

their adoption of a particular course of action. The main difference was between the female teachers and male lawyers. The female teachers were more likely to give virtue-based reasons for breaking the established protocol than the male ones. This is significant, as schools are increasingly considered as institutions where professional judgment and decision-making are compromised due to the increased emphasis on compliance with policies (Cooke and Carr, 2014). These findings offer significant food for thought in this area.

Conclusion

The secondary analysis of the data collected by the Jubilee Centre for Character and Virtues is valuable for several reasons. It yielded significant results, which provide new insights into how male and female teachers, doctors and lawyers make choices when faced with dilemmas. Many previous studies focused on business and accounting; this research sheds light on some largely under-explored groups. It also highlights how different professionals prioritise moral theory when giving their reasons for following a particular course of action. The findings that reveal when professionals are willing to break the established protocol and provide virtue-based reasons for their actions are of particular interest. They challenge the prevalence of codes of conduct in professional ethics, which primarily seek to safeguard the rights of pupils, patients and clients by specifying the responsibilities of service providers with respect to such rights. However, it is increasingly apparent that ‘the value and effectiveness of sound professional practice of institutional regulations and codes of conduct are limited’ (Jubilee Centre, 2016). It is precisely when professionals are called to make ethical decisions that these limitations are highlighted, as often there is no rule or code that covers the precise situation. An understanding of how male and female teachers, doctors and lawyers make virtue-based decisions is vital for the continued flourishing of these professions.

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