Advanced Analytical Paper

The following paper will analyze the scenario provided by Dr. Johari utilizing the four-step method for analyzing critical issues developed by Vincent Ruggiero (2015). Of particular focus in the second step will be obligations upon the student (and any potential conflicts) as well as moral ideals involved. In the fourth step, this author will provide a recommendation on the most ethical course of action as well as a rationale for that decision.

Step 1: The Details of the Case

According to Ruggiero (2015), the four-step analysis begins by attempting to identify answers which may not be clearly answered within the statement of the case (p. 81). There are only a few questions left unanswered by the case statement: given the problems already caused by Jennum's long absence, how would the professor treat the rest of the team should the unethical behavior be reported? Are Jennum and Hoover the only members of each team with knowledge of PHP? Though the team leader says the whole team will fail the class if the unethical behavior is reported, would the teacher actually punish the whole team (or class) for Jennum's actions, if reported by the student? Would the collusion between Jennum and Hoover be noticed by any other students and reported to the professor instead—especially one from the other team—who might be alarmed by the collusion? How would the professor's treatment of the student's team change if a different student reported the unethical behavior? In case the class or team is failed due to this incident, would the faculty work with the team leader and find an alternate means of satisfying course requirements so that he may graduate?

Step 2: Relevant Criteria

As Ruggiero explains, identifying the criteria relevant to the case involves listing all the consequences, obligations, and moral ideals involved (p. 81). We will begin with the potential consequences that the author identified. Because the course requires the team to keep their project designs confidential, and because Jennum and Hoover are on opposing teams, their willful collusion would result in an automatic failure for both students and reported to the Dean of Students as per the course syllabus. The team leader says that if Jennum's misconduct is reported, "we will all fail the class." There are several potential consequences implied by this statement, depending on the "we" implied by the team leader. As Jennum is the designated PHP expert for the student's team, his removal would leave the group without a PHP specialist. Jennum's code is taken entirely from Hoover's work, and so the team would be left with neither a developer nor any sort of code from which to continue, as it is likely the copied work would be thrown out. This would result in an unusable product that would cause the student's team to fail the class. However, the team leader may have meant the whole class—as Hoover willingly engaged in unethical behavior, and he is also the PHP expert for his own team, that team would be left without a developer. However, the opposing team would at least have Hoover's work to build upon should he be fired, as that code was meant to be used for their project. In either case, the team leader would be left unable to graduate given he cannot return back to

school by the next year.

The students have a number of obligations placed upon them. They are expected to maintain ethical behavior at all times and not engage in misconduct. They are obligated to keep their team project confidential according to the class syllabus. As both students and as employees of a fictional company working on a very real product, the teams are obligated to perform their jobs to the best of their ability and as efficiently as possible. There are also obligations upon the professors: they must also give reasonable and appropriate assistance to their students in developing their knowledge and skill while achieving the objectives set forward by their courses, but the professors must also be impartial and honest in how they grade students. Although there may appear to be an obligation on the student at the focus of the case to keep the actions of Jennum secret as per the wishes of the team leader, Ruggiero notes that there can be no obligation to do something morally wrong (p. 80). While this means there is no real conflict of obligations on the student at the focus of this case study, Jennum himself may have felt as if he had to act unethically to fulfill his obligations as a team member when he had not been participating for the bulk of the semester.

As for moral ideas, there are several in play during this scenario of which this author can identify. One such idea is justice, in that each student receives the grade they deserve. Another is honesty, in that the students should be truthful to their professors. Courage is in play particularly for the student at the focus of this scenario, for they must be able to tell the truth about the matter without faltering before the potential repercussions academically and personally. Prudence and compassion apply to this scenario in that, whatever the outcome of the scenario, it should take into consideration the plight of the team leader.

Step 3: Determine Possible Courses of Action

There are several options left open to the student. One option is to obey the team leader and keep knowledge of the collusion between Jennum and Hoover confidential. The other is to simply discuss the matter with the professor. There is another option, however, in which the student reports the incident to the professor with another student as a witness—preferably someone from the opposing team—and seeks a resolution that will not end in automatic failure for the team or class as a whole. It is this last option which this author feels is the most ethical course of action.

Step 4: The Most Ethical Action and Rationale for Decision

This scenario is highly unusual in its nature in that the problem had not been addressed earlier, when Jennum had already exhibited behavior highly detrimental to the team effort. What is clear, however, is that no satisfactory solution can be achieved through discussion with either the team leader, Jennum, or Hoover. Diana Wicks (2011) asserts in her article on dealing with ethical differences in the workplace that whistle-blowing is an option of last resort. She stresses that it is important for an employee to first try and handle unethical situations through the leadership structure of their organization. As per the nature of this course as a simulation of a software

firm, the proper course of action evident to this author is to report the situation to the professors overseeing the course

In this case, the team manager—who would typically be the first option to which breaches in ethics are reported—is more interested in covering up the situation rather than solving it. This author cannot condone "looking the other way" as the team leader requests. In an actual workplace situation, a scenario such as this could result in serious consequences for the company at large. According to Ethics & Compliance Initiative (2013) in their *National Business Ethics Survey,* 41% of respondents witnessed misconduct in their workplace and 60% reported that managers were involved in workplace misconduct. In addition, Dori Meinert (2014) notes that ethical lapses have a cumulative effect on the workplace; when even minor misconduct is ignored, other employees may be encouraged to commit unethical behavior themselves—believing that such behavior is permissible—or they may quit in protest.

Writing on ethical behavior in the workplace, Sam Amico (2010) states that ethical workers should have accountability: they should be honest when things go wrong, and work toward a resolution while remaining professional all the while. As both Jennum and the team leader are not willing to be honest about this incident and wish to keep it "under wraps," the next step would be to report the incident to the next level of management. In this simulated company, the professors of this course would ideally represent the role of higher level managers or executives.

In reporting ethical lapses, Kristin Swain (2013) recommends that employees first compile evidence, and make two copies of all evidence so that the employee retains the information for personal records. She also cautions that when reporting an ethical breach, the employee's own ethics must not themselves be found wanting: the report must be factual and impartial, and not distorted by one's own feelings or exaggerated (though mentioning potential consequences to the employer is permissible). In addition to Swain's recommendation, this author would advise bringing a witness when reporting to the professors to provide further proof.

It is the opinion of this author that, given the highly unusual conditions presented in this scenario, the professors teaching the course are the only persons capable of reaching a decision that would be satisfactory to all parties involved. Taken together with the team leader's wishes to keep this breach in ethics secret, the worrying evidence that managers are often complicit in workplace misconduct, and the potential consequences of overlooking such breaches in the workplace, the most ethical action available to the student would be to report the incident to the professors.

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