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## Article

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# Call for collaboration in researching the best practices in teaching ethical entrepreneurship: the conflict of money and ethics

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## Abstract

Entrepreneurs seek opportunity, are organizational innovators, and engines of economic development. Pursuit of economic self-interest may manifest “guile,” or deceit. As academics, we are charged by businesses (and society) to instruct students in functional topics as well as in the rules and policies of business, whether from a legalistic or procedural basis. This paper lays a literature and logic foundation for the culturally-influenced ethical differences having a significant impact on entrepreneurs and larger businesses due to differing ethical foundations and perspectives. Global differences in ethical values and practices combined with globalized markets, supply chains, and the labor workforce aggravate the likelihood of ethical conflicts. An outline of Western business education orientation, means and methods is presented, and initiates a call to collaborate with inquiry and understanding. While some readers may object to this article *not* further defining the problem beyond the domain of “Best Practices,” and for *not* including elements of research design (methodology, instruments, or sampling technique), this author has attempted to define the *need* without injecting a bias or ethnocentric perspective. Global entrepreneurship research will benefit from understanding world-wide best practices in teaching business ethics, and such research is only valid if performed through true international collaboration; the essence of the *Journal of Global Entrepreneurship Research*.

**Keywords:** Ethics; Entrepreneur\*; Cross-cultural; International; Values

## Background

Entrepreneurs are organizational innovators and risk-takers. Entrepreneurs make choices which are context-dependent. How may an entrepreneur learn what is right or wrong? The traditional pathway for learning is from the family, the cultural environment, and personal, hands-on experience. An alternative, socially promoted pathway is learning “ethical entrepreneurship” from business education systems. Courses on business ethics are taught at business schools throughout the world. For the past 30 years, there have been a growing number of journals, conferences and text blending theory and practice. The American Academy for Collegiate Schools of Business (AACSB) has created guiding standards for ethics to be embedded across curricula. There is a need to prepare entrepreneurs to solve emerging ethical issues and conflicts. There is a need to build the foundation for ethical entrepreneurship education in a global context. This can be accomplished by first seeking the key pillars and synergy at a cross-disciplinary

level. Second, since the task is not for an individual but only can be achieved as a product of collaboration, collective effort should be directed. Hence, this article drafts a framework for such a collaborative effort.

### **Entrepreneurs and opportunism**

Entrepreneurship relies on creating and seizing opportunities with economic benefit. Entrepreneurs face choices and make decisions about creating and growing an organization. They utilize decision-making processes that are shaped by trust vs. opportunity, and contextual interpretation of right or wrong. Critical exploration of the concept of opportunism, however, reveals the paradox that underlies entrepreneurship. Opportunism is the intentioned behavior seeking to take advantage of circumstances; placing one's self-interest above the interests of or consequences to others. Trust is relevant to self-interest if the entrepreneur receives benefits from ethical behavior. Trust can be a source of success, hence, with economic value, if it is based on reciprocal expectations in ethical behavior.

Thomas Hobbes maintained that many (if not all) human actions are prompted by self-interest (Hobbes 1994). Opportunism has been studied in the fields of economics, game theory, psychology, sociology, politics, ethics, and has been central to entrepreneurship research. A simple internet search for "courses teaching opportunity recognition" yields approximately 180 million results, including numerous prestigious university course offerings.

While the concept of economic opportunism lacks a consensus definition or scientific framework, most scholars are familiar with the work of Oliver Williamson. *"Although there is a growing agreement that bounded rationality is the appropriate cognitive assumption for describing economic organization, there is less agreement on how the self-interestedness of economic actors should be described. Transaction cost economics has proposed that economic agents be described as opportunistic where this contemplates self-interest seeking with guile. That has turned out to be a controversial formulation."* (1997, p97). As argued by Williamson, it has been accepted (assumed?) that entrepreneurs were operating with fixed rules which were followed: *"they did not buy more than they could pay for, did not embezzle funds, nor rob banks"* (ibid., p100). The vast majority of entrepreneurs and businesses were assumed to be operating within the tacit rules, the ethical framework of society. The rules, however, emerge from the specific society and culture, and they are context-driven.

The world, the accepted rules of business, and the ethical frameworks of society(ies), however, have changed, and continue to change. Globalization of markets, supply chains, communication, and instantaneous information exchange combine to intensify competitive pressure (Fukuyama, 1999). There has been an exponential increase in available data and information. Entrepreneurs and businesspersons are not equal in their ability to have access to, be able to locate, or be able to appropriate all available information. This has resulted in significant informational asymmetry (Gross and Solymossy, 2015), which adds dynamism and hostility to the business environment (McGee and Rubach, 2015). At the same time, information asymmetry offer new opportunities, especially internationally. Sometimes, these opportunities are more enticing than the boundaries of ethical propriety, as demonstrated by the unethical activities revealed by popular media. Two of the many examples are Sam Wyly and

Bernie Madoff, both entrepreneurs in the field of financial management. Neither could have committed their deceptive acts without the internet. The internet also facilitated marketing services and financial products to interested customers who were not able to access, investigate and understand all of the information necessary to validate the risks of what was being promoted.

The media broadcasts ethical failures after they have happened. Generally speaking, only the major ethical breaches make the news; either due to the magnitude of the money involved or by the number of people affected. Violation of business ethics occur everywhere, in differing magnitudes, and in many forms; greed, fraud, larceny, personal abuse, conflicts of interest, improper employment practices, abuse of power, and bribery to name a few. Some of the names evoke strongly negative emotions, such as Kenneth Lay of Enron, or Calisto Tanzi of Parmalat (both of whom defrauded other businesses as well as investors, causing massive financial damage to thousands of persons).

Some names evoke positive emotions, similar to hero-worship, in spite of the persons not being considered ethical. Stephen Jobs of Apple was a visionary and gifted entrepreneur, and along with Jack Welch (GE), considered "most exemplifying great leadership." (Vershoor, 2006). Steve Jobs, however, has his ethical weaknesses as well. He was known for treating his customers and workers by two different standards. He was known for disrespectful treatment of his workers (demeaning, belittling and hostile) violated their trust, and bringing them to tears (Love, 2011). He seems to thrive on violating norms and breaking rules, whether parking his car in a spot reserved for disabled persons, or collecting speeding tickets, and asked his board of directors to award him back-dated options; which was both unethical and illegal (Bajaj, 2012). Ethical questions also kept recurring regarding his contracting Foxconn labor factories in China. On the one hand, he stated that he was following industry practices, on the other, the labor practices being followed violated local and national laws as well as Apple's self-imposed codes of conduct (Sethi, 2012).

Ray Kroc is known as the man who built McDonald's into the world's most successful fast food restaurant. While not as publicized in the press as his success, political contributions (to re-elect Richard Nixon) seemingly gained special treatment from the Price Commission. The contributions were also deemed instrumental in obtaining preferential legislation allowing sub-minimum wages for teenage employees. The legislation was even called the "McDonald's Bill" (Schlosser, 2005).

Both Steve Jobs and Ray Kroc were extremely successful, and are admired for having achieved their goals. They both also demonstrate self-interest pursuit while behaving contrary to generally accepted practices, and could be argued to having acted illegally. *Here are numerous portrayals, both fictional and real life, which present the entrepreneurs as unethical, unscrupulous, dishonest, and totally self-oriented.*" Many are ethical, but not all (Cunningham and Lischeron, 1991, p48). A simple web-search reveals *many* entrepreneurs and executives pursuing ethically improper activities. Unethical entrepreneurs are found at every level of business and in virtually every country.

#### **Ethics and entrepreneurs – a paradox**

This illustrates what can be seen as a paradox in the relationship of entrepreneurs and ethics. Some entrepreneurs are portrayed as villains because they abused trust, while

others are elevated to the status of heroes because their success is publicized more than their ethical breaches (although they also abused trust). The outcome of successful entrepreneurship (accomplishment, wealth, position, and prestige) is envied by many.

At the same time, entrepreneurship has its detractors. Socrates, in Plato's *Republic*, is discussing commerce, where the exchange of money is the goal, states that "*The more men value money-making, the less they value virtue*" (Ghosh, 2003) More currently Martin Luther King Jr. stated "*the profit motive, when it is the sole basis of an economic system, encourages a cutthroat competition and selfish ambition that inspires men to be more concerned about making a living than making a life.*" (Ayres, 1995).

"Marx's disapproval of capitalism is inexorably tied to the idea of profit, or "*mehrwert*," the value-added activity provided by entrepreneurs (Marx, 1894). Within the former state-controlled economies of Eastern Europe, many thought entrepreneurs were gangsters, crooks and thieves rather than the driving force behind economic development. As reported by George Starcher, a newspaper article in Moscow described four computer programmers (who successfully launched a software venture) as "*four thieves [who] stole a million rubles from society*" (Starcher 1997).

Investigating the intersection of entrepreneurs and ethics is itself a daunting task, and reveals polarized and conflicting views. On one hand, there are proponents arguing that profit is the consequence of value-added production, which is a positive, and is therefore "good." On the other hand, many echo Marxist perspectives; profits do more social harm than good. Recent research by Bhattacharjee, Dana, and Baron suggests that even in a capitalistic, market-oriented society, people believe high profits come at a social cost, which some consider to be ethically wrong (2015). Clearly, there are opposing views on the role entrepreneurs serve in society. The concept of entrepreneurs and profit are seen differently: good or bad, right or wrong, ethical or unethical, within a relatively homogeneous culture sharing tacit rules and ethical frameworks. It is to be expected that these differences will be magnified when persons are from different cultures, or if they operate under different perceptions of the rules and expectations for behavior.

### **Society, rules, and ethics change**

Previously assumed and accepted rules of business have changed. As codified by the Michigan Supreme court in the ruling on Dodge vs. Ford Motor Company [170 NW 668 (Mich, 1919)], the operating parameters for business (at least in the United States) were that corporations had an obligation to use profits to increase shareholder value rather than to benefit employees or the community as a whole. Two generations ago, Milton Friedman wrote that the *obligation* of the business is "*to make as much money as possible while conforming to their basic rules of the society*". Friedman argued that the corporation is not a real "person," it is an artifice. Issues of ethics and morality were the domain of people, not companies (Friedman 1970, p1). This philosophy has been taught to all business students; a business's ethical obligations are to maximize profits and not to break laws.

Considering Steve Jobs and Ray Kroc from the Friedman perspective, and by virtue of the 1919 ruling by the supreme court, their goal was to make a profit, and since they were not charged nor convicted of a crime, one might imply that they didn't break the law.

Social pressures argue for revising a business's obligations to include responding to changing societal needs (Carroll, 1979 and 1991). Changing societal needs, norms, expectations, and ethical frameworks place obligations on businesses that can be envisioned as social-mandates, embodying the spirit of law without the authority of the law (Frederick, 1978). As far as the general public (society) is concerned, a business is only ethical if it is beneficial to society and not seen as causing harm. It is no longer sufficient to avoid breaking laws, businesses are to work for the betterment of society. Furthermore, what is perceived as excessive profit can also be interpreted as wrong, since it is seen having created little social value and actually causing harm (Bhattacharjee et al., 2015).

Societal expectations have changed considerably in the past 100 years. The attention and scrutiny focusing on business ethics has intensified. Ethics are increasingly related to societal wants (framed in terms of social virtue), and less with traditional absolutes of right and wrong, good and evil. Previously, it could be argued that some questionable practices were overlooked and considered the consequence of increasing competition and the desire to remain in business, excused as human weaknesses. Theft, deception, extramarital affairs and embellished résumés have existed long before they became either news, or the necessarily the cause for termination or incarceration. Whether there are, in fact, more ethical lapses currently than previously is unknown. Technology has, however, made information readily accessible and immediate. Information availability along with increased regulatory restrictions and disclosure mandates place entrepreneurs and executives under a microscope of vulnerability. Ethical impropriety, whether in business or personal lives, causes observers to question the entrepreneur's business judgement.

In addition to societal changes, the business environment is also markedly different. The generally accepted phased sequence a business experiences prior to becoming global (local, regional, national, international and finally global) are no longer sequential or even necessary. The stages have been made irrelevant because of technology and enhanced communication and transportation mechanisms. In addition, labor is now as portable as capital or materials, perhaps even more so. Businesses operate across the globe, and their personnel come from every corner of the world.

### **Cultural differences**

Not every corner of the world has the same ethical rules to guide what is right and wrong behavior. Ruth Benedict, one of the early contributors to our knowledge of cultural diversity, showed that cultures vary greatly in their moral beliefs and ethical practices, and that these differences are manifested in moral principles we might reasonably expect to agree upon, such as killing children or taking one's own life (Benedict, 1934). More recently, James Rachels simply states that "*different cultures have different moral codes*" (Rachels 2003, p18). Globally, people from different cultures perceive ethics and have moral priorities that differ. While there have been efforts to present global standards (e.g., Donaldson, 1996; Haidt, 2012), they have been very broadly-based, classification schemes rather than common moral values. Donaldson arrived at three categories; "*respect for human dignity, respect for basic rights, and good citizenship*" (Donaldson, 1996, p.54). Haidt, who along with psychologist Craig Joseph proposed the Moral Foundations Theory framework, identifies six categories of values (and their opposites) as a way of

understanding how morality varies among cultures. The six foundations and their opposite are: care/Harm (cherishing and protecting others): fairness/cheating (rendering justice according to shared rules [also called proportionality]): liberty/oppression (loathing of tyranny): loyalty/betrayal (standing with group, family, or nation [also called ingroup]): authority/subversion (obeying tradition and legitimate authority [also called respect]): and sanctity/degradation (abhorrence for disgusting things, foods, actions [also called purity]) (Haidt, 2012). The U.N. Declaration of Human Rights, drafted in the two years in the aftermath of World War II focuses on human rights. The Declaration presents values that are intended to be universally acceptable as human beings interacting with other human beings in an ethical manner. There are very few global ethical standards for guiding business. The categories presented by both Donaldson and Haidt do provide categorization schemes that identify areas of differences.

Anthropologists and sociologists, call attention to these differences, giving examples of behaviors considered morally correct in some societies yet condemned in others, including infanticide, genocide, polygamy, racism, sexism, and torture. Therefore, it can be seen that moral values and the ethical propriety of an action being right or wrong is based upon the moral norms of the society in which the action occurs.

This adds risk, since it gives entrepreneurs and businesses in the global environment cause for concern. *“The most fundamental ethical problem that the manager of an international business faces is the problem of moral diversity. Many oil companies, for example, operate in the United States which professes that men and women should be treated as equals and where bribery is considered wrong, while simultaneously operating in several Middle Eastern countries where women are regarded as subordinate to men and bribery is widely accepted. How is the manager to deal with such differences?”* (Velasquez, 1996, p15) Entrepreneur operate in one country, however simultaneously deal with suppliers and customers across the globe. They also must contend with moral diversity.

### **Adapting, learning, and doing**

Business schools traditionally taught students to maximize shareholder value (following the Friedman model). More recently, the stakeholder model is emphasized. Williamson, however, noted that businesses tend behave dishonestly with regularity (Williamson, 1981, 1985). Scharpf further states that persons perceiving a hostile environment will consciously shift negative externalities to others, and will be indifferent to negative externalities caused by the pursuit of their own interests (Scharpf, 1991, as cited in Messner, 2013). Negative consequences are often deflected or passed onto others in the pursuit of profit, and in conditions of hostility and distress, the entrepreneur may pursue their interests (deceptively if necessary), and won't care who is harmed.

Do we, therefore, assume that entrepreneurs will focus on and pursue their objectives and be less concerned about ethics or social consequences? At the same time, social pressures act upon all businesses, forcing them to pay closer attention to the practices they conduct or endorse. Technology allows one persons' action or judgment to be instantly be broadcast to any and all interested parties. Modern business is a combination of several philosophies: bureaucratic, predatory, and socially responsible. The mission of business education is to enhance/enlarge the latter and limit the former. Businesses

are becoming more conscientious, and recognizing social pressure. Two forms of responses are evidenced.

First, there has been an increase in the presence and enforcement of codes of conduct. Codes emerge from a combination of management values and intent, labor relations, and to protect the organization from regulatory and legal liabilities. As identified by Long and Driscoll, codes of ethics provide institutional structure and legitimacy. While it is reasonable to expect that codes of conduct may focus on moral values and establishing behavioral norms, research analysis into the the form of legitimacy most represented (cognitive, moral, or strategic), suggests that strategic legitimacy is in much more prominent than either moral or cognitive (Long and Driscoss 2008).

### **Teaching ethics – the development of business ethics**

The second response has been to exert pressure on universities and business schools to incorporate ethics within the curriculum. Attention to business ethics in United States universities emerged concurrently with the counter-culture (and authority challenging) movement of the late 1960s and early 1970s. Initially, it was scholars from U.S. Catholic universities who began to look at business from the perspective of ethical theories. During the first 25 years of focusing on ethics, attention to business ethics progressed through distinct stages. Initially, it was characterized by a moral virtue perspective which evolved from the religious/philosophical perspectives, then to the application of the concepts to business, later through the integration of social issues and eventually looking at business ethics as an integral element of business management (DeGeorge, 1987). The Society for Business Ethics was formed in the early 1980s, along with two academic journals: *Journal of Business Ethics* 1982, and *Business Ethics Quarterly* 1991. At the same time, textbooks, case studies, and college courses offerings were ubiquitous. Currently, all AACSB accredited business schools are required to embed business ethics and social responsibility across the curricula. Specialized degrees in Business ethics as well as ethics focusing on functional specializations (e.g. Marketing or Accounting ethics), as well as Corporate Social Responsibility, Environmental Ethics, graduate and doctorate degrees are now widely offered.

At the same time, debates about the effectiveness of ethics courses and training continue. The core of these debates is whether or not moral virtues can be taught at a University, to persons who already have passed their formative years. Rather than lofty ideals or theories, the day-to-day activities and interactions with others mold, shape, and reinforce personal values and codes.

Stressing codes of conduct overlooks the minimalistic nature of codes and laws; they articulate lowest level of behavior that is acceptable by stressing what cannot be done without suffering punitive consequences. Ethics is not comparable to functional topics like accountancy or economics. At the same time the legalistic, “code” style of teaching provides specific boundaries to guide actions. Some argue that rather than teaching students how to act ethically, most courses do not equip students to overcome *the “temptations to cheat and rationalize that actions”* are *“such an easy opportunity.”* Students observing others (cheat and lie), they rationalize that it is acceptable because others are doing it. Instinctive thinking (driven by intuition and emotion) may cause people to disengage from their traditional values when behaving unethically in order to achieve

personal gain (Fisman and Galinsky, 2012). This implies that students, like entrepreneurs and managers, react to environmental hostility (stress) by deflecting negative consequences (or ignoring them), and pursue their self-interests, ignoring their personal moral values.

Ethical entrepreneurship education should be a focus in preparing entrepreneurs, and the concept should be central to all business education, and should include core human and citizenship values. Entrepreneurs seek to gain advantage by seizing or creating opportunities for economic gain. The moral and ethical dilemmas faced by Entrepreneurs have greater (direct) financial, personal, and professional consequences for them than managers (Solymossy and Masters 2002). Non-owner managers act as agents for the owners, and seek to *“make as much money for the owners as possible while obeying the basic laws and customs of society”* (ibid. p237). Non-entrepreneurs need the education as well as entrepreneurs.

#### **Different people, different countries, different values**

Most International firms have basic policies for employee integrity, but increasing globalization calls for truly global codes of ethics. To begin to understand the development of any global business standards, it is necessary to address the issue of differing ethical values among business persons from different countries (Asgary and Mitschow, 2002).

Whether ethics is taught in a university or through training in a corporate setting, it is provided from a foundation of cultural norms and accepted practices of the country within which the university or business operates. While globalization is not a new phenomenon, the impact of globalization on ethics instruction is at the earliest stages of exploration, and generally focuses on prescriptive processes for multinational firms. Whether a global entrepreneurial organization or a sizeable corporation, all growing firms need ethical employees with the ability, knowledge, skills, and attitudes to add value to the firm. *“Many managers believe that the key to managing organizational ethics is hiring “good” people with strong personal moral development”* (Ferrell and Ferrell, 2012). This, however, fails to recognize the difficulty most persons have with voicing their moral conflicts, or to vocalize disagreement with superiors (Gonzales-Padron et al., 2012). Are a perspective employee’s moral convictions more important than getting along or keeping their job?

There is embedded ethnocentricity within persons, and experience-induced biases, along with the comfort (stability) in our areas of familiarity. Inexperienced entrepreneurs and managers may not be familiar with their biases, and as a result, will face greater likelihood of ethical conflicts when confronting persons with differing value systems or ethical norms.

Scholars from multiple countries have explored the ability to teach ethics for decades, with many arguing that increased awareness and consideration of the consequences are the most likely outcomes of teaching ethics (ex. Fisman and Galinsky, 2012). The objectives of ethics education are multi-faceted, and include self-awareness, decision-making processes and understanding one’s biases. In addition to the knowledge component, all students are supposed to be encouraged to develop the skills to identify organizational and professional purposes, to deal with value conflicts, and to anticipate others’ reasoning and rationalizations. As scholars, we need to ask ourselves if we are teaching ethics

in the best possible manner. Reviewing the various approaches and methodologies employed (acknowledging that this is based on “Western” thinking and experience), it is evident that there are a wide-range of approaches (see Appendix 1).

### **Review of approaches and methods employed**

A survey of literature was performed to identify the approaches and techniques being used, including cross-disciplinary work impacting business students. Educators have benefited from 30 years of experience, and have effective tools. This review is acknowledged as not being comprehensive. It has been simplified for classification purposes. Another presentation of pedagogical methods (without classifications) is presented by Baker and Comer (2012). The different methods presented by them and by this author are not used in singularly; they are generally used in some form of combination. They are, however, usually weighted more in one category more than the others.

### ***Theoretical frameworks***

This approach has two orientations; one from the philosophical inquiry into how things should be (normative theory), the other from the evidence-based view (descriptive theory). The “ideal,” or normative perspective has relatively globalized acceptance, since contributors to theory development (e.g. Immanuel Kant, Aristotle) are generally accepted by scholars throughout the world. But acceptance and incorporation are not the same. Furthermore, many noted philosophers (such as Confucius, Muhyiddin Ibn ‘Arabi, Shinran, and Zhuang Zhou) are absent from most Western texts and instruction materials. Many business ethics instructors are not trained in philosophy, hence lack foundational knowledge of the diversity of ideas and perspectives. An interesting book outlining major global philosophers and their contributions is Amy McKella’s volume on the 100 most influential philosophers of all time (2009).

The descriptive approach focuses on the application of ethical standards by individuals and organizations. Often, this looks at not only how decisions are approached, but at how the decisions are justified to others. While based on the normative philosophies, it presents students with the subtleties of problems enacted. As argued by Polanyi, “reality” is socially constructed, and needs to be discovered (Baum, 1996). In this manner, it is similar to culture, not directly evidenced, but implied by signs, symbols, and artifacts. An example of the descriptive approach is evidenced by the marketing industry, which looks at a combination of outcomes and resource advantages. Ethical concepts (such as bribery, misleading advertising, or antitrust activities) are identified, but the emphasis is on the optimum outcome. This requires students to not only understand social “reality,” but to further anticipate and work towards socially desired outcomes (Nicholls et al., 2013; Ferrell et al., 2013).

### ***Case study methodology***

Arguably the most widely used method (in the U.S.) is situational analysis, either by focused situation or through formalized case studies. Emerging from the field of strategic management, the case study method is used to focus on specific ethical issues. Students learn that their personal moral values may disagree with an organization’s or other stakeholders’ expectations. This method encourages environmental scanning (Fox-Wolfgramm, 2010), and the challenges of making decisions under

conditions of complexity and conflict (Ferrell and Ferrell, 2012). The case method also allows integration of regulatory and legislative considerations, such as the Sarbanes-Oxley Act of 2002. While the underlying principles, duties and standards of corporate governance were largely unchanged by the Sarbanes-Oxley act, the processes and procedures were significantly changed. This introduces students to the varying levels of complexity accompanying ethical codes and the law. The prominence of stakeholders and directors was increased, altering the consequences (accountability) of unethical activities. By looking at specific examples from multiple perspectives, students are exposed to unforeseen consequences resulting from bad decisions (Mitchell and Yordy, 2010). The case study methodology also allows introduction of social issues that students might not otherwise encounter, such as environmental degradation, human-rights abuses, or toxic dumping.

#### ***Decision-making processes***

While anchored in the situation-analysis, or case study methodology, rather than relying on what others have done, the pedagogical approach that focuses on the decision-making process presents example-based decision-occurrence's that have already occurred, or hypothetically could occur. This approach focuses on and encourages the examination and discussion of students' decision making processes. This approach is based on the idea that ethical decision-making is mastered by experience, and experience is enhanced by the opportunity to practice new behaviors (Lattal, 2012). The decision-making process opportunities are stimulated by a variety of different methodologies, including interviews (Castleberry, 2007), games (Gibson, 2003), exercises (Schumann et al., 2006), and simulations (Wankel and Stachowicz-Stanusch, 2012). This approach and different techniques helps students to identify the ethical issues present in a given situation, and to apply decision-making criteria (moral, or ethical frameworks). In addition, using created scenarios or simulations allows students to confront social issues that are new, novel, and emerging, issues affecting the business environment, such as gender identity (Byrd and Scott, 2014).

#### ***Learning values***

While not strongly evidenced as a pedagogical objective in secular, public universities in the U.S., there are examples of explicitly teaching moral virtues (Frey, 2010). The appropriateness of, and ability to teach moral virtues has generated significant debate. Over 100 years ago, John Dewey argued that schools had the responsibility to train students to become members of society, and calls the idea to develop moral character hypocritocracy. He maintained that the purpose of education was "*making the methods of learning, of acquiring intellectual power, and of assimilating subject-matter, such that they will render behavior more enlightened, more consistent, more vigorous than it otherwise would be*" (Dewey, 1909, p3). Education should enable students to choose from among multiple values. Roche (2009) makes this more explicit by arguing that education's principle objective is to teach critical thinking, which is different from establishing a moral foundation. The presentation of multiple different perspectives encourages awareness and learning. The critical thinking process selects which perspectives and values to accept and by behavior, make habitual.

Educators teach by presenting topics as well as by modeling personal behavior. Moral virtues are observed and learned by witnessing behaviors in action. Therefore, even if not intending to teach moral virtues, educators can and do communicate and convey

virtues. Such teaching and modeling of virtues is potentially a two-edged sword. Values can intentionally be communicated through conscious behavior. Unconscious actions can also model values, even those that are inappropriate.

Consciously modeled and reinforced behavior (instruction in morality) may still not result in the desired virtues being accepted. Students might refuse and rebel against the intended virtues (Guroian, N.D.). A noteworthy and prominent example of this is Friedrich Nietzsche, who rebelled against the traditional Christian values acquired from his family and schooling.

Huang (2011) cites an apparent paradox in Confucius' beliefs - that everyone is receptive to education, but common people cannot be made to understand things. He argues that virtue cannot "*be taught in the same way as theoretical knowledge or technical skills*" (p.141). This echoes the previously provided perspective that it cannot be taught as a functional skill per se (Fisman and Galinsky, 2012). Aristotle (in *Nicomachian Ethics*, book II) distinguishes between moral virtues (which are developed by habitual behavior, and constant practice), and intellectual virtues, which are learned through instruction. Moral development begins at infancy, and moral values are reinforced through interaction. Initially, moral foundations are laid at home, in the family and situational context. Over time, habits are further shaped through interaction with others (Coles, 1997). While there is consensus that personal, moral virtues may not be implanted by education, it has been argued that social issues and social awareness are presented and reinforced through education (Palomares and Chisvert, 2014). The personal moral values of societies' members shape culture. Culture in turn affects individual values. Cultural pressures, by reinforcing acceptable and discouraging not-acceptable behaviors influence the moral values of its members.

### **A search for understanding**

Ethics explores right and wrong by critically examining the reasons underlying different practices and beliefs. This author maintains four observations as being evidenced:

1. Morality is an individual and a private choice (albeit socially influenced and reinforced).
2. Morality (and ethics) differs *within* every society as well as *between* societies.
3. Entrepreneurship and business education incorporate ethics, awareness, and managerial skill.
4. Entrepreneurs and managers, increasingly migratory and transportable, will be the economic drivers and persons of prominence in the coming years. They will shape the ethical landscape of the business environment.

As an educator motivated to equip students to be sensitive to differing values and ethical perspectives, this author notes the distinct absence of meaningful of ethics education variance internationally. There is anecdotal and literature evidence of deviation, but no inquiry into the question of deviation in ethics education internationally. How are ethics and values reinforced by university and organizational instruction and practice in different countries and cultures? The need to internationalize business ethics is well understood. However, rather than being approached from a world's best practices

approach, a general code of ethics approach has been utilized (Asgary and Mitschow, 2002). As stated earlier, this is a minimalist approach.

While business ethics was identified as an established field of study and instruction almost 30 years ago (DeGeorge, 1987), There is insufficient data to know how and for how long it has been approached elsewhere. How do others, especially those in differing cultures, differing socio-economic and political perspectives embed values? How do they teach ethics?

A recent suggestion to familiarize students with differing stakeholder and organizational controls contains the phrase “best practices.” It presents a classroom exercise drawing on student experience (which is limited), and directs students to consider five organizational categories, (as well as an post-hoc “other” area with the example of whistle blowing) (Baker and Comer, 2012):

- Human Resource issues,
- Consumer Confidence issues,
- Use of Organizational resources,
- Conflict of Interest issues, and
- Corporate Social Responsibilities issues.

Absent in this approach is familiarity with how those from a different context will view the same exercise, and how to incorporate those differences for the benefit of the organization. Diversity of experience in the classroom is much less than diversity of foundation and experience among the global workforce. How are students going to be equipped to recognize and work with persons of differing moral and ethical compositions if their education does not escape the shroud of ethnocentricity? How can we, as scholars and educators, learn of what is being taught elsewhere?

Increasing globalization, the prevalence of virtual work teams and the international mobility of the workforce has caused this author to question the best practices for teaching ethics, especially in those countries / cultures that are markedly different? While cultural differences were identified by Anthropologist Ruth Benedict in the 1930s, serious international inquiry of cultural impact on business did not occur until the late 1960s. At the time it was started, Geert Hofstede, worked for IBM, and was interested in application, not as an academic. Cultural research is continuing with vigor, more recently with the GLOBE studies, representing collaborative research analyzing 62 countries (House, et al., 2004). The result is available globally for all scholars and organizations. Why are there no internationally-oriented comparative studies regarding ethical foundations and how they impact entrepreneurship and the greater business community? How can we (as international research scholars) begin to identify world-class, best practices to inform the instruction of ethical entrepreneurship?

*“The common techniques and methods used by world-class benchmarking providers are the result of many years of observation and experience...[and] to identify the right benchmarking provider, you need to examine group’s common methods, and discover how they make use of these methods.”* (Carter and Carmichael, 2011, p.40-41) Identifying best practices increases different understandings of problems, causes, and issues, as well as potential solutions. The process is enabled by collaboration, strategic planning, and oriented towards transferable solutions (ibid.).

## Conclusion

This is a call for dialogue through collaboration. One of the principle purposes of research publication is to stimulate discussion on important topics. Unethical activities are not restricted to any one country or a single socio-economic system; they are international and multilaterally evidenced. There are many examples of areas we can learn from each other, and it is this author's desire to initiate such a discussion without restricting it to any specific form or format. Disseminating the idea and call through JGER (a peer-reviewed, open source journal) assists those who are resource-limited and have limited access to print and electronic data bases.

Beginning with exploratory study, inquiry can initially investigate whether cultures have any standardization. Do universities in other countries prioritize the instruction topics as theoretical foundations (normative or descriptive), decision-making processes, or identifying and establishing core values? Likewise, what are the principle means and methods utilized (e.g., case study, experimentation, simulation, etc.) (see Appendix 1). Another element of great interest, and arguably the more challenging element of this call for research collaboration, is to seek indications of effectiveness of instruction. Which approaches have exhibited greater beneficial success to the international entrepreneurial and business community; which are truly the world's "best practices?" In a manner similar to the GLOBE studies, which differentiate between cultural value beliefs and behaviors, it is reasonable to anticipate differences between University approaches and business community validation. Also similar to the GLOBE studies, such a research initiative can *only* be accomplished through collaboration of persons from different perspectives and foundations, but with a common interest in inquiry.<sup>1</sup>

## Endnote

<sup>1</sup>As an experienced entrepreneur who has hired many managers (including some with differing ethical foundations), and a research based scholar (researching and teaching business ethics for approximately 15 years), this author is well aware of the challenges of teaching ethics, and ethics within organizations.

## Appendix 1

### Approaches and methodologies to teaching ethics

#### *Theoretical Foundations (Normative)*

Absolutism

Deontology

Eudemonism

Relativism

Teleology

Care

#### *Philosophical (Arguably theoretical, more Descriptive than Normative)*

Deontology

Rule based

Teleology

Utility

Justice

Rights

Moral Rights

Legal Rights

Eudaemonism (Moral Virtue / Character)

Mono-theistic Religion based

Spiritual / moral guide (e.g., Confucious, Aristotle)

### ***Means and methods***

Social context

Intellectual

Identifying collective norms

Addressing the social construction of “reality”

Identifying consequences of bad decisions

Legislative / regulatory processes

Personal processes

Implanting moral values / virtues

Personal Engagement (Personalize the situation)

Analogous Relationship

Establish extremes, move towards the middle.

Test limits (without first establishing extremes)

Write a policy (and test the viability of the policies in an organization)

Role Reversal

Experimental (simulation)

### **Competing interests**

The author declares that he has no competing interests.

### **Author's contribution**

The author have read and approved the final manuscript.

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