Professionals and “Good” Leadership
A Case Study from East Africa

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Presenter: Stephen Schwenke, Ph.D.
Creative Associates International
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Leadership is not a person or a position. It is a complex moral relationship between people, based on trust, obligation, commitment, emotion, and a shared vision of the good.

Joanne Ciulla
“Complex Moral Relationship”? 

A profession is a “disciplined group of individuals who adhere to high ethical standards and uphold themselves to, and are accepted by, the public as possessing special knowledge and skills ... and who are prepared to exercise this knowledge and these skills in the interest of others. Inherent in this definition is the concept that the responsibility for the welfare, health and safety of the community shall take precedence over other considerations.”

Australian Council of Professions
“Largely negative assessments of [patients] treatment by nurses...from breaches of confidentiality to stigmatizing and rude behavior to lack of confidence in their medical training and knowledge.”

“Widespread community distrust for nurses”

“Nurses [are] considered rude, stigmatizing and judgmental and are distrusted by many community members.”

“The thought of going to health clinic just kills us before going. Fearing what will happen [at the clinic] comes first before our illnesses...”

* From BUILDING HEALTHY COMMUNITIES: The views of people living with HIV in ‘task shifting’ and health systems strengthening. Findings from a five-country consultation, HEALTH GLOBAL ACCESS PROJECT, INC., November 2007.
Kenya Nurses Code of Ethics

- Core values:
  - Health and well-being
  - Choice
  - Dignity
  - Confidentiality
  - Fairness
  - Accountability
  - Safe practice environment
The disconnects

- Lack of leadership within and among professions
- Professional code of ethics versus actual professional ethical performance
- Weak knowledge of ethical norms
- Weak motivation to be ethical, and strong incentives to be unethical
- Weak recognition of role of professions as agents of a nation’s development
Motivations

• Respectability in “tough markets”
• Quest for meaning, social status, and job satisfaction
• Desire for consistent and improved quality and competence
• Identification with public interest issues
  • justice, health, safety, efficiency, environmental sustainability)
Objectives

- Find, recognize and strengthen existing ethical leadership resources in East Africa
  - Association of Professional Societies in East Africa (APSEA)
  - Makerere Center for Applied Ethics (MACAE)
- Accelerate, strengthen, and support the APSEA Mainstreaming Ethics Initiative
- Establish and sustains professions as ethical leaders in and resources for development throughout East Africa, with potential for replication more widely.
Paradigm Possibilities: Profession

• Old Model
  • A guild or monopoly to gain a corner on the market, and maintain scarcity of supply
  • An “old boys’ club”
  • Value-neutral: a business, with no moral pretenses

• Older Model
  • A “gentlemen’s club” focused on quality
  • Mutually accountable for consistently high technical and ethical standards
  • Accountable to the public for adherence to “high ideals”
Paradigm Possibilities: Profession

• APSEA’s new model
  • Ethical performance
    • “Good” ~ Identified, monitored, rewarded
    • “Bad” ~ Identified, monitored, sanctioned
  • Crafting a new public identity as leaders in:
    • Public interest advocacy on “professional” ideals
    • Technical competence for development
    • Anti-corruption (compliance)
    • Pro-integrity (aspirational)
Leadership?

• A New Vision
  • **AGENCY:** Professions as moral agents of development and change
  • **IDENTITY:** Indigenous effort by APSEA to revitalize an ethical identity through improved ethical performance and “respectability”
  • **ORIENTATION:** A public interest agenda