond straight commerical exchange involve the goodwill, resources, and the mutual interests of the parties involved. Although each generic type of relationship should be considered independently, it is the *a priori* position of this article that such considerations should be consistent with a set of predetermined, predictable, and explicit ethical principles and processes. This provides a safeguard against unrestrained opportunism and the possibility of educational stewards making strictly financial decisions, without consideration of their educational advocacy functions.

In recent years school budgets have decreased in real dollar revenues, and school administrators have felt strapped for resources. Policies made in tough economic times may be different from those made in more affluent times. Social and economic conditions should not automatically alter the ethical status of proposals; nor should fiscally-challenged times automatically provide justification for what would otherwise be considered ethically unjustifiable policies or practices. Unfortunately, these conditions tend to make proposals, such as the one examined in this paper, worth considering.

Acknowledgment of both rational and intuitive biases should be an important function of the decision process. These biases provide a starting place for what Strike (1993) calls dialogical competence: "the ability to talk about, reason about, and experience appropriate phenomena via a certain set of concepts" (p. 105). Strike says that moral reasoning consists of a reflective equilibrium of interaction between moral data, moral principles, and background conceptions or convictions (pp. 107-108).

STAKEHOLDER ANALYSIS AS BASIS FOR ASSESSMENT OF VALUES AND INTERESTS

The first-phase task of this policy process is to enumerate stakeholders, to identify their particular values and interests, and to enumerate their short-through-long-term interests. Furthermore, degrees of indifference amongst individuals and groups of stakeholders and the policy makers' fiduciary responsibilities to each set of stakeholders must be determined. These tasks are especially important when the consequences of alternative responses are anticipated. This analysis must be conducted in the context of the particular offer and with sensitivity to the social, economic, and political realities of all persons and groups.

A thorough exposition would consider the interests and values of each stakeholder group and would identify any conflicts of interest that

might result from the proposed relationship. At least six stakeholder groups need representation in the case of the computers-for-receipts offer: students, school-based educators, parents, senior administrators and legislators, members of local community, and business and commerce sector members. Using the example of students as one constituent group, a series of questions is proposed to estimate their particular interests and values related to this project: What is the probability that the computers offered in this proposal will be helpful to the students in the schools? What are their current educational needs, and do these computers address these needs? Will the computers be used by the students or will the adults in schools have the main access? How much would one or several microcomputers benefit the overall education program of students? Will students have greater access to computers by virtue of this proposal? What is the possibility that efforts to secure a computer through this proposal would fail? Will any student be particularly advantaged or disadvantaged with or without these computers? Are students, in any way, going to be exploited (treated as means rather than ends) by this proposal, if accepted? If there were internal funds available, would these computers be a high enough priority to purchase, independent of this proposal? What will be the intensity of involvement, expectations, and the expenditures of energies by the students? Will students be required to influence others to change their present grocery shopping patterns? What is implicitly taught to students about consumer, commercial, and educational enterprises?

Some would say that students are the most important stakeholder group to consider in this case. Children are not voluntarily in the situation, and their attendance at school is for educational ends, not for commercial ones. The fallacy of false necessity, that is often inflicted by advertisers, perhaps could be countered by asking whether or not this proposal is the only way to enhance the education of students. Of course, the parentism of the above statements could be questioned, as well.

Numerous questions might be asked on behalf of the other groups, as well. For example: Are parents, in any way, going to be subjected to coercion with respect to shopping loyalties? Might parents be transformed from consumers to marketing agents? What opportunity for assent or consent would be offered to parents? To what extent will teachers be asked to do more work that is not directly related to their primary instructional function (e.g., doing such things as collecting receipts and advertising for companies)? How much tax will be saved for each local property owner? Will any local businesses be placed at

risk of suffering negative effects? Will any long-standing relations be-
tween educational and commercial interests be put at risk? If the food
chain profits from this proposal, how might the community profit, in
addition to the gift of computers? What immediate advertising, sales,
and public relations gains benefit the proposers of this offer? What
benefits or disadvantages might ordinary consumers experience? What
are the potential costs and benefits for the small stores that provide
local services and livelihoods in the school communities? As indicated,
questioning the values and interests not only seeks to uncover the
prospective consequences of the proposal for these six groups, but also
raises some of the ethical and nonethical value and interest conflicts
that must be considered.

DETERMINATION AND DELIMITATION OF ETHICAL AND NONETHICAL ISSUES

After identifying the stakeholders' interests and values, educational
policy- and decision-makers should remind themselves of their relative
obligations, such as mediatory responsibilities in constituent conflicts
and stewardship of predestined purposes and resources. Further, these
leaders must, by some means, determine which of these value conflicts
are ethical and which are nonethical (or ethically neutral) in nature.
This distinction is important, because nonethical values may allow
much more room to negotiate or to compromise than do ethical values,
whether the ethical values are derived from purpose (teleological eth-
ics), principle (deontological ethics), probability (consequentialist eth-
ics), or professionalism (expert and virtue ethics). In order to proceed
with this distinction, a sampling of potentially troublesome issues in the
form of questions is undertaken. If any of these questions are worrisome
to a board or to professional policy makers, they should be addressed
before deciding upon the offer. The key task is to determine if any of
the relevant issues are of an ethical nature. It would be imprudent to
accept or reject the offer without considering the positive or the nega-
tive ethical concerns raised by these questions.

The questions could be further divided into general categories and case-
specific issues. Alternatively, policy designers might use the purpose,
principle, probability, and professionalism categories (as above), or
they may divide the issues into problem sets, such as: consistency with
mission or purpose, consistency with trusteeship obligations, potential
for clashes between competing interests, consistency with community
sensitivities, and possibilities of side-effect concerns (distribution or
process questions). Such lists may vary depending on particular circum-

stances. (See the Appendix for likely questions to arise from this particular case.)

DEVELOPING DECISION CRITERIA

Issues are most readily addressed if predetermined principles, precepts, and precedents are available to serve as plumb-line type criteria for policy decisions. For example, utilitarianism offers a set of theories that regard the end of action to be "general happiness," and it affirms those "acts, dispositions and institutions which maximize the happiness of all who are affected by them" (Ashmore, 1987, p. 68). The basic question a utilitarian asks in determining the moral status of an action or practice is: "Will this action produce greater overall human well-being?" For many utilitarians, well-being is the only good, and they consider their own well-being as neither more nor less important than the well-being of anyone else. If utilitarian principles are retained to determine the moral worth of this proposal, one would project the benefits and costs of either acceptance or rejection of this offer. A quantitative approach to this analysis might include such factors as are included in Bentham's calculus (1948, pp. 30, 31). Bentham used elements such as intensity, duration, certainty, and propinquity to estimate the benefit produced by any act, practice, or decision. He also identified fecundity (chance that more of the same good benefits would follow), purity (chance that the opposite of good benefits would not follow), and extent (the number of people affected by the act). The utilitarian decision-maker will focus on the short and long term impact of such an offer on others, together with the net welfare for key stakeholders.

Alternatively, the theories of rights and deontological ethics (*deontos* means a binding duty) provide decision criteria based on moral entitlements and obligations (Hobbes, 1958; Kant, 1964; Locke, 1952). Deontological theories of ethics have been defined negatively as non-teleological theories. Theories of moral obligation consider factors other than (or as well as) the ends of action to determine their rightness or wrongness (Garner & Rosen, 1967, p. 36). From a deontological position, a policy on commercial and educational partnerships is right when it conforms to a relevant principle of duty. Obligations may be either self-imposed, socially-imposed, or divinely-imposed (Holmes, 1984, p. 69). A policy decision is deemed appropriate if it respects the rights of all individuals affected by the policy. In short, the security of sustained

respect for persons and the impartial nature of a policy will take precedence in decision-making.

The various theories of justice (Rawls, 1971; Walton, 1991) also offer help to resolve conflicts of rights and interests among stakeholders. One way of dealing with justice is to give each constituent group its due according to its work and its predisposition to dependence. Rawls (1971) states that any inequality of opportunity has to enhance the opportunities of those with the lesser opportunity. He says that an excessive rate of saving must be realized in order to mitigate the burden of those bearing this hardship (pp. 83-90). In other words, such a policy would formulate rational rules and procedures that apply to all persons fairly, such that no one person or group is disadvantaged by the fact of advantage provided others.

Ethical theories can help educational policy makers deal with the cases that come before them by generating principles or, in some instances, tie-breaking criteria where conflicts of interests exist. These principles may be expressed in the form of statements or questions that are useful for determining consequences, rights, obligations, and best remedies for stakeholders. For example, policy makers may consider the following principles:

REVERSIBILITY PRINCIPLE (or the Golden Rule): What would be the policy if we (the policy makers) assumed the point of view of the children or their caring parent(s)?

KID-ON-THE-SHOULDER PRINCIPLE: What would be done if impressionable children were watching and learning from the way we handle this proposal? What would be our decision if our own children or those of a respected personal friend were involved?

SOUND EXPLANATION PRINCIPLE: Is the justification for accepting or rejecting this computers-and-sales-receipts offer sufficiently explainable to the people that most matter (including the children and relevant local community)?

LAW OF ORIGINS PRINCIPLE: Has our tentative decision addressed what we, as educators, are here for? Given our educational mission and mandate, is this computer offer a good deal for our school community?

CONSISTENCY OR UNIVERSALITY PRINCIPLE: Would we be willing to commend our policy as good, right, and just to other policy makers, given similar circumstances?

AWAITED-HARVEST PRINCIPLE: How do the long-term benefits or losses that derive from this policy decision compare with the shorter term benefits or losses to the people in our school jurisdiction? Have we allowed long-term interests to trump short-term interests?

NO-HARM PRINCIPLE: Are any children, anywhere, or at any time in our school system, likely to be hurt or disadvantaged from this policy decision? If they are, do the economic, educational, and equity benefits from this decision outweigh these potential harms?

CRITICAL EQUILIBRIUM PRINCIPLE: Does this policy decision give proper balance to the individual best interests of particular children in typical classrooms with the collective best interests of all the children in our school system?

QUALMLESS DISCLOSURE PRINCIPLE: Can we unashamedly tell our most respected professional peers, our caring parents, and our colleagues in the local chambers of commerce the reasons for this decision, with full confidence that they would see things our way and support the policy decision?

OBJECTIVE RESPONSIBILITY PRINCIPLE: Are the particular standards or the constraining external obligations that have been entrusted to us, with respect to providing the best possible public education for our constituents, being satisfied by this policy decision? Is this decision consistent with our stewardship of the public trust?

ALTERNATE RESPONSES AND PROJECTION OF ETHICAL IMPLICATIONS

A limited number of reasonable responses to this proposal are suggested, beyond merely blushing. Policy makers might ignore the offer and refuse to deal with the questions, issues, and judgments that are delineated above. Policy makers might explain the proposal to their constituents and invite their opinions and judgments. Policy makers may take a firm stand against the offer, and make their position a matter of the public record. School jurisdictions may need to choose this option if the company has already publicized the offer, as in this situation. Rejecting the offer might range in expression from a simple, "No, thank you," to calls for censure of the major food chain because of their attempt to manipulate the consuming public through children. Policy makers might request that the food chain donate the microcomputers to schools, especially disadvantaged schools, in exchange for public acknowledgment of their generosity, or some such counter-offer. Finally, but not exhaustively, the policy maker might decide to "go for it!" As indicated, this offer received this same range of response from school systems.

Obviously, given the interests and issues-identification process, there will be ramifications for the various combinations of alternative policies that attempt to address this problem. Our recommendation is that the interests and issues identified at the beginning of the process be raised again to help qualify alternate responses, to anticipate criticism stemming from each of the alternatives, and consider amending or

modifying the preferred resolutions. For example, if the school jurisdiction decides to collect cash receipts in exchange for the possibility of receiving one or more school computers, they will need to: 1) Emphasize the purpose of public education and the non-technological aspects of the learning environment; 2) Think about other commercial interests that might wish to enter into similar or related relationships; 3) Anticipate complaints from direct competitors of the successful corporate suitor; 4) Decide how to guard against concerns related to direct advertising, exploitation, time away from central task, and influence on shopping patterns; and 5) Determine how to ensure that lower socio-economically endowed schools are not disadvantaged by the acceptance of this offer.

A framework for ethical analysis should admit of and adjust to the practical and social realities of school systems and communities. For example, it has been mentioned that the retailer had chosen to begin its advertising campaign prior to meetings with school board officials. This strategy may have placed a rather strong social pressure on the policy-making of the schools. On the other hand, it may have constrained the boards to exercise their autonomy and to assert their independence despite the powerful media campaign.

ETHICAL CONTEMPLATION ON APPROPRIATENESS OF POLICY AND PRACTICE

This article has attempted to put the responses of these school boards into explicit, normative, ethical terms. In preparing this exposition, we consulted with two urban boards of education who had relied on *a priori* policies, as well as with a rural board who did not have a policy for this area of concern. In the case of the two urban boards, their policies reflected the regime values of the day and had taken-for-granted ethical components embedded in their origin and expression (Pal, 1989). These policies suggest that they were consequentialist in their orientation. According to Pal (1989), such policies have the goal of "maximum satisfaction of preferences" (p. 204). All three school systems seemed to rely primarily on consequentialist arguments in their rejection of the grocery chain's promotion. They also reasoned that they had no guarantee of receiving a computer if their efforts fell at all short of the $150,000 mark, in sales receipts. In the end, the process had neither persuasive inherent nor consequential educational value. The rural administrator noted that the general economic health of the small

communities was threatened, thereby bringing into question the commercial value of this proposal for local retailers.

In terms of nonconsequentialist arguments, the advertising was said to contain subliminal detail that made an unfair appeal to Canadian nationalism at a time of potential disunity or separation. Perhaps these administrators and their boards reasoned that their constituents (students and their families) were being asked to participate in direct advertising that unfairly supported one business over others. These requirements seemed contrary to the primary mission of the schools and to their loyalties to community-based retailers. School administrators felt that something was wrong with the "deal." The difference between the retailer's outlay for the computers was considered disproportional to sales receipt expectations and their advertising benefits. Although not stated directly, administrators implied that students had a right to expect that all programs related to the school would be primarily directed at their welfare. A large corporation's use of "students as pawns" was seen as a violation of school system integrity. Their analysis says that the offer tends to place their constituents in a position of being used as means rather than ends. Put in this Kantian formulation, the school response was rooted in a perceived duty to respect persons as valued more highly and differently than material objects.

The school administrators said that the students relied on policies and educational leaders to protect them from counter-productive influences and commercial predators. Any observer will note that from book covers to lunch boxes, from coloring books to comics, from T-shirts to hats, from radios to toys, everything in the child's world seems to have become ad space. While the alternatives might include monitoring the space, stifling commercial exploitation, or exploiting the phenomenon, school boards, administrators, and other stakeholders need to consider carefully where they want their policies to lead and what, if any, constraints they wish to impose on their own participation or intervention in such situations.

The urban public board gave educational outcomes as its touchstone while the other two boards were influenced more by religious motivations and explicit ethical perspectives than by educational outcomes. It might be that the philosophic and ideological pluralism of the public board may have inclined the administration to shy away from explicit ethical principles and to rely, instead, on written policy with implicit ethical values. The spokesperson for the public board stated that the decision with regard to the grocery chain offer was not an ethical one.

The Catholic board administrator identified it as an ethical decision for his organization; and the rural division administrator believed that the Christian faith of the majority of the trustees in his rural school jurisdiction shaped the ethical nature of their discussions. Clearly, this distinction could be an artifact of random effects of just three interviews or of the personalities of the three persons being interviewed. Nonetheless, it does ignite a set of hunches regarding the effects of religious beliefs on the expression of discrete ethical values in school system decision-makers' policy responses.

Although consequentialist ethics were more common in the administrators' justifications for policy decisions, nonconsequentialist approaches might have been preferred if language and linkage were more clearly articulated (Strike, Haller, & Soltis, 1988). Nonconsequentialist ethics derive from transrational values (Hodgkinson, 1991). According to Hodgkinson, nonconsequentialist values are a matter of faith rather than logic and of intuition rather than cognition. Perhaps educational leaders do not lack transrational values, but rather find utilitarianism more easily defended and more fully articulated in the arena of educational politics.

With most conventional policy analysis frameworks, a review of the policy implementation is scheduled to allow for policy modification. Especially important in such a review are the responses of the various constituents. In other words, these reflections should consider the meta-ethical issues related to common and exclusive interests. Education does, indeed, play a vital role in society. Schools are expected to instill in young people consciousness of important moral commitments and characteristics, thereby preparing them to become contributing members of society. Because of the deep and lasting effects of schooling on young people, society may hold mixed-sector engagements and relationships, such as in this case, to a higher set of ethical expectations.

On reflection, schools are often expected to demonstrate values such as justice, integrity, equity, full participation, inclusion, and fairness (Calabrese, 1990). Business or commercial interests, on the other hand, are usually seen as having profit as a central goal, although this perception is sometimes debated (Hunter, 1990). There is increasing societal concern about corporate ethics and about the assumption of social responsibility by commercial institutions, both public and private (Lewis, 1990). Corporations in North America have a long history of contributing to socially worthwhile causes, including education (Carroll, 1989; Sturdivant & Vernon-Wortzel, 1990). In business, self-interest is often

argued to be a fundamental value (Sturdivant & Vernon-Wortzel, 1990), but this focus does not necessarily imply a lack of concern for other values.

Business involvement with schools has obviously raised some ethical issues. Schools like to think of themselves as untainted by the profit motive (Rist, 1989). However, donations of money from business can be traced back to corporate profits.

Furthermore, educational institutions have a "tradition" of commercial involvement with such things as fund-raising, yearbooks, school jackets, team uniforms, and score clocks. Although some corporations have historically not demonstrated as much concern for ethics as have others, it should not be assumed that business ethics is an oxymoron. Even if only through enlightened self-interest, most CEOs today espouse philanthropy (Carroll, 1989). Despite isolated examples to the contrary, businesses are not necessarily, nor essentially, unethical. Although corporate values are different from those of education (Dunn, 1987), the ethics of school systems are not necessarily better developed than those of corporations. To reiterate, the value systems are distinctly different. Although some business leaders argue that their main aim is not to maximize profits (Hunter, 1990), most agree that self-interest is the basis of corporate philanthropy (Sturdivant & Vernon-Wortzel, 1990). The challenge remains for educators to sort through what are the exclusive and common interests of the commercial and educational worlds.

CONCLUSIONS

It has been argued that ethical decision-making processes need ethical humility, and that numerous individual and systemic forces constrain "good, right, and proper" policy decisions. Vaill (1991) says that value conflicts need to be diagnosed and resolved reflectively, collectively, wholistically, and spiritually. The failure of the grocery chain's offer to attract positive attention from school systems may have resulted from value confusion rather than from lack of ethics. From a business point-of-view, the direct advertising aspect of their offer was not inherently unethical. Of course, some might argue that they are caught up in self-deception if they view their offer in any way other than self-serving. A disturbing feature of the offer was the discrepancy between energy outlay and material return. All three school systems saw a basic unfairness in linking $150,000 in sales to a single microcomputer. Their

reluctance was exacerbated by an advertising presentation implying that the retailer would play a major role in "technologizing" education for Canadian children. This suggestion was considered to be an exaggerated claim and a questionable pedagogical strategy.

The problem did not seem to be rooted in a fear of having brand names visible. Every school computer and each driver education vehicle used by schools is clearly marked with sponsors' and brand names. However, to be legitimate, corporate image-making must be linked to pre-existing educational goals. Schools deal in educational processes, not in material rewards unrelated to learning. The grocery store chain did not seem to have identified an authentic educational component. To some educators, the grocery chain was exaggerated in its consideration of profit and image without thinking about how the individual student would benefit from collecting sales receipts. Although the same concern exists for several other kinds of fund-raising ventures, such as door-to-door selling, at least a portion of every sale goes directly to the student council or to other educational services.

In summary, three school systems rejected the retailer's offer probably because of differences in values between business and education. But the circumstances, in our society, indicate a need for business and education to develop closer partnerships (Farrell, 1991; Hoyt, 1991; MacDowell, 1989; Molnar, 1989). Schools require more resources, new ideas, and different approaches. Businesses benefit in obvious ways from employable and trainable graduates. Commercial interests enhance their public images by involvement in the educational world (MacDowell, 1989). But details of commercial and educational partnerships must be carefully worked out. The values of each side must be understood and respected by the other. These differences are not necessarily mutually exclusive. Rather, they can be constrained and enhanced by ethically-driven deliberations.

The processes by which organizations make ethical decisions are not always clear. Sometimes these processes do not clearly include the ethical domain. At times, school system rationales or rationalizations are simply vague. Usually, however, the welfare of students is the stated criterion for educational decision-making. Educators claim their rewards, intrinsically and extrinsically, for putting their students first. They protect and promote schools as places where the specific benefit of students (as ends) override any conflicting organizational or institutional benefits (as means). Although all three school systems relied on

some form of group decision making, people contribute to decisions as individuals. If they substitute policy for direct consideration of ethical questions, they are simply substituting the policy-makers' ethics for their own. Often a decision is made, based on policy or not, and the ethics are filled in later. But decision makers must be able to distinguish right from wrong, and not just in terms of proportional benefit. Thus, a great need for executive ethics education exists.

Schools need partnerships with business to prepare students adequately for our changing society and to gain access to technology. In this case, bilateral discussions before program promotion would have enabled both parties to clarify values and to identify shared goals. Perhaps such discussions had taken place in another setting (e.g., in the United States or in another part of Canada). However, the Saskatchewan educational mores compelled some school systems to reject this proposal or at least to blush at the proposition of an engagement. The education establishment believed that the grocery chain was trying to make inappropriate use of students. Perhaps, though, the two parties simply started from different value platforms. If the retailer had approached the school systems for pre-promotion discussions, then both sides might have been able to satisfy their needs in ways thought to be ethical and acceptable.

This article has sought to describe an interests-sensitive case and to offer a framework for ethical consideration of such a case. Both writer and readers might benefit from an opportunity to appreciate and to critique this ethical framework and to consider the common and exclusive interests held by educational and commercial sectors. This is a practical and possibly transferable example of a policy analysis template that places the ethical domain at the center of educational decision-making. The author hopes this article will serve to stimulate debate and discussion on particular policy considerations involving the relationship between educational and commercial interests, from ethical and other perspectives.

APPENDIX

General Issue Questions:

1.   Is a school division ethically bound to reject "freebies" or gifts from the private business sector? Should they enter into commercial agreements that have been initiated by other parties?

2.   Are corporate handouts simple gifts of philanthropy or sophisticated marketing tools in a high-stakes power game? Do such handouts alter or compromise the purpose of public education?

3.   Do commercial influences in school settings displace educational values with commodities or, at a deeper level, replace the internal goods of learning with external goods of material things?

4.   Are school divisions, as public authorities, legally or ethically in conflict if they receive particular financial support from commercial interests in exchange for services (advertising agency)?

5.   Is it appropriate for a school division to align itself with parts of the corporate sector to gain advantages for itself (rational self-interest)?

6.   Should particular businesses have or be perceived to have access and exchange monopolies with public schools?

7.   Are relationships between business and education typically in the best interests of students? How does one know if a particular relationship is, indeed, in the best interests of students?

8.   Is the alleged manipulation of young people, who can be pressured into supporting, promoting, and endorsing a particular business or product, permissible under any circumstances? Is such an outcome from a commercial alliance avoidable?

9.   Will students be subjected to undue pressures now or in the future?

10. Is what seems, on the surface, to be a question of direct educational benefit really what it appears to be?

11. Will arrangements that are characterized by expedience, convenience, and technological progress place the integrity of schools at risk? To what extent should the appearance of impropriety be a concern?

12. Where does the school system stand on the notion of entrepreneurship? To what extent are entrepreneurial proposals contrary to the culture of schools? What are the limits of entrepreneurship for school settings?

13. Under what circumstances does a relationship between business and education become appropriate? How might a relationship be constructed in order to encourage community involvement in schools and to foster corporate citizenship?

14. Is the notion that schools are essentially places of learning a naive construction, especially where such a notion is used to delimit the relationships between other interests and schools?

15. Where do you draw the line with relationships with commercial interests: sponsorship of team sports, advertising space in the hallways, billboards on school property?

Specific Issue Questions Related to Offer:

1. Are students being used as a means rather than an ends by the food chain?

2. Are commercial interests getting cheap advertising through a ready-made audience?

3. Is anyone disadvantaged or hurt by this deal? Is any one advantaged or helped by this deal?

4. At what price may the sacred be replaced by the practical? By entering into this arrangement will school systems become partners in the transformation of education from a free marketplace of ideas to a common marketplace of goods? To what extent does the school system view itself as a sacred entity; one wherein the profanities of marketing are not allowed to enter?

5. Does this offer constitute a commercial exploitation of any school-community constituents?

6. Is commercial exploitation of curriculum qualitatively different from, and more reprehensible than, other forms of market advertising to children precisely because it masquerades as education?

7. What are the possibilities of either equality or inequity of distribution with this proposal? (Schools in wealthier neighbourhoods may be able to produce more receipts and get more computers.)

8. Is this proposal a solution to financial decisions that have deprived students of expensive educational equipment?

9. Is this a slippery slope situation, where accepting one offer will lead to accepting others that are potentially less acceptable?

10. How much voice do school authorities have in negotiating the terms of the offer?

11. How ought school divisions deal with the notion of loyalty to the small store owners in the school communities?

12. If the decision is made to participate, will inside constituents feel responsible for working to purchase school equipment, on top of their other assignments?

13. Should people be asked to channel their personal grocery buying to accommodate the school purpose of gaining a computer?

14. Do commercial relationships between large corporate enterprises and schools disadvantage small, local business enterprises?

15. Do all businesses have equal access to students? Should they have equal access?

16. Are there any explicit or implicit commitments by the school, as agent, to endorse or support this food chain beyond this offer?

17. Are children, youth, and their parents made vulnerable to manipulation?

18. Does this decision constitute a precedent?

19. Does affirming one company imply a boycott of other competing companies?

20. Do corporate handouts, with strings attached, alter or amend the purpose of public education on a school-level?

21. If the Board approves of this offer, will this decision imply that the school division agrees with the tacit assumption that technology equals education?

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