Educating for the ethical professional through work integrated learning
Acknowledgments

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Focus of presentation

- Purpose and intent of ethics education for the development of effective professionals

- Consideration of current practice in ethics education and possible future trends

- Positioning ethics education within work integrated learning programs and learning in and through practice
Common student objections to ethics education

- I am already a good person, how is studying ethics going to make me any better?

  **Likewise,**

- If I am going to do something wrong, a couple of classes won’t make a difference.

- Just tell me what to do and how to behave and I will just do it.

- What you teach me does not have any relevance to what happens in the real world.
Purpose and intent of ethics education

Bampton & MacLagan (2005) assert there are five core reasons as to why people believe ethics should NOT be taught.

1. **It is not relevant**; lack of correlation to the practices of the workplace.
2. **It is not necessary**; existing legal frameworks, presence of codes, prior influences are more important.
3. **Has no effect**; it will not change people’s fixed views.
4. **It is not a responsibility of universities**; moralisation of staff and indoctrination of students.
5. **Feasibility**; lack of resources and time, greater priorities.
There are two arguments made which suggest why ethics is relevant to good workplace practice:

1. **BIG BAD NEWS ARGUMENT**
   e.g.: Enron, HIH, Queensland Health, NSW Police

2. **STIMULATE ETHICAL SENSITIVITIES AND JUDGEMENTS**
   i.e.: being able to respond to yet unforeseen problems and coming to develop agency as a professional
If ... we constantly practise care of the self, if we are intimately involved in making judgements, in thinking critically and imaginatively about who it is we wish to be and the actions we perform, if we are practised at reflection and in dialogue with others, then we will be able to bring about a self who is free.

(Infinito, 2003, p.70)
Practical wisdom

- “a true and reasoned state of capacity to act with regard to the things that are good or bad for [humanity]”

  Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics* VI.5

- Practical wisdom requires not only knowledge of what is right and wrong, but a capacity to act on this knowledge.
The Importance of Moral Will

Intentional

Ethical

Unethical

Unintentional
Is ethics education necessary when we have codes?

“… we are responsible for conducting the business affairs of the companies in accordance with all applicable laws and in a moral and honest manner.”

“We want to proud of … and to know that it enjoys a reputation for fairness and honesty and that it is respected.”

“Because we take these principles seriously, we should act decisively to ensure that all those with whom we do business understand our policies and standards.”

ENRON CODE OF ETHICS published July, 2000

Enron collapsed in October, 2001 with evidence significantly unethical accounting practices.
[The nurses] had a number of issues with Dr Patel’s conduct. It seems he did not wash his hands before commencing the procedures, and ignored a request to do so. Indeed, he responded to the nurse making the request that ‘Doctors don’t have germs’.

The result was that Ms Pollock and Ms Aylmer made an appointment to see Dr Keating and met with him on 27 November 2003.

Ms Pollock gave evidence that Dr Keating said he would speak to Dr Patel about the incident in the renal unit but that it was difficult to do more in the absence of clear data that Dr Patel’s patients were suffering, disproportionately, from infection.
A lack of good systems can not account for the failure to act on complaints of the type described. It was a small hospital, the complaints were emanating from a number of senior people, and one is left to wonder at the fact that it was not until April 2005 that Queensland Health or Base staff ever asked an independent surgeon to review the work or the decision-making processes of Dr Patel.

The extent management at the Base failed to act to a proper standard, they were motivated by an unhealthy culture or a desire to retain their jobs …
The necessity of moral skill

An over-reliance on rules chips away at our ability to act with moral skill.
- Adapted from TED Presentation by Prof. Barry Schwartz

Example:

Why I let my 9 year old ride the subway on his own.

Lenore Skenazy, published in the New York Sun, 1 April, 2008
Empowering students for change

- **VOICE**
  - Say something

- **Necessity**
  - Stay quiet

- **PRESENCE**
  - Leave

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<th>Stay</th>
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- **Quadrant 1**
  - Active change

- **Quadrant 2**
  - Vociferous exit

- **Quadrant 3**
  - Passive acceptance

- **Quadrant 4**
  - Quiet exit
Why don’t people act ethically?

SOCIAL FACTORS
- Deference to authority
- Sense of belonging
- Peer pressure
- Workplace culture

SELF

INDIVIDUAL FACTORS
- Sense of entitlement
- Self-confidence
- Self-esteem
- Impairment

Griffith Institute for Higher Education
A function of ethics education

When I was younger, I scared my mother to death, the things I would blurt out about District 12, about the people who rule our country, Panem, from the far off city called the Capitol. Eventually I understood this would only lead us to more trouble. So I learned to hold my tongue and to turn my features into a different mask so that no one could ever read my thoughts. Do my work quietly in school. Make only polite small talk in the public market. Discuss little more than trades in the Hob, which is the black market where I make most of my money. Even at home, where I am less pleasant, I avoid discussing tricky topics. Like the reaping, or food shortages, or the Hunger Games.

- Extract from *The Hunger Games* by S. Collins
Effectiveness of ethics education

In determine the effectiveness of ethics education, one must first decide what the aim of such education would be.

Therefore,

What do you think are the aims of ethics education?
Aims of ethics education

- Development of moral reasoning.
- Increased ability to recognize and deal with ethical issues and conflicts.
- Cultivation of moral imagination and awareness.
- An emotional commitment to professional values.
- Empowerment of the individual to transform practices.
- Development of a critically aware and reflective individual who can freely construct a self in response to their environment.
Effectiveness of ethics education

Secondly, research suggests that most ethics education has, at best, a short term (if not transitory) effect. There is a need to consider the effectiveness of the approaches used.

Therefore,

What are the most effective approaches to the delivery of ethics education?
The role of the university

- All acts of education are moral in nature.

- Universities have role in not just developing vocationally or work ready graduates, but evolving future professionals.

- Professionals require the capacity to be self reflective and make autonomous decisions.

- Therefore there is an obligation for universities to educate for the critically aware professional graduate.
Professional practice
Informs
Professional ethics and expectations
Informs
Personal values and morals

Workplace Experience
Academic Education
Resourcing

- Where something is considered to be a priority then proper funding should be made available.

- Ethics should be integrated across a curriculum and in the experience of the university, but there is also a need for the explicit teaching of ethics (in particular critical thinking and practical wisdom).

- Work integrated learning programs provide a good location where the theoretical foundations of applied ethics become realised in the practice settings of the workplace.