


Chapter 5

Leadership and Business Ethics for Technology Students

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ABSTRACT

Technology ethics is a sub-field of ethics education addressing the dilemmas that are specific to the information technology age and encompasses a societal shift as technological devices provide a more efficient transfer of information. The use of technology poses unique ethical dilemmas and is an important topic to explore. Corruption in society is a problem and is further segmented by focusing on the technology industry. An overview of ethics in academia is discussed to impact a person's ethical values before entering the workforce. A review of business and technology ethics provides the background on the differences between topics. Ethical concerns about the use of the internet, security, biometrics, data, cryptocurrency, and elevated privileges for technology professionals are also explored. An overview of leadership ethics is included and the impact it has on culture. A curriculum approach to teaching ethics to technology students through practical ethics education in the program through simulation, case study, and real-world approaches is also provided.

INTRODUCTION

Corporate corruption is a persistent problem in a global society. The news consistently presents evidence that academia is failing to implement methods that provide ethical education for students to successfully adapt to their professional careers. These failures are evident in the numerous scandals surrounding government, financial and risk management, the personal conduct of senior leaders, and quality assurance issues in products being produced (Prisacariu & Shah, 2016). These industries employ well-educated graduates from some of the most prestigious academic institutions yet continue to fail in teaching practical applications of ethics. In a business setting, the answer to preventing unethical behavior is to adopt codes of conduct, compliance training, and whistleblowing programs as part of a multifaceted approach. Codes of conduct define the compliance framework, training helps employees understand and apply the

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framework, and whistleblowing is used as a tool to detect code violations and is designed to influence desired behavior by increasing the detection of wrongdoing (Stöber et al., 2019). Education from a top school, a moral upbringing, and protective business processes do little to prevent corporate corruption by individuals who quite clearly, should know better.

The adverse impacts of such treacherous events have rippling effects that can permanently disrupt business. These unethical business practices have detrimental and long-lasting consequences, including financial disaster and loss of trust (Lilly et al., 2021). Lilly et al. (2021) further describes how leaders at the top do not act alone; they must have the complicit support of others within the organization. Ethics refers to the behavior used in decision-making and conduct of an individual, leading individuals in their dealings with each other, determining the moral responses to situations for which the best course of action is unclear, and directing managers in decisions on what to do in various business situations (Ezenwakwelu et al., 2020). The first step in remediating this issue is to understand why individuals who have been taught ethics in their academic journey idly standby or participate in such adverse behaviors. The second step is to determine how academia can better develop and implement a curriculum that reinforces ethical decision-making to help students understand the impact their future decisions have on themselves, their company, their community, their industry, and society on a holistic level.

APPLICATION OF ETHICS EARLY IN ACADEMIA

Educators are challenged with teaching students the broad and various topics within their program while also providing guidance ethics to individuals whose morals have largely been developed during their younger years. Because the development of moral reasoning continues in adulthood (Kohlberg, 1984) and advances in logical and socio-cognitive capabilities occur during late adolescence and early adulthood, there is some reason to expect further normative developmental changes in prosocial moral reasoning into the 20s (Eisenberg et al. 2014). At a time when many young adults are discovering themselves, it only makes sense to ask if this is a crucial moment in development that is under-leveraged. Schwitzgebel et al. (2020) ask if university ethics classes influence students' real-world moral choices and conclude the question is important but difficult to answer. This question is important to consider when citing curricular reasons and applying the practical value of teaching ethics because real-world moral behavior is, in general, difficult to measure accurately and systematically (Schwitzgebel et al., 2020). Eisenberg et al. (2014) suggest the college experience supports the improved growth of moral reasoning because the academic environment provides opportunities for engaging in complex discussions, alternative perspectives, and abstract thinking that lend well toward maturity; the ability to improve moral reasoning tapers off in early adulthood.

As a society, it is recognized that college is often the last opportunity to substantially inform and expand the role of an individual's ethical behaviors. Kidd et al. (2020) say universities seek to teach ethics across a range of contexts - through a selection of humanities courses, across professional schools, and within general education programs or other core curriculum requirements. It is vital that all training and education develop students' critical analysis skills framed by ethical judgment, considering that ethics must be the guiding light that allows discernment of choice for the future and reflects upon the present (Monteiro et al., 2019). The beginning of an academic program traditionally focuses on core or general education courses. A core class with a syllabus packed full of the material makes it difficult to incorporate teaching ethics intentionally. Faculty contend with the question of not only how to include ethics

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