Strategies for Teaching Research Ethics in Business, Management and Organisational Studies

Linda Naimi
Organisational Leadership, Purdue University, USA
lnaimi@purdue.edu

Abstract: Ethics education has become increasingly important in the wake of recent corporate scandals and reported scientific misconduct. The pressure to succeed has spurred the emergence of a 'cheating culture' (Callahan, 2004). Callahan suggests that ethics – i.e., integrity, honesty and fairness – is losing ground to a market-driven economy and culture that rewards self-interest, self-gratification, and amoral behaviour. As educators, we are committed to providing students with the preparation, mentoring and guidance they need to address ethical issues that arise in their academic, professional and personal lives. We need to serve as positive role models to encourage ethical conduct. Nowhere is this more critical than in the area of research, particularly human subject research. To ensure integrity in research, students and faculty must demonstrate that they understand the ethical and legal ramifications of their work prior to initiating any research. In addition to legal requirements, universities now use a variety of creative approaches designed to promote integrity in personal and professional conduct. This paper discusses effective strategies for teaching research ethics to undergraduate and graduate students in business, management and organisational studies. Strategies include online interactive training modules, case studies, role-playing, action research, critical inquiry, simulations, the Socratic Method, interest triggers, and research analysis. This paper also includes a brief look at LANGURE, an NSF funded national initiative involving over one hundred faculty and students at eight land grant and historically black universities in the United States. LANGURE is developing a model curriculum in research ethics for doctoral candidates in the physical, social and life sciences, and engineering.

Keywords: Research, ethics, business, management, organisation, case studies

1. Introduction

Ethics education has become increasingly important in recent years, given press coverage of corporate scandals, political corruption, and scientific misconduct (Kolp and Rea, 2006; Callahan, 2005; Hellman, 2001; Mallor et al, 2005). A number of observers have decried what they see as a deepening erosion of core values (Callahan, 2004; Slovic, 1999; Cowe and Williams, 2000; Guinn, 2005; McGee, 2002). Unethical behaviour is on the rise in all sectors of society. Employee misconduct in America costs companies more than $400 billion dollars a year. In 2003, nearly two-thirds of corporations surveyed reported suffering huge losses from employee fraud and misconduct, and the situation is worsening (Richardson, 2005-2005: 41). On college campuses worldwide, instances of student misconduct, such as cheating, plagiarism, dishonesty, falsification of data and fraud are on the rise. According to the Centre for Academic Integrity at Duke University, 75% of all college students confess to cheating at least once (Kleiner and Lord, 1999). This finding confirms earlier studies by Baird, Stern and Havlicek, that nearly 85 percent of college students cheat (Lupton, Chapman and Weiss, 2001; Callahan, 2004:219). A study of business students in 2001 found that 'students who engaged in dishonest behaviour in their college classes were more likely to engage in dishonest behaviour on the job' (Callahan, 2004: 219). Business students reportedly were far more likely to engage in unethical conduct than others, based in part on their belief that 'you have to do whatever it takes to get ahead' (Goodpaster, 2006). The Centre for Academic Integrity at Duke University conducted a series of research studies from 1990 through 2002. Researchers found that on most campuses, over 75% of students admit to some form of cheating (CAI, 2003). In a 1999 survey of 2,100 students on 21 campuses, about one-third of those surveyed admitted to serious test cheating and half admitted to cheating on written assignments and research. However, surveys conducted between 1990 and 1999, involving over 12,000 students on 48 different campuses, demonstrated that academic honour codes effectively reduced cheating by one-third to one-half. Today, that may no longer hold true. In a 2003 study conducted by ABC news, 92% of high school students admitted to lying to their parents and teachers on a regular basis. Of those polled, the majority believed that lying was 'okay as long as you were not caught' (ABC News report, 2003).

Internet plagiarism is also a problem at all educational institutions, given the ease with which students can download research papers and submit them as their own work. In 1999, 10% of the students admitted to Internet plagiarism. In 2001, that number had risen to more than 41%. Interestingly, 68% of the students indicated in their comments that they did not consider Internet plagiarism a serious violation. Surprisingly, more than one-third of faculty surveyed said they did not take action against students who cheated in their classes because it was too widespread. This is of concern, because it not only compromises academic integrity, it also shapes attitudes and habits students take with them into the workplace (Callahan, 2004;

McGee, 2002; Goodpaster et al, 2006). Federal regulations, university policies, and codes of conduct have been less effective than expected in stemming the tide of unethical conduct. A recent survey found that ethics programs in tended to rely too heavily on asking individuals to do the right thing and disregarded the impact of organisational culture on people's behaviour (Callahan, 2004). Having a code of conduct in and of itself does not appear to be a sufficient deterrent of unethical behaviour. To be more effective we need to 'integrate ethical values into daily routines' and enforce penalties for non-compliance (Callahan, 2004: 282).

The pressure to succeed at all costs has created a 'cheating culture' (Callahan, 2005) that threatens to undermine academia as well as the social and economic fabric of society. Instances of unethical conduct fill the daily news to the point where many now are largely unmoved by stories of misconduct and wrongdoing (Morant, 2005). However, the media also suffers from misconduct. According to a recent survey, sixty-three percent of journalists believe there has been a steady decline of ethics and values in their profession (Gardner et al, 2001: 128). All of these have served to erode public trust and foster a culture where anything goes as long as one avoids detection. In a recent poll at a Midwestern university, 55% of college students in management and business studies reported that ethics is 'whatever a person thinks is right' and that 'personal ethics is more important than society's moral values' (Naimi, 2005). This finding is troubling. It suggests that we – as individuals and as societies - have lost our moral compass. If students view ethics as merely 'personal' and 'situational', as Maxwell (2005) contends, how can educators stress the importance of ethics and reinforce ethical standards in academia? How can we teach ethics in research if we fail to incorporate ethics education in the curriculum and practice it in our daily lives? Who are our role models today? Is virtue a thing of the past? As educators, we recognise that students need preparation, mentoring and positive role models to help them in recognising ethical issues, and analysing and reasoning carefully about them. They need mentors and guides to help them make responsible decisions in the face of difficult dilemmas. Nowhere is this more critical than in the area of research, particularly human subject research. To ensure integrity in research, students and faculty must demonstrate that they understand the ethical and legal ramifications of their work prior to initiating any research. In addition to legal requirements, universities have employed a variety of creative approaches designed to promote integrity in personal and professional conduct. This paper begins with a discussion of the cheating culture and the cause for concern about the decline in ethical conduct and "right thinking" in society today. A discussion of various strategies for teaching research ethics to undergraduate and graduate students in business, management and organisational studies follows. Strategies include online interactive training modules, online legal research, case studies, role-playing, action research, critical inquiry, and simulations. It ends with a discussion of LANGURE, a national initiative involving more than 100 faculty and students at 8 land grant and historically black universities in the United States. This NSF-funded project involves developing a model curriculum in research ethics for doctoral candidates in the physical, social and life sciences, and engineering. Its approach is adaptable for use in teaching research ethics in business and management programs.

1.1 Learning theories

We begin with a discussion of learning theories that are most relevant to teaching ethical reasoning. Bloom's Taxonomies classify levels of learning and intelligence according to cognitive, affective and psychomotor domains. The cognitive and affective domains are particularly important in ethical reasoning. The six cognitive levels are knowledge, comprehension, application, analysis, synthesis and evaluation. The affective domain levels as emotions, attitudes, appreciation, and values (Bloom and Krathwohl, 1956). Disconnects between the affective and cognitive aspects of the mind can lead to judgment errors and irrational behaviour. Thus, an intelligent person can make bad decisions when there are significant differences between his thinking and emotions (Goleman, 1995). This differential development has led to the emergence of the theory of multiple intelligences (Gardner, 1983). Social learning uses a variety of interactive tools, including role-playing, mentoring, debates, discussions, and role modelling (Rossett, 2004). Action research, also known as action learning theory, engages students in solving real life problems in organisations (Revans, 1980). Experiential learning takes students through four stages of learning: concrete, reflective observation, abstract conceptualisation and experimentation (Kolb, 1984). Felder and Soloman (2003) identify eight contrasting pairs of learning styles: Active and reflective learning, sensing and intuitive learning, visual and verbal learning, sequential and global learning. Learning activities may be organised from the simple to complex, in modules and cumulative. Providing a range of learning experiences in the classroom can enhance the teaching of ethics in research and in organisational studies. It is important to consider differences in students' learning styles, experience, abilities, and interests when teaching ethics (Van Patten, Chao, and Reigeluth, 1986).

2. Ethics

Before we can teach research ethics, we need to increase our own understanding and judgment, promote best practices in the conduct of research and scientific investigation, and establish an organisational culture focused on what it means to be an ethical person. Ethics is not about answers. It is about asking questions. Ethics is about awareness, understanding, monitoring and consequences. The researcher is responsible for developing procedures and controls to ensure that all participants in a study are treated ethically. Students need to know what will happen if they engage in unethical conduct. Ethical issues in research include:

- Informed consent,
- Voluntary participation,
- Confidentiality,
- Anonymity,
- Conflict of interests
- Data security
- Capacity
- Protected groups,
- Social responsibility, and
- Humane treatment of subjects.

There are five basic ethical approaches or theories used today to guide ethical decision-making. These are utilitarianism, common good, Kant's categorical imperative, rights, justice and virtue. When faced with moral challenges or ethical dilemmas, one can choose to employ one or more of these approaches to resolve the problem.

2.1 Teleological theories

Utilitarianism was advanced by 19th century scholars John Stuart Mill and Jeremy Bentham to assist in determining which course of action is more moral. When applying a utilitarian approach to resolving an ethical dilemma, one seeks to achieve the greatest good and the least harm for the greatest number of people. Proponents of the common good approach, such as Plato, Socrates, Cicero, and Confucius viewed society as a community whose members share similar values and goals. The approach is toward the greater social good to be derived from a fair and just distribution of resources and benefits. When using a common good approach, one seeks to establish or maintain conditions that are beneficial to all members of a given community or society in furtherance of society's goals. If it benefits society, all members will benefit, though not equally.

2.2 Deontological theories

Eighteenth century scholar, Immanuel Kant, proposed his categorical imperative, sometimes referred to as the Golden Rule approach. Kant was interested in the rightness of an act or a decision, not in the ultimate consequences. According to Kant, a person of good will and strong character will make an ethical decision, regardless of the outcome. Kant's approach was to identify whether or not there was a universal right or law to guide one's course of action. One seeks to do what is right and to treat others as one would wish to be treated. The rights approach proposed by John Locke and Thomas Hobbes, among others, in which one seeks to make a decision based upon certain fundamental human, civil or social rights. Under the rights theory, one seeks to identify the rights at stake, and exercise rights that do not infringe on or violate the rights of others. The justice approach is concerned with issues of fairness, equality and impartiality. Harvard philosopher John Rawls proposed a theory of distributive justice in which the goal is to determine a fair method for distributing goods or services, as if we were under a 'veil of ignorance' that prevented us from knowing our social status (Hartman, 2005:7; Mallor, 2006:79). Accordingly, when using the justice approach to ethical decision-making, one seeks to make a decision that is fair to all parties, does not show favouritism, and serves the greater good. Equal treatment under the law is a worthy goal, but, according to Rawls, sometimes it is necessary to treat "equals equally and unequals unequally" to achieve justice (Hartman: 2005:7; DeGeorge, 2006). Virtue theory, promulgated by Socrates, Plato and Aristotle, is concerned with cultivating desirable traits. A virtuous person demonstrates prudence and wisdom in all his decisions and, as a result, lives a wholesome and fruitful life. (Mintz, 1996:830). Another approach in teaching research ethics is to integrate or embed ethics and research topics into the curriculum, so students are continually exposed to ethical issues and research design concepts throughout the program of study. This method establishes the relevance of research and ethics in business and management education. For example, a marketing

course may involve discussions of key concepts followed by examples of false or misleading advertising (ethics) and consumer polls (research). The student begins to see the importance of research in marketing products and services to consumers and gains a better understanding of the ethical issues involved in marketing.

3. Teaching research ethics in organisational studies

In 1999, the U.S. Congress passed Title 45, Part 46 of the Code of Federal Regulations to regulate the conduct of all persons and organisations engaged in human subject research (HSR). Referred to as 'The Common Rule', Subpart 46 requires researchers to obtain approval from an Institutional Review Board (IRB) before conducting any research involving human subjects. This involves a three-step process.

Step 1- HSR Certification**.** Faculty and students are required to take an online course that tests their knowledge and understanding of the regulations, policies and procedures for human subject research. One of the most widely used online courses is the Collaborative IRB Training Initiative (http://www.citiprogram.org. A certificate of eligibility is issued upon completion. Step 2 – IRB Approval. Research proposals are submitted to the IRB for prior approval. The IRB may conduct expedited or full reviews. Step 3 – Guidance and Supervision**.** A faculty advisor, senior researcher or principal investigator supervises junior researchers to ensure compliance.

3.1 Critical inquiry and online legal research

Under this teaching strategy, students conduct searches of relevant cases and laws via the Internet, scanning information in news and media publications, online journals, online libraries, and databases. For example, the rise and fall of the Titans - Enron, WorldCom, Tyco, and Arthur Andersen – shocked the public and sent ripples of fear through the stock markets and financial centres around the world. In 2002, the US Congress responded by passing the Sarbanes-Oxley Act calling for transparency and accuracy in financial reporting, full disclosure, and accountability of the CEO and chief financial officer (CFO) to major stakeholders. For the first time, corporate leaders could be convicted of improper financial conduct and misleading the public. Concern about corporate misconduct prompted the United Nations and other countries to implement tougher measures and standards to encourage ethical conduct, transparency, and corporate social responsibility. Students will seek to answer the following questions: What are the ethical issues? Who are the responsible parties? How did they violate their fiduciary responsibilities and the public trust? What are the consequences of their actions? Students will discuss their findings and perspectives in class and submit papers on their findings. Other areas of legal research for business, management and organisational student include:

- The Foreign Corrupt Practices Act
- European Multi-Stakeholder Forum on corporate social responsibility
- The OECD's Principles of Corporate Governance
- The Code of Conduct for Lawyers in the European Community
- Caux International Code of Ethics and Roundtable Principles of Business
- International Labor Organisation's Declaration of Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work
- United Nations Declaration of Human Rights
- International Federation of Accountants Code of Ethics, and
- United Nations Global Compact (Mallor, 2004; Hartman, 2005; Jack, 2001; Maskus and Reichman, 2004).

3.2 Distance Learning

Distance learning (DL) offers flexible, easy-to-use learning opportunities for bringing together students, instructors, industry professionals and researchers from remote sites. Web-based distance learning is also known as Networked Open Learning (NOL) (Banks et al., 1998; McConnel, 1999). Figure 1 depicts the model used for the implementation of the networked virtual classroom that includes databases, learning materials, information, student portfolios, assessment, mentoring and tutoring online.
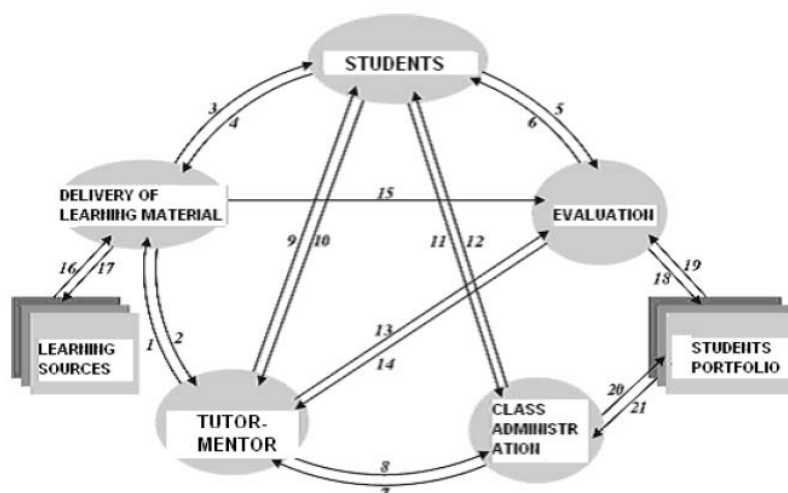
Figure 1: Virtual networked course (Paraskevasi et al, 2003:147)

The ODL approach permits instructors and students to share information, collaborate on solving problems and issues from various remote sites, and encourages both self-paced and guided learning. Students review each others work which is posted on the web in secured folders. Student work is submitted to online authentication services. Two leading organisations are Turn it in (http://www.turnitin.com) and Ithenticate (http://www.ithenticate.com). The papers are analysed for passages that may have been copied verbatim from other copyrighted sources. Student work is also subject to peer review, which serves as a further deterrent to plagiarism. Ithenticate is a web-based tool, which does not require the user to download specific software in order to use its services. TURN IT IN integrates with Blackboard and WebCT online learning systems, enhancing its value to instructors who teach online and distance education courses.

3.3 Simulations and role playing

Simulations and role-playing provide students with opportunities to explore decision-making and problem solving in realistic settings. Students develop skill and proficiency in identifying ethical and legal issues, analysing problem situations, determining courses of action and making decisions (Sammons, 2003). Simulations enable students to apply theory and concepts to realistic situations and to learn from their mistakes as well as from the good decisions they make. Simulations are widely used in business and organisational studies, science and technology, engineering, healthcare, education, manufacturing and sports (Rossett, 2004). Simulations in research ethics tests students understanding of what constitute unacceptable practices and demonstrate the effect that poor judgment or unethical conduct can have on one's career and reputation. Management Simulations, BusSims and other online companies offer numerous scenarios for engaging in role-playing, mock businesses and ethical dilemmas. Trochim's online computer simulations for research design (http://www.socialresearchmethods.net/simul/simul.htm) is a valuable resource.

3.4 Case studies

The use of case studies constitutes a fertile area for teaching business ethics, business law, leadership and management skills, and research ethics. By analysing current and historic cases in context, students gain a better understanding of the issues, conflicts and problems that arise in organisational settings. Students analyse cases from different perspectives, such as outside observer, consultant, state or federal official, consumer, employee, manager, or auditor. Discussions and debates encourage additional background research as students strive to understand what when wrong, when, why and how it could have been avoided. Current events are a wonderful source for case studies and provide ideas on possible research topics to both undergraduate and graduate students. In using case study, the instructor guides the students through a thorough reading of the case, and then begins to slowly dissect it. Goodpasteur et al (2006) suggest a 5-D strategy for analysing the ethical issues in case studies: Describe the situation, Discern the issues, Discuss options, Decide what to do, and Defend your decision. To analyse the legal issues, one could follow the same 5-D approach or employ the IRAC method – identify issues, cite rules of law, analyse actions, and draw conclusions (Naimi, 2005). Learning from others' mistakes and successes offers powerful lessons in life.

3.5 Action research

Action research involves identifying a particular problem in an organisation. Eden and Huxham (1996) state that 'action research involves the researcher in working with members of an organisation over a matter which is of genuine concern to them and in which there is an intent by the organisation members to take action based on the intervention'. Action researchers seek timely practical solutions to current problems and seek to add to the knowledge base on what works and what doesn't (Eden and Huxham, 1996). Conventional research methods may not work in some organisational or social settings. Action research offers an alternative strategy for studying a problem within an organisation and developing recommendations for resolving it (Greenwood and Levin, 2000). According to Baskerville and Wood-Harper (1996) and Robson (2002), action research actively involves the researcher, the knowledge gained in the study is immediately applied to the problem, and the process links theory and practice in a practical manner.

4. Langure

LANGURE is the first inter-disciplinary, inter-institutional initiative to create a national network of eight land grant universities (LGUs) and historically black colleges and universities (HBCUs) teaching research ethics to doctoral candidates in engineering and the physical, social and life sciences. LANGURE is developing a ground-breaking doctoral-level course in research ethics consisting of 14 total hours: 10 hours of a common core for all students, plus 4 more discipline-specific hours, hours taught from a menu of 15 modules LANGURE will develop. The eight partnering institutions include: University of Hawaii, Iowa State University, North Carolina State University, North Carolina AandT University, Purdue University, Wisconsin University North Carolina Central University, and Fayetteville State University. The Core is comprised of ten modules:

- Introduction to Research Ethics
- Responsible Authorship and Peer Review
- The Mentoring of Graduate Students
- Animal Subjects in Research
- Professional Responsibility and Codes of Conduct
- Human Participants in Research
- Rightdoing and Misconduct in Research
- Intellectual Property – Copyright
- Responsible Use of Statistical Methods
- Science and the Media: Ethical Issues

In each interactive module, students read a screen of text and then complete a quiz. When a student completes a module, it certifies that the student has read and understood the material. The course introduces core issues and principles in research ethics, issues and principles that do not vary from discipline to discipline. The interdisciplinary approach introduces students to differing perspectives. Students participate in small group discussions on issues related to mentoring, intellectual property, plagiarism, falsification and fabrication of data, university-industry relations, and conflicts of interest and commitment.

5. Conclusion

Clearly, students need preparation, mentoring and guidance in addressing ethical issues that arise in their academic, professional and personal lives. Nowhere is this more critical than in the area of research, particularly human subject research. To ensure integrity in research, students and faculty need to understand the ethical and legal ramifications of their work prior to initiating any research. There are a variety of creative approaches available to student and instructor to promote integrity in their academic, professional and private lives.

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