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Operationalising ethics in entrepreneurship education: experiential and practice-based approaches

Conference Item

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3E Conference - ECSB Entrepreneurship Education Conference

Leeds University, UK - 11-13 May 2016

Practitioner Development Workshops (PDW) Proposal

Workshop title

Operationalising ethics in entrepreneurship education: experiential and practice-based approaches

Main sub-theme addressed: **Values, Ethics and Critiques of Entrepreneurship Education**

Workshop summary

Ethics is widely recognised as an important theme in entrepreneurship education, as reflected in subject-specific guidelines (QAA 2012), accreditation frameworks (AACSB, EQUIS) and in business and management education more generally (Csurí *et al.* 2013). Educators also recognise a growing student interest in ethically-driven entrepreneurship and a more general need to help students prepare for a variety of complex ethical challenges. In addition, more responsible models of entrepreneurial practice are vital in many contexts (e.g. to address environmental threats, including climate change, and to promote economically and socially productive enterprise development, particularly in marginalised communities and post-conflict situations).

However, business ethics education has been criticised for its ineffectiveness, focus on abstract principles, restricted pedagogy and limited engagement with students' norms, practices and ethical beliefs. As such, it lacks a compelling rationale as developmental practice. Ethics curricula are primarily oriented towards CSR, stakeholder relations and ethical decision-making in larger and more established corporations, albeit with notable exceptions (e.g. Spence 2014). This prompts the question: how might pedagogical innovation help to bridge the 'ethical practice' gap?

Our workshop is designed to surface these issues, share experiences and experiment with new pedagogic tools in pursuit of improved approaches to this important area.

Workshop style

Highly interactive format, open to modification:

- Welcome and short presentation to include feedback on pre-workshop activity – identifying and scoping audience experiences (10 minutes)
- Practical activities – an opportunity try out a new online negotiation exercise (presented here in paper-based, synchronous form) and other tools (25 minutes)
- Short concluding plenary (5 minutes)

Expected outcomes

- Share practical experiences of this important issue.
- Engage with research evidence that cuts across the fields of ethical theory, entrepreneurship education and practice.
- Gain new insights by experimenting with new pedagogic tools, including an innovative online negotiation activity.
- Set an agenda for future developmental work and pedagogic research.

Details of any related research

Business ethics education has long been criticised for both its ineffectiveness and limited pedagogy (Assudani *et al.* 2011; Clegg *et al.*, 2007; Hibbert, 2013). Curricula and business ethics texts typically introduce students to a limited set of ethical theories which are subsequently applied to illustrative cases. In so doing emphasis is placed on the application of abstract principles to a variety of contexts, often via the case study with its attendant focus on decision-making (Clegg *et al.*, 2007; Hibbert and Cunliffe, 2015). Contemporary approaches to ethics have questioned this view by emphasising ethics that are *inter alia* embodied, relational, dialogic, antinomical and affect-laden (Beschomber, 2006; Held, 2005; Mansell, 2008). Pedagogic researchers have argued that business ethical education should reorient from this distancing from the self that is embedded in standard approaches, in order to 'bring in' the self and interrogate personal beliefs, experiences and norms through approaches such as reflexivity, threshold concepts, giving voice to values and dialogy (Arce and Gentile, 2015; Hibbert, 2013; Hibbert and Cunliffe, 2015; Morrell, 2004). This 'transformative' model is based initially on the self, experience and context that flows through to abstraction, rather than the disinterested application of abstract principles.

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