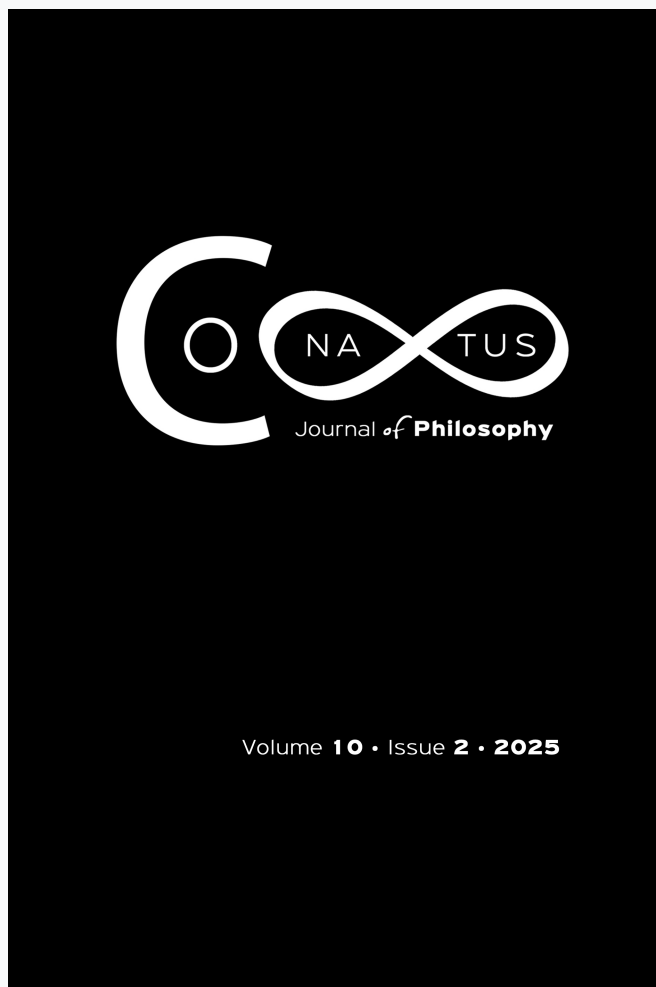


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Communication Skills of the Leader in the School Unit: Applied Ethics and Rule Utilitarianism

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Abstract

The purpose of this study is to highlight the importance of developing and cultivating the communication skills of school unit leaders and teachers, and the connection between these skills, based on rule utilitarianism. Utilitarianism is fundamental for maximizing the benefits for the greatest number of people. Rule utilitarianism, through its moral norms, values, and principles, sets the foundations for human thought and behaviour regarding decisions and actions that do not harm society as a whole, but create a sense of moral perception of the good, the just, and self-interest. The communicative rationality of utilitarianism contributes significantly to making critical and difficult decisions in the school unit, in which the principal and teachers are the main guides in learning and understanding the ethical and social value of communication in the transformations of contemporary social reality.

Keywords: *communication; skills; education; utilitarianism; leader; decision making*

I. Introduction: Communication in ethical education

For philosophers, ethics has a broad scope as it refers not only to the definition of what is good and bad, but also to the way human beings behave in their lives and interact with each other. There is a basic distinction between ethics and moral theory. The term ethics is perceived as the set of rules or principles which govern the behavior of people, which are characteristic of the common culture within a social group or set. Ethical theory or theories, as formulated from time to time within the environment of philosophy by the proponents of moral philosophy, consist of answers to the questions of what is morally right or wrong, what is morally good, and what is bad, and in general are an attempt to indicate how people should behave.¹ According to Aristotle, virtuous people demonstrate their virtues in every aspect of their lives, and that is why children must be trained to respond virtuously to the demands of life.² Through virtuous actions, people advance toward what they desire, ensuring not only their survival but also the prospect of prosperity.³ Noddings points out that on the issue of moral guidance of man in life, Aristotle answers by accentuating the ability of the person of virtue to know when and how to exercise each virtue.⁴ This ability presupposes the moral education of the individual from the first developmental period of his life, which is the school period. Education plays an important role in the moral development of the individual. Towards this end, the teacher must be effective and prepared in their role, having as their main assets the primarily communication skills and knowledge, which make them a leader of themselves and of young people in their moral education, acting as a model in terms of behavior and decision-making.

A human being as an ethical person plays an important role in the way they communicate with others, in the way they lead and take decisions in critical circumstances, manifesting through their choices and decisions the quality of their character. Human ethics became the springboard for the emergence of Kant's ethical universality and deontology and Mill's evaluative utilitarianism, which, together with Aris-

¹ Melanie Killen and Audun Dahl, "Moral Reasoning Enables Developmental and Societal Change," *Perspectives on Psychological Science* 16, no. 6 (2021): 1209-1225.

² Nel Noddings, *Philosophy of Education*, 4th ed. (Taylor & Francis, 2016), 149-150.

³ Purissima Emelda Egbekpalu, "Aristotelian Concept of Happiness (Eudaimonia) and Its Conative Role in Human Existence: A Critical Evaluation," *Conatus – Journal of Philosophy* 6, no. 2 (2021): 75-86.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 145-146.

totalitarian virtues, dominate decision-making and organizational ethics in general.⁵

Kantian moral autonomy of the person is the basis of Kant's deontology and universality, where the person obeys universal moral laws with universal force, which they themselves have established, attempting to preserve their freedom and the moral choices dictated by their will.⁶

Although Kantian ethics and Mill's utilitarianism stem from different fundamental principles, they converge on certain ethical ideas, including the importance of rationality, consideration for others, and a concern for universal moral principles.⁷ Furthermore, Kantian morality is revived in Mill's rule utilitarianism, according to which human actions are judged by whether or not they conform to the established rules of society, with the basic orientation of ensuring the general good. In this way, Mill breaks away from Bentham's hedonistic utilitarianism, which defined utility purely in terms of pleasure and pain. Bentham's approach linked utilitarianism closely to hedonism and,⁸ arguably, to a form of egoism that legitimized the pursuit of self-interest, or to a form of foolish Machiavellianism.⁹

Hegel attempted to limit the foolish decision-maker by putting man in charge of his moral life, which he must define, and therefore his freedom. The result of the act will judge the motives of the individual, who must benefit not only himself but also others. Hegel emphasizes the need for human self-consciousness which transforms the individual personality into a universal one, since individual benefit must be committed to the universal benefit.¹⁰ Nietzsche extols individual responsibility and accountability as the birth of man's free will, attempting to give new meaning to the ethics of men through their actions and their natural will to power.¹¹

⁵ Sotiria Triantari, *Ethics in Decision Making: Aristotelian Ethics in Decision Making* (K. & M. Stamoulis, I. Arch. Harbandidis, 2021), 8-9.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 62-67. For a comprehensive discussion on dignity as related to autonomy from an impartial standpoint, see Filimon Peonidis, "Making Sense of Dignity: A Starting Point," *Conatus – Journal of Philosophy* 5, no. 1 (2020): 85-100, esp. 87ff.

⁷ Simone De Colle and Patricia H. Werhane, "Moral Motivation across Ethical Theories: What Can We Learn for Designing Corporate Ethics Programs?" *Journal of Business Ethics* 81 (2008): 751-764.

⁸ Triantari, *Ethics in Decision Making*, 8-9.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 70-73.

¹⁰ Robert M. Wallace, *Hegel's Philosophy of Reality, Freedom, and God* (Cambridge University Press, 2005), 8-9.

¹¹ Daniel Harris, "Nietzsche's Social Account of Responsibility," *Southwest Philosophy Review* 28, no. 1 (2012): 103-110.

The power of human actions through Aristotle's moral vision was emphasized by Marx, supporting that the rational man is the creator of himself and the social conditions in which he lives. Marx's ethics, adopting Aristotelian terminology, considers practical ethics on a matrix of responsibility, accountability, beliefs, principles and rules to address the social and class inequalities and come up against the unbridled liberation of capital.¹²

The brief reference to the ethical theories of philosophers highlights the necessity of human education to be oriented towards knowledge of the systems of values and norms on the basis of which one must act and make rational decisions on moral principles that do not offend human value and personality, transcend self-interest and are oriented towards the happiness of the greatest number of people. Moral education contributes to the formation of the individual's personal identity and highlights the need for moral education, in the context of school education.¹³ The skills that frame and highlight their moral identity focus on their ability to communicate and to be in constant interaction with fellow human beings in the workplace and society. Teachers' knowledge and skills have a strong impact on students' learning and moral development.¹⁴ The essence of moral education is the process by which teachers transform certain social norms and moral virtues into individual thoughts and ethics of learners through certain educational means. Thus, moral education is mainly the process of moral social transmission.¹⁵ According to E. Campbell the teacher is a role model for the student, since moral behavior and practice in their professional field inevitably affect the moral climate of the school.¹⁶ Moral education plays an important role in shaping the character of students, causes social and cultural changes but also creates a foun-

¹² Michael DeGolyer, "The Greek Accent of the Marxian Matrix," in *Marx and Aristotle: Nineteenth Century German Social Theory and Classical Antiquity*, ed. George E. McCarthy, 107-153 (Rowman & Littlefield, 1992); Triantari, *Ethics in Decision Making*, 86; Sotiria Triantari and Elias Vavouras, "Decision-Making in the Modern Manager-Leader: Organizational Ethics, Business Ethics, Corporate Social Responsibility," *Cogito* 16, no. 1 (2024): 7-28.

¹³ Wohabie Birhan et al., "Exploring the Context of Teaching Character Education to Children in Preprimary and Primary Schools," *Social Sciences & Humanities Open* 4, no. 1 (2021): 100171. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ssaho.2021.100171>

¹⁴ Fon-Yean Chang, "School Teachers' Moral Reasoning," in *Moral Development in the Professions: Psychology and Applied Ethics*, eds. J. Rest and D. Narvaez (Erlbaum, 1994), 71-83.

¹⁵ Jingying Chen et al., "Development and Status of Moral Education Research: Visual Analysis Based on Knowledge Graph," *Frontiers in Psychology* 13 (2023): 1-2.

¹⁶ Elizabeth Campbell, "Moral Lessons: The Ethical Role of Teachers," *Educational Research and Evaluation* 9, no. 1 (2003): 25-50.

dation of moral values that become a guide to decision-making.¹⁷ The moral development of a person is oriented towards cognitive development, which emerges through knowledge and the process by which the individual argues, highlighting their character and morals as an orator. It is also oriented towards social interaction,¹⁸ which, being empirical, determines the rational orientation of the arguments for deeds, starting from wisdom.¹⁹

Education plays an important role in the moral development of a person, so it should not be limited to theory but should be expanded into practice, through simulations and programs that focus on the exercise of self-control, self-motivation, emotional intelligence, consciousness, self-awareness, attention focus, adaptability, etc.²⁰ These are skills that frame an individual's communication skills and contribute to leadership roles and their contribution to team cohesion and cooperativeness. Training is considered complete when it leads to the all-round development of the individual, which includes not only cognitive development but also moral development.²¹

The moral formation of the individual is based on the transition from individual responsibility and action to intersubjectivity in which the moral and social value of communicative action is founded, with the basic parameter that the consequences of this action and interaction are focused on the common good. This perspective ensures the greatest happiness for the majority of people. The utilitarian perspective has contributed and continues to contribute to the development and cultivation of communication skills of teachers and students in taking leadership roles in decision making.

¹⁷ Hyemin Han, "Analysing Theoretical Frameworks of Moral Education Through Lakatos's Philosophy of Science," *Journal of Moral Education* 43, no. 1 (2014): 32-53. Moral education is also highly dependent upon moral evaluation in education. See Georgios Tsitas and Athanasios Verdis, "Proposing a Frame of Ethical Principles for Educational Evaluation in Modern Greece," *Conatus – Journal of Philosophy* 6, no. 1 (2021): 135-158.

¹⁸ Maria Mammen and Markus Paulus, "The Communicative Nature of Moral Development: A Theoretical Framework on the Emergence of Moral Reasoning in Social Interactions," *Cognitive Development* 66 (2023): 101336.

¹⁹ Sotiria Triantari, *Ethical and Social Philosophy of Communication: Communication Strategies and Techniques* (K. & M. Stamoulis, I. Arch. Harbandidis, 2020), 32.

²⁰ David A. Pizarro and Peter Salovey, "Being and Becoming a Good Person," in *Improving Academic Achievement: Impact of Psychological Factors on Education*, ed. Joshua Aronson (Academic Press, 2002), 247-266.

²¹ Ning Fang, "Research on Practice Effect of 'Fostering Integrity and Promoting Rounded Development of People' on Students' Moral Development in Universities and Colleges," *Frontiers in Educational Research* 3, no. 10 (2020): 91-92.

II. Utilitarianism as a harbinger of the importance of communication in education

Jeremy Bentham (1748-1832), the main founder of utilitarianism, considered the principle of utility as the starting point that can approve or disapprove any human action and at the same time is a criterion for the happiness or, on the contrary, the misery of some people. Happiness or unhappiness depends on the quantity and quality of pleasure and pain. Bentham scientificised ethics by setting up a systematic psychometric method, the “felicific calculus” for measuring the quality and quantity of pleasure and pain.²² By comparing the total happiness produced by different choices, individuals can determine which action is morally preferable, thus serving the greatest good for the greatest number of people.²³ Pleasure, according to Bentham, becomes the criterion of utility for most people. Bentham developed act utilitarianism, according to which we ought to act in terms of the consequences or effects of a particular act for the common good.²⁴ Bentham’s utilitarianism focused on maximizing profit, but without evaluating the rightness of the act on the basis of a code of moral conduct.²⁵ Practical utilitarianism, despite the fact that involves the communicative partnership and coordinated action of a group of people for the common good, ignored the moral correctness of communicative interaction. Bentham advanced the benefit of the many at the expense of morally rational means to achieve the end, nullifying the moral and social value of communication as a key tool in the morality of an act or decision.

At the opposite end of Bentham’s utilitarianism there is the moral utilitarianism of John Stuart Mill (1806-1873), who argued for a direct relationship between the superiority of higher qualitative pleasures and the superiority of the common interest, putting forward as a measure of his utilitarianism the right moral conduct that concerns not only the person acting, but also all persons associated with him.²⁶

²² Johan E. Gustafsson, “Bentham’s Binary Form of Maximizing Utilitarianism,” *British Journal for the History of Philosophy* 26, no. 1 (2018): 87-109.

²³ Ruut Veenhoven, “Greater Happiness for a Greater Number: Is That Possible and Desirable?” *Journal of Happiness Studies* 11 (2010): 605-629.

²⁴ Andrew Gustafson, “Consequentialism and Non-Consequentialism,” in *The Routledge Companion to Business Ethics*, eds. Eugene Heath, Byron Kaldis, and Alexei Marcoux (Routledge Taylor & Francis Group, 2018), 83-84.

²⁵ James Henderson Burns, “Happiness and Utility: Jeremy Bentham’s Equation,” *Utilitas* 17, no. 1 (2005): 46-61.

²⁶ Gustafson, “Consequentialism and Non-Consequentialism,” 84; Triantari, *Ethics in Decision Making*, 70.

Mill focused on the service of the common interest, thinking of the strengthening of social bonds and healthy living of human society through the moral responsibility of the individual in the communicative act. The ethics of communication was later emphasized by J. Habermas through the three kinds of validity claims. The claim of truth, the claim of correctness, which concerns rules and values that indicate the horizon of the statement and the claim of honesty.²⁷ J. Habermas formulated the strategy of communication on the basis of an ethical dialogue, which presupposes an ethical argumentation, aiming at the rationality of the act. In his reflection exists the Aristotelian thinking on the moral responsibility of the individual and also Mill's evaluative utilitarianism, where the evaluation of the general good is assessed by an act that is or is not in accordance with the established rules of society, so that the general good is ensured through an ethical stance. Mill argued for the necessity of educating young people in evaluative or rule utilitarianism, as this education can lead to moral norms of action, such as respect, kindness, justice, etc. These are virtues that define behaviors that aim to achieve a moral act with the ultimate goal of common benefit.²⁸ The view of rule utilitarianism is a starting point in the development of communication in the school unit, where teachers and students communicate effectively in the context of coordinated and organized actions ensuring the common benefit as well as the individual's personal happiness.²⁹ Mill makes a decisive contribution with rule utilitarianism to the obedience of teachers and students to commonly accepted rules that are assimilated by its members in the school society. Normative or evaluative utilitarianism appears more just than practical utilitarianism, as correctness in decision-making is based on rules of general behaviour.³⁰

Communication is more effective in rule utilitarianism because it better achieves the combination of the corporate interest with the common social interest, as it approaches the process or means for action to become moral by setting the rules and moral principles.³¹ Rule

²⁷ Jürgen Habermas, *The Ethics of Communication* (Alternative Editions, 1997), 21.

²⁸ Triantari, *Ethics in Decision Making*, 71.

²⁹ Fei Xie and Ali Derakhshan, "A Conceptual Review of Positive Teacher Interpersonal Communication Behaviors in the Instructional Context," *Frontiers in Psychology* 12 (2021): 2-8.

³⁰ Dale E. Miller, "Mill, Rule Utilitarianism, and the Incoherence Objection," in *John Stuart Mill and the Art of Life*, eds. David Weinstein, Ben Eggleston, and Dale E. Miller (Oxford University Press, 2011), 94-118; Triantari and Vavouras, "Decision-Making," 10-11.

³¹ Tom L. Beauchamp and Norman E. Bowie, *Ethical Theory and Business*, 5th ed. (Prentice-Hall, 1997), 26-28.

utilitarianism reinforces and develops the learning of the importance of communication and communication skills in the school unit, because it strengthens the sense of justice, which includes some other rights such as the freedom of the individual, directly setting rules of respect for human actions, so that the whole social system is not overturned by actions that will be to the detriment of the common good. Rule utilitarianism emphasizes human responsibility, the need for the individual to be responsible, since with the help of reason and knowledge of moral norms, with their actions, they can be responsible for the general good, or otherwise responsible for the negative consequences of their actions.³² The teacher and the student train in social responsibility, which also determines the quality of their actions.³³

Under the prism of rule utilitarianism, communication enters dynamically into the educational reality and becomes effective in optimal decision-making, reducing conflicts, bringing out the team spirit, the sense of reciprocity, justice and individual responsibility. The teacher is the model communicator, who as a leader empowers themselves and their students, as they shape their values and influence their culture. The teacher in this communicative interaction with students takes on the role of a moral leader, giving guidelines for ethical conduct.³⁴ The same role is supported by the head of the school unit towards the teachers, thus creating a chain of dynamic relationships in the small community of the school unit, in which the ethical communicative leader is authentic, honest, fair, responsible.³⁵ This dynamic relationship is strengthened through the degree of learning of communication skills, which contribute decisively to the ability of the principal-teacher leader and students to integrate into the school unit through the achievement of positive interpersonal relationships.

III. Interpersonal skills of the effective educational leader

The concept of an effective leader moves away from the concepts of authority, power and influence, which can give opposite results when in

³² See Maria Sartzetaki et al., "The Ecosystem of Ethical Decision Making: Key Drivers for Shaping the Corporate Ethical Character," *Conatus – Journal of Philosophy* 10, no. 1 (2025): 221-238.

³³ Florian Wettstein, "Social Responsibility," in *The Routledge Companion to Business Ethics*, eds. Eugene Heath, Byron Kaldis, and Alexei Marcoux (Routledge Taylor & Francis Group, 2018), 167-183.

³⁴ John M. Schaubroeck et al., "Embedding Ethical Leadership within and across Organization Levels," *Academy of Management Journal* 55, no. 5 (2012): 1053-1078.

³⁵ Dimitrios Dimitriou, "Corporate Ethics: Philosophical Concepts Guiding Business Practices," *Conatus – Journal of Philosophy* 7, no. 1 (2022): 33-60.

excess and lead to confusion and disorientation. The effective leader, and particularly in the field of education, influences the thoughts, actions, attitudes, behaviors and decisions of subordinates or of a group and voluntarily and willingly achieves their cooperation and joint participation in the successful implementation of goals, with the ultimate goal of the well-being and happiness of teachers and students. The effective leader exercises two basic functions in which they bring out the strength of character and abilities: communication and decision making.³⁶ The role of an effective leader requires continuous improvement of interpersonal skills such as dynamic complex problem solving, creativity, human resource management, emotional intelligence, collaboration, decision-making, negotiation and cognitive flexibility.³⁷

In a historical-ideological review of the key characteristics of the leader,³⁸ we find that all interpersonal skills presuppose the ability to communicate with others in a two-way process, where both they and others are given the opportunity to speak and listen, to control their perceptions of what they hear, respecting principles of verbal and non-verbal communication.³⁹ The communicative competence of the school leader makes them effective and a role model for the student, so that they can adapt to the environment, and be able to process and decode messages and information throughout the communication process. In the school unit, communication is constant and daily not only between students, but also between the principal and teachers and between teachers and students. Communication impacts the educational reality of principal-teachers-students-parents, as well as learning and teaching in the classrooms of the school.⁴⁰ In this communicative complex one of the basic interpersonal skills is active listening, which helps and leads to a better perception of information, especially when the information provided is important and necessary for decision making in the educational community. Active listening not only encourages continuing communication, but also contributes to the stability and

³⁶ Sotiria Triantari, *Leadership. Leadership Theories. From the Aristotelian Rhetorician to the Modern Leader* (K. & M. Stamoulis, I. Arch. Harbandidis, 2020), 230.

³⁷ Suzanne de Janasz, Karen Dowd, and Beth Schneider, *Interpersonal Competencies in Organizations* (McGraw-Hill Irwin, 2012), 18-35.

³⁸ Sotiria Triantari, "From Coaching to Mentor Leader: Profile and Skills of the Mentor Leader in Human Resources Management," *Dia-noesis: A Journal of Philosophy* 15 (2024): 104-105.

³⁹ Triantari, *Ethical and Social Philosophy*, 49-57.

⁴⁰ Vasiliki Brinia et al., "The Impact of Communication on the Effectiveness of Educational Organizations," *Education Sciences* 12, no. 3 (2022): 1-16.

duration of collaboration and negotiated problem solving.⁴¹ Active listening is enhanced by verbal and non-verbal communication,⁴² which manifest the direct and indirect behavior of an effective leader, which inspires trust between the principal, teachers and students. Optimal listening success in effective communication is directly related to the skill of emotional intelligence.

According to D. Goleman, emotional intelligence is the ability of a person to understand, feel, evaluate and practically apply the power of their emotions as a source of energy, information, confidence, creativity and influence. There must be balance and harmony between the emotional and logical mind, since emotion feeds and shapes the functions of the logical mind, which in turn exerts a certain influence on the emotions.⁴³ The content of the concept of emotional intelligence is first captured in Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*, where the philosopher referred to the appropriate time and circumstance, in which the wise -in this case the leader- can feel the emotions of others without being directly emotionally involved themselves.⁴⁴ Emotional intelligence contains the main dimensions, which are social awareness, which involves understanding the emotions of others, self-management, i.e. self-perception and self-control in the management of personal emotions, and social awareness, which refers to understanding the feelings of others, where the leader has the ability through relationship management to inspire vision, create shared goals and integrate the abilities of subordinates. Emotional intelligence combined with empathy are the skills that give the leader clear and stable awareness, self-control and control over reality and the current situation and enhance teamwork and cooperation.⁴⁵

In this context, it is understood that the skills of the school unit manager are highlighted through their actions, which also reveal the levels of emotional intelligence, which is a promotional factor in the educational process, the working climate, the management of educa-

⁴¹ Janasz, Dowd, and Schneider, *Interpersonal Competencies*, 179-180.

⁴² Allan Pease and Barbara Pease, *Definitive Book of Body Language: How to Read Others' Attitudes by Their Gestures* (Orion Publishing Co., 2017), 33-34, 71; Müge Demir, "Using Nonverbal Communication in Politics/Utilization de la communication non-verbale dans la politique," *Canadian Social Science* 7, no. 5 (2011): 1-4.

⁴³ Daniel Goleman, *Emotional Intelligence: Why It Can Matter More Than IQ* (Bantam Books, 2006): 32-41.

⁴⁴ Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, II, 1106b.

⁴⁵ Daniel Goleman, Richard Boyatzis, and Annie McKee, *Primal Leadership: Realizing the Power of Emotional Intelligence. Leading with Emotional Intelligence* (Harvard Business School Press, 2002): 60-69.

tional change, the achievement of objectives, feedback and conflict management. Emotional intelligence as a basic communication skill is considered to be crucial in students' self-efficacy and especially in the acceptance of diversity and difference. The principal and teachers are the key transmitters in communication that focuses on removing prejudices, stereotypes and behaviors that can be perceived as bullying and empowers students' creative thinking.⁴⁶ The actions of principals-leaders directly influence the culture and climate of the school as well as teachers' perceptions of school climate and are directly related to student outcomes.⁴⁷

It is evident that the communication skills of the education leader-principal are the driving force behind the way they exercise leadership and especially the way they make decisions, as they can stimulate teachers' emotions and influence their thoughts and actions but also their creativity. In addition, effective and fair school leaders communicate their goals and visions for the school, inviting teachers to adopt them as their own,⁴⁸ and impart ethical principles to others.⁴⁹ This point reinforces the importance and the role of communication in the collaborative decision-making process.

IV. The Communicative rationality of utilitarianism in decision-making

The ethical viewpoint of utilitarianism approaches the basic behavior of the leader through communicative interaction with others, as they attempt to make decisions that protect the interests of the minority, and in the case of the school unit, without endangering the lives of others. This point orientates the social view of utilitarianism and communicative rationality in decision making, which have as a background the strategy of communicative action.⁵⁰ Communicative rationality largely

⁴⁶ Mehdi Zirak and Elaheh Ahmadian, "Relationship Between Emotional Intelligence & Academic Achievement Emphasizing on Creative Thinking," *Mediterranean Journal of Social Sciences* 6, no. 5 (2015): 561-570.

⁴⁷ Raquel Gomez-Leal et al., "The Relationship Between Emotional Intelligence and Leadership in School Leaders: A Systematic Review," *Cambridge Journal of Education* 52, no. 1 (2021): 16-18.

⁴⁸ Kenneth Leithwood, "A Review of Evidence about Equitable School Leadership," *Education Sciences* 11, no. 8 (2021): 11-12.

⁴⁹ Olga Kourtoglou, Elias Vavouras, and Nikolaos Sariannidis, "The Stoic Paradigm of Ethics as a Philosophical Tool for Objectifying the Concepts of Organizational Ethics, Corporate Social Responsibility, and Corporate Governance," *Conatus – Journal of Philosophy* 9, no. 2 (2024): 119-143.

⁵⁰ Arne Roets et al., "Utilitarianism in Minimal-Group Decision Making Is Less Common Than Equality-Based Morality, Mostly Harm-Oriented, and Rarely Impartial," *Scientific Reports* 10 (2020): 13373.

involves skills such as emotional intelligence, sensitivity, self-control, and language control. According to Mill, any expansion of the formal education promotes social mobility and sociability, because “education brings people under common influences” and gives them access to its facts and feelings, while improved means of communication promote education.⁵¹ In Mill’s rule utilitarianism, communicative rationality transcends self-interest, which in Bentham’s pragmatic utilitarianism is linked or identified with the common good. Mill advanced as a measure of the utilitarianism of the common interest the right conduct, which is proportional to the rightness of the moral communicative act. From this position Mill does not isolate the individual who acts and decides, but relates all persons to them in a communicative reasoning interaction, in which the dominant element is respect for each other.⁵²

Mill’s normative rationality evaluates and secures the common good through an ethical stance applicable to decision making, through a communicative strategy that focuses on the wisdom and moral virtue of the actor. Based on Mill’s theory, the school leader must formulate a strategy established on a good and open communication climate in the school unit and on moral and social values that promote freedom of expression, respect, trust and cooperation between teachers and students.⁵³ Rule utilitarianism is oriented towards the construction of a common communicative language through which the principal and teachers interact to make decisions on the basis of common moral principles of behavior, aiming at the common good. On the basis of social constructionism,⁵⁴ the communicative reality is linked to the rational choice and decision of the leader and the teachers, so that there is a harmonious coexistence in the school unit. The compatibility of communication and rational rule utilitarianism strengthens the strategic attitudes and actions of the leader-principal for making an ethical decision, and also the strategies of a joint decision of the principal and teachers in a climate of cooperation, which obviously strengthens the harmonious integration of principal and teachers in conjunction with the students in the school unit.

The communicative rationality of utilitarianism is very important in group settings, where decision making is more complex. Recipients

⁵¹ John Stuart Mill, *On Liberty* (Broadview Press, 1859), 125-126.

⁵² Ben Eggleston, “Consequentialism and Respect: Two Strategies for Justifying Act Utilitarianism,” *Utilitas* 32, no. 1 (2020): 5-9.

⁵³ Triantari, *Ethical and Social Philosophy*, 140-141.

⁵⁴ Tom Andrews, “What Is Social Constructionism?” *The Grounded Theory Review* 11, no. 1 (2012): 39-40.

need to determine reality through information, experience and prior knowledge in order to gain acceptance of their viewpoint by their peers and consent to a preferred practical action. The identification of mutual interests characterizes the predominance of the option over other alternatives.⁵⁵ In this common course of action, communication skills play a vital role in achieving common benefit in the school unit. In decision making, the decision makers are distinguished for virtue and wisdom, which ensure the means of realization to achieve the end. The moral conduct of the recipient is also brought out by the means of persuasion.⁵⁶ These are communicative skills, which enhance the skill of thinking and acting directly as a leader, having as basic parameters emotional intelligence and conscientiousness from which skills such as: self-control, self-awareness, responsibility, adaptability, aptitude, honesty, insight, active listening, restraint, creativity, etc. are derived.⁵⁷

Creativity, resourcefulness and responsibility are key criteria for excellence in dynamic decision making and strengthen the link between utilitarianism with decision-making, as the basic concept of school social responsibility emerges from the common good.⁵⁸ Each school unit, with the principal and teachers as key parameters, is inextricably linked to society as a whole and should recognize through the decisions they make their responsibility towards students, parents, society and the environment.⁵⁹ Social Responsibility in schools is a key element in ‘communicative utilitarianism,’ as it is oriented towards skills that aim to achieve the interests of the wider community. Decisions are taken and actions are carried out by the headmaster and teachers, based on their moral responsibility and accountability.⁶⁰

Rule utilitarianism along with virtue ethics and deontology contributes to the development and strengthening of fundamental communication skills, particularly in situations requiring difficult or spontaneous decisions, by promoting consistent ethical standards that guide interper-

⁵⁵ Suzanne C. De Janasz, Karen O. Dowd, and Beth Z. Schneider, *Interpersonal Skills in Organizations* (McGraw-Hill Education, 2025), 532.

⁵⁶ Triantari, *Leadership*, 112.

⁵⁷ Triantari and Vavouras, “Decision-Making,” 10-15.

⁵⁸ Christos Kanavas and Sotiria Triantari, “The Rational Decision-Making and the Social Responsibility in the Optimal Functioning of the School,” *Cogent Social Sciences* 10, no. 1 (2024): 2419542.

⁵⁹ Wayne R. Mondy and Joseph Martocchio, *Human Resource Management*, trans. I. Phirippi (Tziola, 2019), 57; Maria Vaxevanidou, *Corporate Social Responsibility* (K. & M. Stamoulis, 2011), 73.

⁶⁰ David Chandler and William B. Werther, *Strategic Corporate Social Responsibility: Stakeholders in a Global Environment* (Sage, 2006), 6-44.

sonal interaction.⁶¹ Rule utilitarianism, also emphasizes adherence to rules that maximize overall well-being, encourages self-control and moral decision-making.⁶² This ethical framework promotes respect for human rights, inclusivity of vulnerable groups, commitment to established moral principles and legal standards, thereby guiding both reasoning and behavior in a consistent and ethically sound manner.⁶³ In fact, this behavior takes a dominant role in interpersonal relations when it concerns the principal and teachers, who are the standard in their advisory guidance to students.

V. Conclusions and philosophical reflections: Can utilitarianism constitute an objective ethical basis for the educational process and communication skills in decision-making?

Ethical education is a vestibule in students' attitudes, perceptions and interpersonal relationships. The teacher plays a key role in this education as a model of behaviour and a rational decision-maker. A person brings out the morality of their personality through choices, decisions and the quality of character. Utilitarianism, especially John Stuart Mill's rule utilitarianism, contributed significantly to the emergence of the moral person. Mill's utilitarianism was influential in enhancing the communication skills of teachers and students for both leadership roles and decision making.

Rule utilitarianism emphasized the moral and social value of communication and provided the basis for learning communication skills, strengthening the sense of justice, individual freedom and respect for the individual as a means to achieve the common good. Rule utilitarianism was the starting point for the communicatively rational decision of the recipient, bringing out responsibility, community social responsibility, self-control, self-awareness, and other skills that highlight the basic interpersonal skills of the effective educational leader and teachers, seeking to live harmoniously in the school unit in a spirit of cooperation, teamwork.

Mill's utilitarianism advocates the greatest possible benefit for the greatest number of people. A principal often must make decisions that affect students, teachers, and the wider local community and has the ability to encourage the members of the school community to change and to do things they would not normally consider without his influ-

⁶¹ Shannon A. Bowen, "Strategic Communication, Ethics of," in *The International Encyclopedia of Strategic Communication* (Wiley-Blackwell, 2018).

⁶² Reynold J. S. Macpherson, "The Legacies of Roman, Christian, Kantian, and Utilitarian Ethics in Contemporary Theories of Educative Leadership," *Values and Ethics in Educational Administration* 17, no. 1 (2024): 1-10.

⁶³ Triantari, *Ethics in Decision Making*, 115-121.

ence.⁶⁴ By applying rule utilitarianism principles, the principal can prioritize actions that will benefit the majority the most. The skills of effective communication allow the principal to articulate these decisions clearly, helping all participants in the educational process to understand the rationale and feel included, while principals who wish to help an oppressed social group in the school through utilitarianism can promote collective change and mobility, and therefore act as a kind of motivational ethic.⁶⁵

Author contribution statement

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⁶⁴ Yongmei Ni, Rui Yan, and Diana Pounder, "Collective Leadership: Principals' Decision Influence and the Supportive or Inhibiting Decision Influence of Other Stakeholders," *Educational Administration Quarterly* 54, no. 2 (2018): 216-248.

⁶⁵ Izhak Berkovich and Ori Eyal, "Transformational Leadership, Transactional Leadership, and Moral Reasoning," *Leadership and Policy in Schools* 20, no. 2 (2021): 131-148.

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