Ethics in B-School Curriculum : A Study on attitudes of B-schools' Directors affiliated to GTU

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Research objective

This research attempts to study and measure the attitudes of B-schools' directors regarding including ethics in B-school curriculum and to offer suggestions based on analytical results and of the study.

Design/Methodology/approach

A survey has been used to collect primary data and 105 questionnaires were sent. Questionnaire items were developed through a two stage process involving a review of the measurement scale employed in previous studies and two pilot study of focus group to identify the attributes for measuring attitudes regarding the above mentioned topic.

Data Analysis

Microsoft Excel has been used to analyze and interpret the data. Cross tabulation, Graphical Representation, and Rank Analysis have been used.

Findings and analysis

Our research results show that it is not unreasonable to believe that majority of our sample units are positive for including Ethics in B-school curriculum.

Limitations of research/ Future research directions

Further research in this area is needed. Replications among other samples are needed to validate the current finding. An important area of future research is to investigate faculty and students' attitudes toward including Ethics in B-school curriculum. The research is just a small step in understanding the attitudes of directors of B-school.

Implications

GTU course design committee (Board of Studies) should now see Ethics education for MBA students as an important way to differentiate their MBA program from any other university. Academicians, administrators, researchers, in particular and university in general, should recognize the need of including ethics in B-school curriculum. GTU authority could devise a plan of action for incorporating the issues like pedagogical approaches, content of course, module wise session plan, and faculty training and development and case development, reading material of this topic. The appointment of an Ethics Coordinator for business schools at GTU is essential.

Originality/value

This paper makes a valuable contribution given the fact that there are only a limited number of comprehensive studies dealing with including Ethics in B-school curriculum the in Gujarat state.

Keywords Ethics, attitudes of directors, B-School Curriculum.

Paper type Research paper

Introduction

Examining the future prospects of business ethics education is a very important step for further development and refinement of MBA programs offered by GTU. Presently, there are a number of reports and surveys on the including business ethics in B- School curriculum in various countries. But there are no similar reports or surveys on the teaching of business ethics at the MBA program offered by GTU in Gujarat. Therefore, we undertook the first comprehensive survey of including Ethics in B-School Curriculum: A Study on attitudes of B-schools' Directors affiliated to GTU.

Literature Review

Many business schools are choosing to integrate ethics throughout the curriculum rather than requiring a separate ethics course (Berl & Shannon, 1997; Imagine, 2003). Researchers continue to debate over whether ethics should be taught as a stand-alone course or integrated into the core (or entire) curriculum (e.g., Oddo, 1997; Zych, 1999). It has been suggested that the integration of ethics in various business courses is needed if students are to be able to incorporate business ethics across business disciplines and to recognize the interconnectedness of ethical issues in business (Gioia, 2002; Oddo, 1997 .Sims & Brinkman (2003) have suggested some ways to design genuinely integrative and and/or interdisciplinary approaches to business ethics education in which students are

exposed to various levels of ethics education throughout their entire educational experience rather than in a single stand-alone course or a little integration somewhere along the way. Hoffman and Moore (1982) surveyed over 1,200 colleges and universities in order to find out about business ethics offerings in their respective institutions. Paine (1988) found over three-quarters of the schools reported they had included ethics in their curriculum and many of them had chosen to integrate ethics into courses such as business law, business policy, functional business core classes, and business and society courses. Schoenfeldt et al. (1991) reported on their fall 1988 survey of business deans from colleges and universities associated with the AACSB. They found "ethics, as a curriculum topic, received significant coverage at over 90 percent of the institutions. Ruder (cited in Baumhart, 1968) surveyed 104 business school deans to determine the extent business schools offered classes on business ethics. Parmental (1989) examined ninety-nine syllabi of undergraduate business ethics courses which were collected by the Center for Business Ethics at Bentley College. Collins and Wartick (1995) found, since the early 1970s, there had been 11 major studies conducted which attempted to "identify the stature of Business and Society courses in business school/program curriculum.

Cathy Driscoll and Jacqueline Finn (2005), found evidence of discrepancies between students and professors with regards to their perception of the integration of ethics into coursework. In addition, discrepancies were found among the perceptions of some of the students taking the same course. Possible reasons for these discrepancies are explored, as well as some of the examples of marginalization of ethics and some of the barriers to teaching ethics that emerged in this study. Implications for business faculty and administration are discussed in a study of the integration of ethics in an MBA program at an Atlantic Canadian University.

Ove D. Jakobsen, Knut J. Ims, Kjell Grønhaug (2005), conducted empirical study in Norwegian Business Schools. Based on an empirical study conducted in Norway authors addressed the following issue: "What do faculty members of the Norwegian Business Schools consider to be their responsibilities in preparing their students for leading positions in public and private organizations?" Moving on to interpreting the results from the survey, researchers discussed the empirical findings by comparing the data using four different theoretical perspectives; neoclassical economics, strategic management, corporate social responsibility and socio-economics.

Gael M. McDonald (2004), combined a review of existing literature in the field of business ethics education and a case study relating to the integration of ethics into an under graduate degree. The paper also discussed practical questions such as who should teach ethics, and when and how ethics can be taught. The paper presented alternative models for the teaching of ethics in the curriculum of undergraduate and postgraduate business programmes. An integrative model is elaborated with a case example describing the six-stage process undertaken in the move from a single entry course to an integrated approach. The case study details not only the planning and initial implementation of ethical education in the context of an undergraduate business degree programme, but also the means by which a change in the way that ethics is taught.

Nell Adkins and Robin R. Radtke [4] (2004), "examined whether accounting students' perceptions of business ethics and the goals of accounting ethics education are fundamentally different from the perceptions of accounting faculty members. The study used a survey instrument to elicit student and faculty responses to various questions concerning the importance of business ethics and accounting ethics education. Statistical analyses indicated that students consider both business ethics and the goals of accounting ethics education to be more important than faculty members.

Sims, Ronald R. Brinkmann, Johannes[5] (2003), Provided several experiences with offering business ethics modules within other courses and suggested different premises that can serve as step to follow business ethics curriculum in paper titled" Business Ethics Curriculum Design: Suggestions and Illustrations".

Zucheng Zhou and Ping Ou and Georges Enderle [6] (2009), conducted a national survey to gain a thorough understanding of the status of business ethics education in MBA programs in China. Researchers aimed to understand, first, the extent of business ethics teaching currently being offered in MBA programs, and second, the prospects for the development of business ethics teaching in the near term. Survey results show that business ethics instruction is presently offered on a limited scale, and there are constraints impacting business ethics education.

(1. Cathy Driscoll and Jacqueline Finn[1] (2005), "Including Ethics into Business Education: Exploring Discrepancies and Variability Among Professors and Students", *Journal of Business Ethics Education* Vol. 2, No.1. PP. 51-70.

2. Ove D. Jakobsen, Knut J. Ims, Kjell Grønhaug[2] (2005), "Faculty Members' Attitudes towards Ethics at Norwegian Business Schools: An Explorative Study", Journal of Business Ethics, Vol. 62, No. 3 pp. 299-314.

3. Nell Adkins and Robin R. Radtke[4] (2004), "Students' and Faculty Members' Perceptions of the Importance of Business Ethics and Accounting Ethics Education: Is There an Expectations Gap?", Journal of Business Ethics, Vol. 51, No. 3, pp. 279-300

4. Sims, Ronald R. Brinkmann, Johannes[5] (2003), "Business Ethics Curriculum Design: Suggestions and Illustrations", Teaching Business Ethics, vol.7, No.1, pp.69-87

5. Zucheng Zhou and Ping Ou and Georges Enderle[6] (2009), " Business Ethics Education for MBA Students in China: Current Status and Future Prospects", Journal of Business Ethics Education 6: pp.103-118.)

Significance of the study

Since most of the previous research on business ethics education has focused on faculty and students' perception about ethics, but little, if any, research concerning business ethics education in B-school curriculum has been done. This study is significant in two ways. First, it is being conducted on business ethics education in the business school curriculum of GTU. Secondly, it is the first study examines the attitudes of Deans, Head of the Department, Directors and Principals of MBA colleges affiliated to GTU.

Research questions

- What are the business schools' practices towards the inculcating business ethics among the students and faculties?
- What is the attitude of Deans, Head of the Department, Directors and Principals of MBA colleges affiliated to GTU regarding including business ethics education in B-schools?
- What are the difficulties/ obstacle in including Ethics in B-School Curriculum?
- What are the prospects of teaching ethics in B-schools?

Research objective

The main aim of this research is to study and measure the attitudes of B-schools' directors regarding including ethics in B-school curriculum and to offer suggestions based on analytical results of the study. The secondary objective of the research is to study the prospects and difficulties in including Ethics in B-School Curriculum.

Sample

Selection of academic institutions and respondents was done on convenience basis. The B-schools which were selected for participation in this study are affiliated to GTU. There are 132 B-school affiliated to GTU, out of which 105 MBA colleges selected for survey. As discussed earlier, sampling unit are Deans, Head of the Department, Directors and Principals of MBA colleges affiliated to GTU.

Survey instrument

The survey instrument was based on dimensions which were developed by Evans and Robertson. The questionnaire was developed with the certain modifications in the light of suitability to the present study. In addition to the questions in Evans and Robertson's original survey, several additional questions were added to the survey by the researchers.

Methodology

This is an analytical study based on the primary data collected through questionnaire. The questionnaire had been mailed to 105 directors of MBA colleges affiliated to GTU, chosen on a convenient basis. On first phase of research questionnaire was sent to directors' personal email id, but response rate was very low. So, in second stage, questionnaire was kept on Google doc and sent to official email id of directors. (i.e. MBA<collegecode>owner@gtu.edu.in) A literature review was undertaken to identify what parameters to consider in research. The data was collected through questionnaire consisting of 30 questions. All of the statements used in questionnaire were measured on a five point "Agree-Disagree" Likert scale. For the analysis of data statistical methods are applied with the aid of SPSS (Statistical Package for Social Science) software, version 16.0 and excel.

Major findings

- There are 20 statements measuring the attitudes on ethics, all are measured on 5-point likert scale. For each item mean score and standard deviation was measured to know the significance of various statements. Mean score is highest for statement number 19 that says GTU should start Centre for Business Ethics and appoint an Ethics Coordinator for business schools. Mean score is lowest for the statement number 7 which says that there is no need to explicitly address ethical issues in the business curriculum.
- Majority of the participating institutes are not publishing any journal/magazines on ethics, few, almost nil are subscribing journals/magazines on ethics.
- Institutes are not giving more weights in API if faculty does research (publishes research paper/working paper, prepare case study/ article, enroll for PhD in this area.
- The attitude of Deans, Head of the Department, Directors and Principals of MBA colleges affiliated to GTU regarding including business ethics education in B-schools is very positive.
- Lack of qualified instructor and Lack of support from trainer from corporate are the two main difficulties rated by respondents.
- Researcher found that future prospects for business ethics teaching are promising.

Limitations of research

Few limitations must be acknowledged that suggest caution in generalization. The research is just a small step in understanding the attitudes of B-schools directors towards including ethics in business curriculum. The faculty and students' attitudes have not been investigated. The present study is based on a moderate sample size and sample units are covered from B-schools affiliated to GTU (Gujarat state) therefore the results of this study cannot be generalized. The sample may contain a response bias, since those interested in including ethics in B-school curriculum may have responded at a higher rate than those are not interested. These constraints limit the general liability of the research results.

Future research directions

Future researcher could make extensions of the current study. As mentioned above the research is just a small step in

understanding the attitudes of B-schools directors towards including ethics in business curriculum. The gap score between students and faculties have not been investigated. Future researcher can develop more specific scale by incorporating the attitudes of them. Future research could examine a wider respondent base across the various states of India by using quota sampling across the faculty level, students and administrators. Lastly, the objectives of this research were fully met, but this is a single area research focusing on B-schools. Such concentration could limit generalizations of the findings to the whole education sector. Anyway, this drawback creates opportunity for future researchers in this area by investigating same dimensions in other areas like medical students.

Implications

GTU course design committee (Board of Studies) should now see Ethics education for MBA students as an important way to differentiate their MBA program from any other university. Our research finding shows positive attitudes of directors' of B-school for including ethics in B-schools curriculum. Academicians, administrators, researchers, in particular and university in general, should recognize the need of including ethics in B-school curriculum. On a closing note, it should be noted that while the results and implications of the present study are useful, for broader conclusions, GTU authority could devise a plan of action for incorporating the issues like pedagogical approaches, content of course, module wise session plan, faculty training and development and case development, reading material of this topic. The appointment of an Ethics Coordinator for business schools at GTU is essential. Ethics Coordinator would be someone trained in business ethics or social issues in management. Ethics Coordinator would provide the business school with directions on how to integrate ethics into the curriculum. Ethics Coordinator would act as a link in regards to coordinating ethical content.

Conclusion

This study set out to expand understanding of how including ethics education in B- school curriculum in the context of fast developing state like Gujarat. The purpose of this study was to provide satisfactory answers to the research questions, as well as to meet the objectives of the research. In this conclusion section, the major results in terms of research questions and the key research objectives are summarized. The first research question was: What are the business schools' practices towards the inculcating business ethics among the students and faculties? Majority of the participating institutes are not publishing any journal/magazines on ethics, few, we can say almost nil are subscribing ethic journals. Institutes are not giving more weights in API if faculty does research in this area. Second question was : What is the attitude of Deans, Head of the Department, Directors and Principals of MBA colleges affiliated to GTU regarding including business ethics education in B-schools? For this question research received high rate of positive response. Second question was: What are the difficulties/ obstacle in including Ethics in B-School Curriculum? Lack of qualified instructor and Lack of support from trainer from corporate are the two main difficulties rated by respondents. Last question was: What are the prospects of teaching ethics in B-schools? Researcher found that future prospects for business ethics teaching are promising. To conclude, the contribution of this paper is not only in the discussion of whether to integrate ethics in B- school curriculum but also to the mechanisms for initiating and conducting the change process. The success of the change management process was largely attributed to the Dean's desire to integrate ethics in B-school curriculum and to overcome the obstacles found during survey. The B-school should make more efforts to integrate business ethics education in order for all business activities to maintain ethical standards and to gain sustainable competitive advantage in a significant way.

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