

Preface

This is a qualitative study of business ethics programs in 17 countries. The purpose of this study is to engage a variety of cultural perspectives to evaluate the current state of theory and practice in ethics and diversity in business management education. The research gathered includes surveys, in-depth interviews, and participant observation. I interview business school faculty, students, and graduates and review pedagogy, curricula, and course materials to explore how business management educators around the world are responding to the growing diversity in student populations and the dual crises of environmental destruction and lack of ethical stewardship from much of the corporate community. Respondents are from the USA, Canada, the UK, France, Denmark, the Netherlands, Italy, Germany, Turkey, New Zealand, Australia, India, China, Lebanon, Ghana, Swaziland, and Togo.

The research focuses on the following:

1. Ethics versus Business Ethics: Are there different definitions and expectations for business ethics and socially normative ethics, and if so, how do they differ?
2. Business Ethics versus Business Practice: How much does business ethics education affect business practices?
3. The Impact of Cultural Context: How do larger cultural values impact the presentation and interpretation of business ethics?

Using Hannah Arendt's concept of the banality of evil and Émile Durkheim's definition of solidarity, I found that ethical behavior is not just relative to historical time and geographical place, from culture to culture, or from individual to individual. Ethical behavior is *relative within each individual and depends upon the group with which they are currently identifying*. When students identified with business interests, their ethical positions were different than when they identified as consumers, employees, or citizens. This inconsistency in ethical positions did not seem perceptible to students and could change in a matter of minutes.

This study also found that the business ethics programs reviewed here in India, Ghana, and New Zealand made the biggest effort to include a diversity of perspectives in course objectives and in student and faculty member populations.

Additionally, the institutions studied in these countries also made a conscious effort to prioritize humanistic values rather than focus chiefly on profit and productivity.

This research points to two general changes that must happen within business ideology and practice in order that business decisions become routinely associated with ethical standards consistent with those directed toward long-term social and environmental good:

1. Businesses must serve people rather than people serving business. Rather than a parallel and often times opposed set of standards governing the business realm, ethical social interactions must be the larger context in which businesses operate. Businesses that harm people and the environment have to close. The extinction of a business should not hinge on whether it ceases to generate profit, but on whether it fails to contribute to widespread and long-range social good. In other words, quality of life issues must be primary in the evaluation of business success with quantitative considerations secondary—otherwise there is no meaningful distinction between ethical and unethical business practices or between the goals of legal, legitimate businesses and their illegal counterparts.
2. The theoretical and practical assumptions that undergird the economic template of business must serve and represent populations equally and fairly rather than privileging certain populations on the basis of culture, gender, race, class, sexual orientation, or other foundational sources of identification. The current lack of diverse perspectives, experiences, and opinions minimizes alternative views and therefore obviates the ability to define and execute ethical behavior.

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