

RENEWING THE EMPHASIS OF ETHICS IN THE BUSINESS SCHOOL CURRICULUM

**Delores Barsellotti, International Business & Marketing Dept. California State Polytechnic,
Pomona, CA 91768 (909) 869 3630**

**Janis Dietz, College of Business and Public Administration, University of La Verne,
La Verne, CA 91750 (909) 593 3511**

**Dave Peters, President, Professional Solutions International,
Upland, CA 91784 (909) 920 9623**

**Susan Peters, International Business & Marketing Dept. California State Polytechnic,
Pomona, CA 91768 909 869 2608**

**Andrew Truong, Associate Director, Graduate Studies, College of Business, California State Polytechnic,
Pomona, CA 91768 (909) 869 3551**

ABSTRACT

Given the ethical, moral and legal issues that have had major impact on the business community in recent years, one wonders what students may really know about ethics and if they know what may constitute the various ethical issues they will face in the business world. This special session will discuss the various curricular issues, classroom activities and a real world perspective of ethics. Topics to be covered:

1. Defining the need. An overview of the topic and short discussion of the need for having more ethics topics in business coursework and curriculum
2. The AACSB emphasis on ethics studies in the curriculum.
3. The "real world" perspective on the importance of teaching ethical issues.
4. A small school perspective on the ethics problem
5. Issues of ethics and student perceptions of ethical behaviors
6. In class exercise for building awareness of ethical issues in relevant marketing/international business classes.

DEFINING THE NEED FOR ETHICS IN THE BUSINESS CURRICULUM DELORES BARSELLOTTI

At one time, many business schools did have courses in business ethics (some taught in the business school, some by the philosophy department in the school of arts). These courses often were either a part of the required business courses or as a required general education course.

Given the ethical, moral and legal issues that have had major impacts on the business community in recent years, this is being reconsidered. Cases like

Enron, the accounting firms that have utilized "creative accounting" (i.e., Arthur Andersen) and the mixed messages of situational ethics have all given the impression that "anything goes" when one is attempting to become very successful.

This portion of the presentation will focus on recent problems, their impacts and what has possibly lead to permitting these issues to become so massive and pervasive in our society.

Other issues to be presented will cover why there is a strong need to reintroduce the ethics areas back into the curricula with a more pronounced emphasis.

AACSB PERSPECTIVE ANDREW TRUONG

There have been many articles on the importance of instilling ethics into university business courses. The AACSB has been calling for a larger role for ethical studies to be incorporated into courses so that students may become more sensitive to the ethical and moral issues (along with the legal ones) that they may encounter in today's corporate world.

ETHICS IN THE REAL WORLD DAVE PETERS

Professional Solutions International is an international business-consulting firm. Mr. Peters has worked in over 60 countries in the last five years. He will discuss the importance (or lack of) ethical training and situational ethics as experienced abroad. In addition, he will offer the "real world" perspective of what should be taught in a university setting.

SMALL SCHOOL PERSPECTIVE

JANIS DIETZ

University of La Verne is a smaller business school and a program originally affiliated with a religious organization, the Church of the Brethren. This former affiliation is reflected in the mission statement of the university and is intentionally carried out in the general education program. The focus on social, environmental and global responsibility is key to attracting students and faculty who want to be a part of such a community. Private schools do not always need to abide by the same rules (Healy, 1996) as state schools in certain areas, so they have the responsibility of holding themselves to higher standards. Does this vary ethical education? Do students have different value patterns to begin with? Is it easier to instill ethical values in a university with a "Christian" mission?

Initial interviews with the students show that they downplay the impact of that background, but do feel that the smaller sized school does help them to understand ethical issues better.

Ethics is taught in the business curriculum as a separate course and is offered five times a year. University of La Verne uses MITT (Multi-Integrity Teaching Tool) to train these students. Smaller class sizes make it somewhat easier to police unethical activities and the continued presence of the Church of the Brethren influence (albeit, unofficial and less dominant than other schools) encourages a higher ethical standard. The increasingly multi-cultural background of the student body and the increased exposure to potential ethical dilemmas (Internet term paper sources, music downloading, etc.) seems to have mitigates some of the forces pushing to a stronger ethical background.

Indeed, the faculty also reflects this multicultural background and this, too, may have an impact on the teaching of ethics as ethics values are culturally determined. Some of these do not adhere to "American" values and see no reason to do so (Shaw and Berry, 2004). The question must be asked, "Do our students reflect what we teach, or what we do?"

INCORPORATING ETHICS IN THE CLASSROOM

SUSAN PETERS

Over the years, ethics education has held various places in our curricula. Classes in ethics or business ethics were once very popular and often required classes. The feeling then arose that teaching ethics this way separated it from the function course work. That is to say, it became another class like biology or

history that a student had to take, but yet was not what they really needed to learn to be an accountant, a marketer, etc. Schools focused on teaching ethics within the courses. Marketing ethics was a subsection of each marketing course, accounting ethics of each accounting course and similarly throughout the curriculum. But is this effective? Do students see this as incorporating ethics in the functional knowledge they are obtaining or do they perceive that it has been de-emphasized? (Shannon & Berl, 1997)

Robinson, Lewicki and Donahue (1998) developed a questionnaire addressing seven clusters of what the authors refer to as "marginally ethical tactics" that may occur in the negotiation process (modified later by Lewicki and Barry 2001). This questionnaire, the SINS II Scale, was originally used on MBA students and practitioners in the field. (SINS stands for "Self-reported Inappropriate Negotiations Strategies.") The survey (to be administered during this discussion) is simple enough to be used, also, at the undergraduate level. Due to the negotiations emphasis, placing it in the appropriate section of a class is desirable to reduce confusion or misunderstanding.

California State Polytechnic University teaches a class in International Negotiations, which is required for all international business students and all of the sales track marketing students (and recommended for certain other career tracks.) Approximately eight sections a year are offered with the average class size of around 40 students. This exercise is often used AFTER teaching negotiations ethics.

The exercise usually begins by asking for a show of hands of those who believe that they are ethical (this usually is unanimous). The class is then asked if they believe that they are more "ethical" than the typical business person (most do see themselves as more ethical). They are then asked if they believe that, in general, business people are more or less ethical today than they were in the past (this opens a very lively discussion of issues that have occurred in the relative recent past, (i.e., Enron and others) and whether or not we have learned from these occurrences.

The next step is the administration of the questionnaire. The real surprise happens to be the results. The members of the class already view themselves a strongly ethical (or, more so than their predecessors), so it is a shock that the results usually show the exact opposite.

This questionnaire exercise is an experiential exercise to familiarize students with ethical issues,

dilemmas and problems that may occur in the real world. It is designed by the questionnaire authors to act as a catalyst for discussions (after the class fills out and hands in the questionnaires), and to permit students to examine their own personal views of ethical behaviors. The results from the questionnaires are useful to analyze those areas that may need to be addressed further in the classroom; these areas may be important when reviewing curricular matters for various other courses (the main reason to administer it in relevant courses).

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