

Literary Imagination and Leadership: Lessons From the Classroom

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Abstract : In recent years, business schools made teaching ethical leadership a higher priority. Greater attention to moral and ethical concepts and reasoning processes may prove beneficial to future business leaders. But with a shift in focus, there is a need for a shift in pedagogy. This paper explores an imaginative literature-based pedagogy in the teaching of ethical leadership. An imaginative literature-based pedagogy uses works of fiction to help students build moral analysis and moral judgment capabilities through a rigorous assessment of the moral soundness of actions, motivations, rationales, and consequences portrayed in works of fiction. Business students enrolled in 4 leadership senior-level courses were assigned the White Tiger: A Novel by Aravind Adiga as their main course reading. Students' engagement was measured as a three-factor construct exploring cognitive engagement, behavioural engagement and emotional engagement. In addition, students' final papers were analyzed using thematic content analysis. This paper will present the results of this analysis and argue that incorporating fiction into the leadership curriculum allows students to explore the dire consequences of avoiding countervailing interests, engaging in dishonesty and engaging in moral puffery-based leadership.

Keywords : ethical leadership, empathetic imagination, business education, pedagogy, fiction

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