

# Business Ethics in the Curriculum: Integrating Ethics through Work Experience\*

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**ABSTRACT.** In this paper we seek to make the case for a teaching and learning strategy that integrates business ethics in the curriculum, whilst not precluding a disciplines based approach to this subject. We do this in the context of specific work experience modules at undergraduate level which are offered by Middlesex University Business School, part of a modern university based in North West London. We firstly outline our educative values and then the modules that form the basis of our research. We then identify and elaborate what we believe are the five dimensions which distinguish an integrated approach based on work experience from a disciplines-based approach, namely: process and content, internal and external, facilitation and teaching, covert and overt, and living wisdom and established wisdom. The last dimension draws on the practical relevance of the Aristotelian notion of *phronesis* inherent in our approach. We go on to provide two case examples of our practice to illustrate our perspective and in support of our conclusions. These are that reflection integrated into the Business Studies curriculum, using the ASKE typology of learning [Frame, 2001, Proceedings of the 9th Annual Teaching and Learning Conference (Nottingham: Nottingham Business School, Nottingham Trent University), p. 80], in respect of personal and group process in a work experience context, provides a useful heuristic for the development of moral sensibility and ethical practice.

**KEY WORDS:** content, business ethics, experiential, facilitation, integration, learning, phronesis, process, teaching

## Introduction: our educative values

The values that we bring to our educative relations, and our approach to teaching and learning, is informed by a humanistic philosophy such as that of Rogers (1969) who suggests that learning needs to be relevant and meaningful for the learner. It is with this in mind that we lay much emphasis on the power of the real, in other words, the value of learning from live experience. We also believe in developing student autonomy in learning. By this we mean that we encourage and help our students develop the skills of thinking for themselves, and in particular, to think and act with integrity. In discussing the goal of autonomy in education Boud (1981, p. 18) says, "A fundamental purpose of education is assumed to be to develop in individuals the ability to make their own decisions about what they think and do".

Autonomy, then, is concerned with helping students direct their own learning, with a degree of freedom from external constraint. However, developing student autonomy in learning is more than a vehicle for developing the individual agent. It also requires that the learner learns how to confront his/her own inner prejudices, is able to make a creative response to his/her unique social environment, and rise above the temptation to act out "patterned and stereotypical responses" from his/her past, (Jackins, cited in Boud, 1981, p. 19). Linking our educative goals for the development of student autonomy, and learning from experience, suggests a transformative

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process of education in which knowledge is created through the transformation of experience. In learning from the real, we facilitate a process of reflection on action, and internal and external dialogue between students, their peers and their tutors. Thus we value learning as a social process.

Reflecting on our practice we foreground questions of the kind such as, "How do I and we improve our practice"? In the context of our work on the employability modules for which we share leadership roles, we have similarly asked the question both of ourselves and our colleagues: "How can we help our students learn in diversity and how we can support their moral development, and awareness of business ethics, in the process"? In addition, we have been explicit with students about our rationale for self-disclosure. The significance of tutor self-disclosure for the development of effective learning has been identified by Mortiboys (2003) for university lecturers, and Johnson and Redmond (2000) for staff developers. Mortiboys suggests that tutor self-disclosure reduces the gap in the learning relationship between the tutor and learner in respect of power and distance.

### **The modules**

At Middlesex University Business School we have been pioneering a number of modules (learning units) which provide students with the opportunity to learn from their experience as employees and as consultants. "Learning from Part Time Work" (discussed in Frame and Dattani, 2000) at level 2 is an example of the former; "Consulting to Organisations", at level 2 (discussed in Frame and O'Connor, 2002) and "Consulting in Organisations", level 3 are examples of the latter. Level 2 modules are normally studied in year two and level 3 in the third and final year of undergraduate programmes, and though our focus in this paper is at the undergraduate level, we suggest that our approach could also be applied at the postgraduate level.

These modules fall under the broad banner of 'employability'. Undergraduate students are required to undertake one or more of these, in some cases as an alternative to the industrial placement. They are front loaded, with input and workshop activities provided during weeks one to four of an 11-week

module. Generic topics provided include teamwork, learning, reflection and organisational culture. In "Learning from Part Time Work" the module handbook includes a small number of key readings on learning and reflection. For the consulting modules, two key textbooks are used: one on the consultant role, the other on organisational learning. Students are assessed using a variety of methods including reflective learning reviews, peer assessment, oral presentations and client reports. The subject of ethics does not appear in any of the module handbooks as an explicit element of the syllabus, nor in respect of the assessment process. Nonetheless, these modules provide us with a framework for the teaching of business ethics as an integrated "learning from the real" approach.

In contrast, a disciplines approach frames the subject of business ethics within a specific module such as one entitled "Business Ethics". Such an approach is characterised by a programme of lectures and seminars that address the ethical aspects of particular business topics such as "Ethics and Decision making" or "Ethics and International Business". In this example, use of ideal case studies and real examples are made, together with student discussion, presentations and a review of relevant literature, as specified in the "Business Ethics" module handbook. An extensive reading list of 79 books is provided. The assessment involves students researching appropriate literature to construct a best practice response to the topic they choose from one of the five provided, for example, "Ethical Issues in Marketing and Advertising". Students are thus required to demonstrate a knowledge and understanding of the ethical canon as it applies to the world of business, and the specific functions thereof.

### **The five dimensions**

We will now examine five dimensions which clarify the distinction being made between our integrated "learning from the real" approach and the disciplines-based approach. We should point out that whilst they serve to provide either/or perspectives that aid our exposition, in reality practice can and does move between the extremes of these dichotomous classifications.

*Process and content*

We are suggesting that our integrated “learning from the real” approach is significantly different because it is not content driven and stands in contrast to what we describe above as a disciplines-based approach. So rather than identifying and addressing various ethical topics, we create a learning environment in which our students may engage with the reality of ethics in respect of their lived experience. Accordingly, we help students identify curriculum learning opportunities that are situated both in the real world of work and in their interpersonal-group relations that can be integrated into their course of study – in other words, in the “mundane and material world” (Anthony, 1998) which is part and parcel of every day life. In effect, the students provide the content with which they then work. It is via this process that ethical issues emerge.

Thus we are suggesting that real live and meaningful issues of ethics in business will emerge in the process of engagement with the “real world” leading students to grapple with what business ethics mean in a particular situation, or what Lave and Wenger (1991) term “situated learning”.

*Internal and external*

By providing opportunities for students to draw on their own experience, and indeed valuing this experience, we help them locate ethical considerations within themselves and in their relationships with others. The value we place on their experience is demonstrated by our inclusion of it in the assessment process. Indeed, accounts of reflective practice are required in all of the employability modules. With a disciplines-based approach, the source of ethical issues and the expertise with which they are constructed and addressed is external to the learner. In effect, this approach privileges knowledge about business ethics. This is reinforced in the assessment guidelines for the “Business Ethics” module by the advice that, “The essay should be written as objectively as possible. Avoid any bias or subjectivity”.

The essential difference, we suggest, between these two approaches can be illustrated as follows: on the one hand “learning about diversity” by considering relevant legislation and its practical application,

via a case study, and on the other, “learning in diversity” by having to work with the lived experience of a diverse team of peers to manage the process and achieve the objectives of the task.

In developing this distinction, we have drawn on the work of Marshall (2001) concerning the development of reflective practice skills in the context of action–reflection cycles. She identifies a dynamic process framed by inner and outer arcs of attention. The former focuses on the internal process of reflective inquiry foregrounding the self and ones relationships with others. The latter, in contrast, engages with the external world such as learning from a taught module or reading a book to learn about the skills of reflection. We suggest that this distinction is a useful heuristic.

*Facilitation and teaching*

To facilitate is to help a process move along. The word derives from, “facile” which is French for “easy”. So to facilitate is to make something easier. What we are aiming to facilitate is knowledge creation through experiential learning (Kolb, 1984) and help students grapple with meaning-making. In contrast, traditional teaching is generally didactic with the primary aim of transferring and applying knowledge, where the teacher is expert and the student is the novice. As Ramsden (1985) tells us, in traditional learning, learners are presented with pre-packaged ideas, in a logical sequence that makes sense to the teacher. As a result of this sense-making, the learner is less likely to grapple with the essence or meaning of the subject, because knowledge is presented by an “expert” and as a commodity rather than as contestable. Indeed Gibbs (1989) suggests meaning cannot simply be transferred to students in lectures and he argues that there is too little scope for the negotiation and construction of meaning in these settings.

The objectives of ethics education, according to McPhail (2001, p. 282) are disruption, the development of a broad view of the profession and the development of the student’s moral sensibility. We would argue that it is the responsibility of individual tutors and course programmers to identify how the teaching of ethics in business informs their particular unit of learning and how it can be best addressed.

Our focus, however, is in developing a strategy that equips all learners regardless of their specific discipline with the skills and knowledge to develop a personal and professional orientation toward “moral sensibility”, one that involves awareness and the ability to act with regard to issues of integrity, justice and truth.

In our approach, “disruption” is facilitated by the process of helping students question their assumptions, whether it be about the learning they derive from part time work or how, as a team, they work with their diversity, and address the hitherto undisclosed issues of stereotyping and prejudices. In this way, we help them reveal the “reality of the hidden”, as identified by the Johari window.<sup>1</sup>

With regard to the development of McPhail’s “broad view of the profession”, our educative context is to develop students from a range of business studies related disciplines, including accounting, marketing, human resource management and general management. Whilst we would expect the profession-specific ethical requirements to be addressed in core discipline-based modules, the more general obligations that our students have to their employing organisations, and to society at large, are those which we believe our approach is best able to address. This, we suggest, extends the frame of teaching business ethics with due consideration for citizenship, moral responsibility for self and others, and the wider obligations of business to society. Furthermore, by drawing out their own experience of being a student and their experience of work and subjecting that experience to reflection and critique, the students themselves contribute to their individual and collective learning and thus the development of a meaningful curriculum in business ethics.

“Moral sensibility” and, in particular, its location in the emotional realm of reason is, we suggest, developed by our approach in that we require our students to provide an account of their learning. This account addresses attitudes, skills, knowledge and emotions as identified in the ASKE typology of learning (Frame, 2001), which can be found at Appendix 1. This typology is useful for the facilitation and development of moral sensibility in that it validates learning beyond the cognitive domains of skills and knowledge. By including the domains of attitudes and emotions, students are enabled to em-

brace the experience of self and other in their learning relationships, engaging with issues of joy, pain, hopes and fears, anxiety and confidence in a dialectical encounter with the world. By encouraging students to be more open to their attitudes and emotions, and by reflecting on the effect their behaviour has on others and *vice versa*, we can begin to move towards helping them develop their psychological “maturity” in respect of the “less defended ego” that Rowan (2001) speaks of, and which Hartog (2002) suggests is an effective vehicle for developing higher order skills of critique and communication. This development fosters a shift from “mental ego”, or an inability to cope with the demands of self-reflection, to the less defended ego referred to above. In addition it marks a shift in power relations, from “power over” to “power with”. With the former, self must win; with the latter self and others win.

#### *Covert and overt*

Our approach is initially covert, in that we do not have sessions on ethics *per se*, nor do we introduce them to the language of ethical discourse. Rather, and as noted above, our approach and strategy for teaching business ethics builds on Anthony’s critique (Anthony, 1998). He argues that there is a problem of alienation between ethicist philosophers and managers, and suggests that the technical terms of philosophers have little practical concern for managers. Furthermore, he identifies this alienation as a problem for educators in respect of what and how they should teach in relation to issues of ethics in business. Thus, Anthony suggests such an endeavour is one that avoids prescription, but rather, is one grounded in the mundane and material world of the manager. As such, we would argue that our approach is initially covert, in contrast with the overt disciplines-based approach.

Our approach necessarily becomes overt, however, in two ways: firstly, when we introduce our students to issues of process, reflection and critique of practice; and secondly, through the consideration of material (content) they bring to class, such as critical incident vignettes (Mac Farlane, 2003), as illustrated in one of our case studies.

*Living wisdom and established wisdom*

Our approach emphasises the construction and development of living wisdom, revealed through the issues and dilemmas associated with the world of work. This work may either be paid employment or university-based group work. We can trace the idea of practical relevance back to the Aristotelian notion of *phronesis* and contrast it to a platonic conception of the good, where a case study or lecture might be thought sufficient to convey the “ideal”, that is, what may be considered as established wisdom. In contrast, the concept of *phronesis* involves an amalgam of knowledge, virtue and reason, (roughly translated as judgment) enabling us to decide what to do, in other words, practical wisdom lived out. We suggest that living wisdom comes from a process of reflective judgement informed by attitudes, values and emotional integrity that in turn clarify and shape both thinking and action.

The use and understanding of the term *phronesis* has been contested through the ages. In Aristotelian terms, knowledge and virtue were linked to community and solely to male citizens, thus rendering this concept somewhat problematic today. Indeed concepts of virtue and community arouse heated debate, not least in a multiracial and multicultural context, which characterise our teaching and learning relationships. In addition, *phronesis* was achieved by privileging the spectator over the actor by extolling the contemplative life. By contrast our educative task involves helping our students develop the skills of both the spectator and the actor by encouraging both reflection and action.

Bligh et al. (1999) argue that education benefits both students and the community as a whole. They identify three domains of higher education learning: affect, cognition and adaptable occupational skills that serve both these stakeholders. They make a case for the development of attitudes and emotional integrity as well as the intellect. In addition, they note the need for Higher Education to provide for an adaptable workforce with a broad range of skills. We suggest that skills such as reflection and critical thinking are important aids for today’s workforce, giving them the tools to effectively think through moral dilemmas and that these skills are developed better through a lived wisdom rather than established wisdom approach.

In support of our goal to develop student autonomy in learning and to produce graduates who can think and act for themselves, thus contributing to a productive and adaptable workforce, our approach includes a degree of power sharing with the student body. Whilst retaining overall responsibility for assessment, this takes the form of peer assessment, and engages students in setting some of the criteria by which they will be assessed.

In a traditional approach to teaching business ethics, the application of theory to practice would guide determinant judgement. In contrast to determinant judgement, where meaning is found in the general, in reflective judgement meaning is found in the particular. Laws and rules cannot apply the particular to the general, rather the link can be found in the diverse social milieu of our students, where there is a multiplicity of particularities which have to be considered. Secondly, the “common sense” that can be found in the general and universal is inherent in the critical nature of the act of reflection. For example, there is no such thing as a community standard for beauty according to Coulter and Wiens (2002, p. 16): “Dialogue about reflective judgements, however, is both possible and required: aesthetic criticism presumes the possibility of persuading others of the quality of the judgement without epistemologically or ethically secure foundations. (Otherwise why bother?)”. What we are trying to develop in our students as we facilitate their development toward becoming good judging thinkers and actors, is the capacity for a “visiting imagination”, in other words, to see matters from the other’s point of view. It was this lack of a visiting imagination that Arendt drew attention to in her report of the trial of Eichman. Arendt (1963, p. 48) noted that Eichman had “an almost total inability to ever look at anything from the other fellow’s point of view”. It was this lack of thinking from the perspective of the other which she saw as an explanation for his behaviour and his lack of conscience. The work of Arendt can help us link the actor and the spectator in the educative task of developing judgement.

A Foucauldian analysis of power, however, suggests that there are limitations on human agency in respect of what an individual actor can do. The expulsion of Jews from the public sphere in Nazi Germany, in Arendt’s view, served to darken the public sphere by rendering this group invisible. To

be a good judging actor involves taking account of the public sphere. Following Arendt, this is not an abstraction but rather one that is occupied by diverse individuals who have the capacity for moral agency. In our practice this involves facilitating the inclusion, of all parties to their collective task and process. In learning in diversity, we overtly encourage visibility rather than colluding with the practice of sanctioning invisibility, based for example on gender, race or culture, as a means of “getting the job done”. As a means of clarifying values, developing attitudes and emotional integrity, we suggest that these educative aims are best achieved through reflection on lived experience and by reflecting in a community of our peers. This emergent “living wisdom” cannot be gleaned only from a textbook or a case study which convey “established wisdom”.

As a means of demonstrating the emergence of students’ “living wisdom”, and by way of illustration of the other four dimensions discussed above, we have followed MacFarlane’s (2003) example by encouraging the utilisation of “critical incident vignettes”. He suggests that traditional case studies are limited, whereas, “work related examples of learners . . . can often provide a rich source of real life material” (p. 57). They are, he suggests, “raw, firsthand commentaries of real events affecting individuals” (p. 58). MacFarlane, though, limits such vignettes to work based experience, whereas we extend the focus to include university-based experience. Two examples, that illustrate our integrated “learning from the real” approach, follow.

### Case example 1

This first case example is taken from “Learning from Part Time Work”. Whilst seeking to maintain authenticity by constructing this account using the student voice, we have changed the actors’ names. It involves the reflection and analysis of a critical incident vignette by a student based on an experience he has had in work. Such an analysis is a required element of the portfolio which students present for assessment.

#### *The student*

“I’m Jerome, a business studies undergrad”. I’m in my final year and I’ve always worked part-time. The West

End is best, lots of shops, lots of demand for part-timers like me but lots of businesses coming and going. Like I used to work for ‘Guess’ in Bond Street, but they closed down. I’m working for “Mulberry” now, at their concession in Harvey Nicks’. I’ve been there eight months now and sometimes stand in for the manager, Shawn.

#### *The work context*

Mulberry sells clothes for men and women and leather goods like cases, bags, wallets and picture frames. They are very expensive and how the merchandise is displayed is very significant in attracting passing trade.

#### *The story: the critical vignette*

“One day Shawn asked me to re-do the display. We get a general outline of what should go with what from Head Office, but then it’s down to us as to how we adapt the guidelines to our particular space. Anyway I spent about two hours or more re-doing the display space; it’s not big but it’s complicated. I was pleased with the results and went off for my lunch”.

“When I came back I was horrified to see the display had been dismantled and put back to where it was before I started. It turned out that another bloke who worked with me, Atif, decided there had been a mistake and decided to take action off his own bat”.

“I was well annoyed. I’d gone to so much time and effort; the boss had told me to do it and now along comes Atif and mucks it all up. When I tackled him about it, he said it was his job”.

“Shawn was off for the day; what to do? I felt like punching him. But I walked away and thought about it”.

“So I talked to the boss about it next day. It turned out that Shawn had not told Atif anything, and Atif thought I was getting ideas above my station and he wanted to do the display job anyway and so on. I’m glad I didn’t punch him one. It shows the need for effective communication, and how helpful to control your initial impulses before you act. Firstly I’m glad I didn’t thump him: I’d have got the sack whatever the provocation. I’m glad I could control my negative emotions. And I’m glad I talked about it and came to some agreement on talking to each other about who is

going to do what. It showed me the good of communication between us. And the whole thing showed me how I'd developed too".

#### *Comment*

The analysis of a critical incident vignette can prove a useful source of reflection on the individual's behaviour and a means of helping decision making for future actions. In this example the student identifies the emotional impact of the incident on his thinking, and his recognition through the process of reflection in action that there are social rules, if not rules of employment, that govern the conduct of people at work. He anticipates the consequences of his actions if he were to act out his feelings and punch his colleague. Instead, he walks away and continues his reflection.

Through dialogue first with his colleague and later his boss the student shows that he is able to see things from the other's point of view.

#### *The learning*

By reflecting on this event with the aid of the ASKE typology of learning he is able to identify:

- The significance of controlling his emotions;
- The advisability of not allowing his emotions to determine his actions;
- An implicit awareness of his part in constructing his social world;
- An awareness of social and organisational rules governing behavior;
- The importance of good communication;
- The fact that he has, in his own words, developed.

Jerome's behaviour is not just constrained by rules that govern social behaviour, though we do not doubt that this may be one influence. It is also in part restraint derived from the capacity for reflective judgement. What we are suggesting here is that he recognises psychological maturity in his own behaviour, that is, he is not being driven by his mental ego but rather by a consideration of the ethical issues that emerge from this particular situation and with which he is engaged. We might speculate how his actions differ from the way he may

have behaved previously, not least because he reports that he has developed. A recognition of this development has been facilitated both by exposure to the real world of ethical choices in a work context and to methods of reflecting on this situated experience, such as critical incident vignette analysis.

We are suggesting that the process of reflection on action, and the reinforcement of appropriate behaviour that learning through reflection can support, implicitly facilitates education for a good social order. We suggest that this can be best achieved when learning is situated as a social process, where there are opportunities for group work, team learning, and for individual and collective reflection on group process and task actions. The case example illustrates the significance of situated learning as a vehicle of moral development, for, as Lave and Wenger (1991, p. 15) point out, "Learning is a process that takes place in a participation framework, not in an individual mind". In our view, without the lived experience outlined above, we doubt that this student would have had the opportunity for engaging with the development process he identifies.

#### **Case example 2**

This second case is from "Consulting in Organisations". Students form consulting teams with peers, usually five in number, identify and gain access to an organisation, and negotiate and deliver a realistic and achievable consultancy brief. The aim is to manage the task within the semester. Each team is allocated a tutor who facilitates their learning and acts as a working coach.

The assessment includes a presentation and written report to clients. Additionally, students provide peer assessment of each other's contribution and performance in the consulting team, based on their agreed criteria. Individuals also produce a reflective learning review based on the ASKE typology of learning.

#### *Workshop programme*

Senge et al.'s (1994) "Five Learning Organisation Disciplines" frame the module. We also address working in diversity. In particular, students are asked to:

- Reflect on their own diversity, and learn about the culture and diversity of their team;
- Identify three stereotypes associated with their culture, and share these;
- Identify how they intend to treat one another, and value each person's diversity and the value added that this brings to the team;
- Give a short presentation on their individual and collective diversity.

This data is shared with the whole class, and gives the teams material to espouse publicly a vision of shared values. Argyris (1990, p. 23) tells us that espoused theory is "the set of beliefs and values people hold about how they manage their lives", and theories in use are "the actual rules people use to manage their beliefs". Espoused values provide a tool for reflection and review, so that students with the help of their tutor can monitor any difference between espoused theory and theory in use. This approach emphasises the importance of relationships and is underpinned by a definition of organisations given by Clarkson (1995) as "complex webs of diverse human relationships", and "relationships writ large".

#### *Case background: espoused theory*

The students informed us that this was the first time such issues had been explored. All teams were keen to make presentations along the lines outlined above, and we had to adjust the workshop in the following week to accommodate all of them. The following quotation is an example of the process and the values espoused by consulting teams.

"We will operate with equity and treat others as we'd like to be treated, you need to get to know someone before you judge them, Malaysians are reserved so we will ask for their views; you need to become aware".

Themes of listening, valuing and respecting each other were common, but within two weeks of making this presentation, tutors were confronted with a case of team conflict, pointing to gaps between what had been espoused and what happened in practice.

#### *The story of group X: theory in use*

The first indication of conflict was when one team member arranged a "transfer" to another team. The perception was that one team member was dominant and there were other tensions. They were asked to reflect on the following questions:

- Do you believe there is a problem in this team? If so, what is it?
- Who else do you think sees it like that?
- Who have you talked to about it?
- What do you think can be done about it?

Different perceptions emerged within the team about levels of contribution and commitment to the task, and what constituted helpful or hindering behaviours. One member was perceived to be bossy and domineering by others, and this same student perceived another to lack the required commitment. The tutor decided to facilitate a one-on-one discussion with both of these two students, to help them examine their mental models of each other.

Both students were Punjabi, one male and the other female. The latter was perceived to be bossy and the former's commitment was questioned. The male student was unaware of how his behaviour was perceived. He was quiet and not at all defensive. Apparently he had sought the help of the student counseling service and was feeling anxious about another module. However, he confirmed his commitment to the module. How his behaviour was perceived by the female student was explored, as were means of addressing this issue. Subsequently the tutor talked to the female student both about her perception of the other and her own reputation for being bossy. By contrast she was very articulate and demanded high levels of performance from all team members. She made it clear she would not tolerate less than 100% commitment. However, there was little else to suggest that the other student was not pulling his weight. She was aware that he was experiencing problems and was encouraged to show him due consideration. The tutor also suggested that quietness was not necessarily reflective of lack of commitment. Initially, the student rejected this interpretation on grounds of equity and fairness. She was then asked to consider a systemic view, where support for another is seen not as an alternative, but rather as an additional perspective she



could hold concurrently with her expectations. This seemed to have had the desired effect and the students managed to work together, and successfully completed the project

However, when the team met to discuss their peer assessment they did not manage to agree on the merits of each other's contribution, and this led to further conflict.

#### *Comment*

In this scenario, different perceptions compete as "truths", raising ethical issues of "equity/rights" and "care". The integrity of these two modes of experience, Gilligan (1982) suggests, are different though connected:

"While an ethic of justice proceeds from the premise of equity – that everyone should be treated the same – an ethic of care rests on the premise of non-violence – that no one should be hurt. In the representation of maturity, both perspectives converge in the realization that just as inequality adversely affects both parties in an unequal relationship, so too violence is destructive for everyone involved". (Gilligan, 1982, p. 174).

#### *The learning*

Learning in this team became blocked and was exacerbated by undiscussibles, different perceptions and mental models, ego maturity, tension between responsibilities for self and others, and the inability to see things from the others' point of view. Argyris (1990) suggests that the gap between espoused theory and theory in use occurs because the latter is designed to produce defensive consequences, which in turn, requires defensive reasoning. This behaviour serves to keep people unaware of their counterproductive actions, thereby reinforcing theory in use, which is governed by the social virtues that we are taught early in life. It is these defensive routines, Argyris suggests, that create undiscussibles and ego defenses when people experience threats or embarrassment. "Moreover, human beings are often unaware that they are producing such unintended consequences" Argyris (1990, p. 12). This habitual lack of awareness he terms skilled incompetence, which in turn produces an unreflexive learning disposition.

The learning of this team has produced an ethical dilemma. Caring and integrity have entered what Argyris (1990, p. 20) refers to as "the blow up cycle". This happens when the social virtues of care, respect and support are deemed not to have worked, and individuals use strength (power) and integrity to serve their interests. If learning is to change team behaviour and their mental models, another tutor intervention would be required to highlight ethical choices that lead to win-win rather than win-lose outcomes. Otherwise those who shout the loudest can exert the most power and influence to advocate their position in order to win. This involves a shift in mind from individual interests and perspectives through organising reflection in a group participation framework.

#### **Discussion and conclusions**

In this paper we have argued for an integrated approach to the teaching of business ethics. In presenting our case, we have explored two case examples where we suggest that the teaching of business ethics can be integrated into the existing curriculum within current resources, and which is situated in the "mundane and material world" which students occupy, either as employees or as consulting team members. It is in this integrated "learning from the real" approach that we argue that particular benefits are derived.

In our first case example we have shown how a student grappled with, and learned from, a live moral dilemma in a work context, as he weighed the complexity of determinate and reflective judgement. In our second case, we showed how students were encouraged, to address diversity in their learning relationships as a vehicle for ethical development but in the context of a "real" work assignment. In both cases we have suggested that reflection, utilising the ASKE typology of learning, whether it be in relation to their personal or group process, can play an important part in ethical development and learning.

Our examples of practice utilise both student work within a university context (a live consultancy project) and in an employment context. As such, we believe the lessons learned will be of relevance to others in the field. The use of group work to facilitate learning and reflection is no longer a novelty

and recent research by Pollard et al. (2004) confirms the work done by Frame and Dattani (2000) that just under 50% of undergraduates are in some form of part time employment. There is thus ample student experience on which the lecturer can draw to facilitate the production of critical incident vignettes (MacFarlane, 2003). Furthermore, we suggest that our five dimensions offer a framework for ethics practitioners to both review and develop their approach.

In conclusion, while not precluding a disciplines-based approach, we advocate a teaching and learning strategy that aims to equip students with transferable skills for dealing with ethics in business. Furthermore, drawing out ethical issues through existing modules such as those we have described, we suggest, makes for more meaningful and robust learning, compared with stand alone modules where the ethical issues are more likely to be remote from, and external to, the student experience. We suggest that our approach is more likely to become part of their portfolio of life long learning, that supports underpinning skills and knowledge for the workplace, in particular the awareness of attitudes and emotions and the need to take account of others' interests, as well as their own. In doing this, we hope to redress the balance by bringing affective learning and adaptive occupational skills on to the agenda, where hitherto academia has traditionally privileged cognitive learning. Though challenging, and not without difficulty, we nevertheless believe that this approach will give students a framework to help them understand why business ethics and their own moral development as future managers and professionals are relevant today, and what their rights and obligations are as citizens in co-creating a just and democratic society.

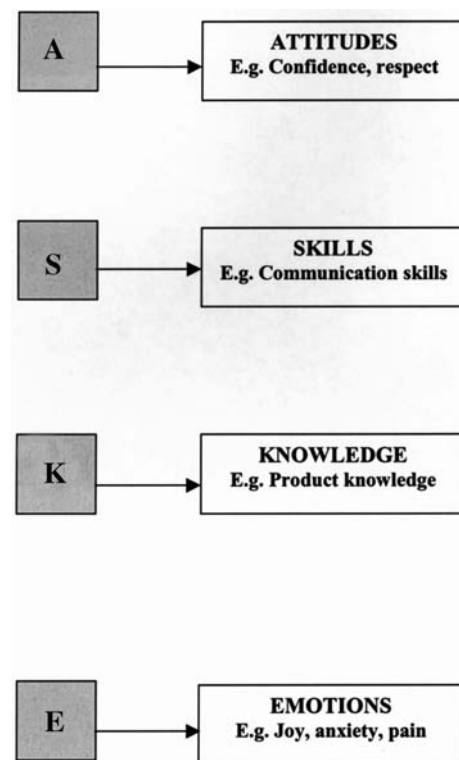
In comparing our approach to integrating the teaching of business ethics in the curriculum with that of a disciplines-based approach, and our explication of that in the form of dimensions of difference, we are engaged in a process of making sense of our practice to ourselves and making sense of it to others. Lomax (1999) describes this process as a "double dialectic of meaning making", a process typically used by educational action researchers, who are engaged in the study of their practice, which is how we would define ourselves. We utilise this approach in our teaching, that is engagement in

sense-making, and we suggest that this is in contrast to a disciplines based approach, which has had the sense made of it.

Living our educative values in our practice, making our motives explicit and explaining what we mean by improvement has an ethical dimension, and continuing critique of ones educational and professional values is seen to be an implicit part of this process. By the same token we believe that accounts of our practice, such as this article, can make for a continuing critique and a more effective means of communication if the value position of the writers is made explicit, rather than being implicit or ignored.

### Appendix 1.

The ASKE Typology of learning (Frame, 2001).



### Note

<sup>1</sup> The name Johari window was derived from a combination of the first names of Joseph Luft and Harry Ingham (Luft, 1970).

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