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Exploring the Integration of Ethics in Business Education: Insights from Faculty Members of
a Humanistic and Ethical Business School

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ABSTRACT:

In today's rapidly changing business landscape, sustainable organizational transformation and innovation are essential for long-term success. To achieve this, organizations must develop and manage knowledge effectively while also promoting values such as ethics and sustainability. Business education plays a crucial role in equipping individuals with the knowledge and skills needed to build a sustainable future, making it a key driver of sustainable development. However, there is scarce research on what faculty members at leading business schools, the real protagonists, think about integrating ethics into business education. Although some research has been done on these drivers, there are only a few, mainly theoretical, papers (Setó-Pamies and Papaoikonomou, 2016) and very little qualitative empirical research focusing on business professors about the factors that influence the integration of ethics in business education. In order to frame a new future role for business schools, a challenge is to engage many stakeholders (Thomas and Ambrosini, 2021). The goal of this article is to contribute to filling this void. We have selected a qualitative method of inquiry by conducting 37 interviews with faculty members at a leading European business school.

Our findings show that ethics is generally understood as acting with integrity and a sense of service, emphasizing common ethical values and the importance of virtues. We also found that this business school has deeply integrated ethics due to key "ethical drivers" such as the founding values, identity, and mission of the school, a continued leadership commitment to ethics, a supportive faculty culture with shared ethical values, and the selection and socialization of new faculty members. Our research highlights the importance of ethics as a core element of good management and explores how organizations can create and manage knowledge for sustainable transformation. Overall, this article sheds light on the external and internal drivers that improve the learning conditions in universities and organizations, promoting innovation and sustainability in education.

INTRODUCTION

Described as the one of the great success stories of the last century (Viten, 2000: 183), business schools have gained influence in higher education, but have also been criticized (Friedland and Jain, 2022).

Criticisms started at least in the 1950s when the Carnegie and Ford Foundations decried management education for being too vocational and lacking academic rigor (Khurana, 2007). As a reaction, business schools decided to increase their scientific credibility through investments in social sciences research.

In a new wave of criticisms in the 1980s, management education was portrayed as being too narrow, overly specialized and unable to provide students with the ability to relate to realistic management problem solving situations (Cheit, 1985; Porter and McKibbin, 1988; Mintzberg, 2004).

Further a fierce debate later emerged about the short-termism and financial priority present in business education (Ghoshal, 2005; Bagley et al. 2020). The 2008 financial and economic crises, a multitude of frauds in corporations (Giacalone and Wargo 2009; Currie, Knights and Starkey, 2010; Hommel and Thomas, 2014) and in higher education institutions (Arend, 2017) added to pressure to include more ethics in business education.

At the turn of the century with crucial sustainability priorities, several authors asked the management community to change its pedagogical and research practices (Pfeffer and Fong, 2002; Mintzberg, 2004; Bennis and O'Toole, 2005). In particular, practitioners and management scholars requested business schools to develop more responsible management education (Giacalone and Wargo, 2009; Currie et al., 2010; Rasche, Gilbert and Schedel, 2015) and to change business schools for the public good (Kitchener and Delbridge, 2020).

Indeed, considering the lack of concrete successes in moral education (Hummel et al., 2018; Conroy, 2021), business schools have a major responsibility in raising the moral awareness and integrity of their students and staff (Luth and Schworer, 2014), and a growing body of literature is concerned with the importance of ethics in higher education, from three different perspectives: ethics in the context of business and business schools (Melé, 2012; Giacalone and Promislo, 2013), course content, pedagogical methods and curriculum design (Acevedo, 2001; Ritter, 2006; Rutherford, Parks, Cavazos and White, 2012; Bagley et al. 2020; Berti et al. 2021) and the drivers for ethics in business education (Giacalone and Wargo, 2009; Currie et al., 2010; Rasche and Gilbert, 2015).

Most scholars studying higher education and integrity have stressed the unethical rather than ethical practices (Baden, 2014; Poje and Groff, 2022). Rather to look at the weaknesses of business schools in integrating ethics, we want to see the positive practices related to ethics in business education. So, our research question is: what are the drivers for integrating more ethics in business schools? The drivers are the factors at different levels that facilitate the adoption of more responsible management education, defined as the education aimed at developing new kind of managers who take a broader, more humanistic view of corporations (Behrman and Levin, 1983; Giacalone and Wargo, 2009; Currie et al., 2010; Rasche and Gilbert, 2015).

Although some research has been done on these drivers, there are only a few, mainly theoretical, papers (Setó-Pamies and Papaoikonomou, 2016) and very little qualitative empirical research focusing on business professors about the factors that influence the integration of ethics in business education. In order to frame a new future role for business schools, a challenge is to engage many stakeholders (Thomas and Ambrosini, 2021). The goal of this article is to contribute to filling this void. We have selected a qualitative method of inquiry by conducting interviews with faculty members at a leading European business school.

This paper is structured as follows. Firstly, we present our literature review to frame some critical issues related to ethics in business education. Secondly, we describe our inquiry method, based on face-to face interviews with faculty members of an European business school, and justify the sample selected. Thirdly, we present and discuss the findings.

Drivers for Introducing Ethics in Business Education

It is important to analyze the drivers to facilitate the integration of ethics in business education. Many research about the way organizations are structured divide the factors that influence the structure between the external and the internal factors. The neo institutionalist theory explain that organizations are able to survive in getting legitimacy from actors in the external environment (DiMaggio and Powel, 1983; Meyer and Rowan, 1977). We could divide the research between the external environment and the internal factors which are here the organizational culture and the human factor.

In the macro environment of business schools, external stakeholders including accreditation agencies, public opinion and rankings can exercise pressure to introduce ethics in business education. Thus, business schools are influenced by accreditation bodies requiring them to follow several quality standards (Matten and Moon, 2004; Rasche and Gilbert, 2015). Obviously, accreditations could lead to imitation of best practices and conformity among business schools (Pfeffer and Fong, 2004; Friedland and Jain, 2022). But also, accreditations can convey ethical standards. For example, for accreditation the AACSB requires “ethical understanding and reasoning (able to identify ethical issues and address the issues in a socially responsible manner” (AACSB, 2012). Some initiatives such as the UN Principles of Responsible Management Education (PRME) have also called on business schools to develop a more responsible management education (Rasche and Gilbert, 2015).

Some critics have been made about the influence of the accreditations on the increase of ethics in business schools. Some scholars described that the environment could lead to a decrease consideration for ethics. Arend argued that the context of some business schools can offer the opportunity, motivation and rationalization for unethical monetization schemes (2017), especially for the midlevel tier schools. Also, the influence of accreditation agencies about ethics is not shared by all academics. Evans et al. (2006) concluded that the general environment of MBA programs places few demands to provide ethics education. Also, Moratis found accreditation to be the least important driver of ethics in business schools (2016). A reason is given by Arend asking: “*I wonder what it takes for the AACSB to actually rescind accreditation on ethical grounds, given they have not previously done so*” (2017: 4).

Another external pressure to integrate more ethics comes from public opinion. The public has reacted negatively to corporate scandals, lost trust in the corporate world and has a low opinion of business leaders. Thus, it has demanded better corporate behavior and more ethical education. This has been emphasized since the 2008 global financial crisis (Giacalone, and Promislo, 2013; Rasche et al., 2013; Hommel and Thomas, 2014).

School rankings is another factor which can have an influence on the importance of ethics in business education. Several criticisms have been made of rankings due their too high influence on the business schools with a risk of “turning a blind eye to anything that is not in the rankings” (Murillo and Vallentin, 2016: 749). When rankings are the Graal, the end becomes more important than the means. Gioia and Corley (2002) so argued that rankings drive business schools to take more care of their image than their substance. Another issue is their questionable quality measurement (Arend, 2017) and the danger of the wrong influence of the measurement. Thus, in order to differentiate between various business schools in terms of overall

performance, some international rankings use the difference between the entry and exit salary of MBA program. A signal of business school achievement is then having successful alumni in financial terms. This key benchmarking element could push business schools to run education programs, which train students for highly paid functions/companies. In this way, the business school rankings may exercise external pressures on business school deans to give priority to the salary on graduation of students over their ethical education.

Within the internal drivers, a driver is the organizational culture of business schools. Organizational culture is usually defined as a complex set of values, beliefs, assumptions, and symbols that define the way in which a firm conducts its business (Barney, 1986; Schein, 2010). The ethical organisational culture is a combination of a formal part, such as ethics codes, ethics training, management practices, and the informal part including assumptions, beliefs, values, behavioural norms, role models and stories in relation to ethics (Trevino et al., 1998; Kaptein, 2010) at the institutional level (vision and values) could be decisive in developing a more responsible management education (Setó-Pamies and Papaoikonomou, 2016). Cultivating an organizational culture that values ethics could discourage misconducts (Zhao et al., 2022). Another layer of organizational culture, the identity of business schools and their missions can also facilitate the integration of ethics in business education. For example, Evans et al (2006) demonstrated in empirical research that, due to their specific organizational culture, business schools with a religious affiliation are more likely to give more attention to ethics in their curriculum. Similarly, Rutherford et al. (2012), using data from 382 US universities, found that colleges and schools of business with religious identities are more likely to require a business ethics course than secular-private and public schools. Clearly, the value co-creation is crucial with today's sustainable agenda. Involving diverse set of stakeholders with intense interactions is necessary to develop the value creation within business schools (Thomas and Ambrosini, 2021).

A third driver to the integration of ethics is the human factor, i.e. the individuals who are the advocates of ethics within their business school such as school leaders, faculty members, other staff and students. A repeated claim in management literature is that corporate heroes are essential to spread ethics in any firm (Brown, 1998; Deal Kennedy, 2000). In business education key leaders, students and faculty members can also be the ethical champions of the ethical development of their school, for example in making explicit promotion of ethical practices (Matten and Moon, 2004; Christensen et al., 2007; Solitander et al., 2012). Matten and Moon (2004) also argued that the most important driver of the corporate social responsibility agenda has been the initiatives of individual faculty members and other scholars have stressed the need to understand the ethical practices of faculty in HE (Arieli et al., 2016). Professors of business school may be active promoters of business ethics and integrating ethics in other disciplines, although there are not many studies on that point. Of course, they also could adopt a negative or a cynical attitude regarding ethics in business education. Hanlon and Frost (2013) found that the majority of the 343 respondents of a survey of faculty members of the Financial Times top 20 Global MBAs had a narrow understanding of human rights and corruption. Curiously, the professors are rarely a focus of empirical inquiry regarding moral development in business schools. For this reason, we concentrate our research on the perception of the faculty members regarding the drivers for ethics integration.

Despite the agreement regarding the need for the development of ethics in business education or to have more responsible management education, we do not know much about the conditions of implementation of responsible management education (Rasche and Gilbert, 2015). With the

aim of contributing to the literature on ethics in business education, our research question is: what are the drivers for integrating more ethics in business schools?

RESEARCH METHOD

Since our specific aim is to identify the perception of ethics in business education by faculty members, we have selected a case study approach (Meyer 2001; Eisenhardt and Graebner 2007; Yin 2014). The case study is particularly well suited to helping to understand processes or behaviours that are not well understood (Hartley 1994). One reason for selecting this approach is to get a holistic view of a phenomenon. The richness of the information collected, and the contextualization of the information can give an elaborate and comprehensive view of a phenomenon (Yin 2014).

The research setting IBS Business School, which offers MBA degrees, Ph.D in management, and Executive Education, has more than 100 full-time faculty members. Its main campuses are in Europe and the US. Its faculty is very international and hold doctoral degrees from top institutions worldwide.

We selected our data procedure in relation with our research question (Eisenhardt 1989; Yin 2014). Since we wanted to investigate the perception of academics regarding diverse aspects of the integration of ethics, we decided to carry out interviews of IBS faculty members. The idea was to directly ask academics what they thought of the integration of ethics. The data collection was done on the IBS campus and relied on a combination of desk-research (analysing various internal documents), observation of the IBS functioning, face-to-face interviews

An interview guide was made and tested and the final guide was used with all the respondents. The interview guide had 21 open-questions to get rich answers from the respondents.

We contacted the potential respondents via email using the IBS faculty list. A total of 69 professors were contacted. The prospective respondents were in all departments of IBS with the exception of Business Ethics. We did not interview colleagues from the Business Ethics Department to avoid the bias of having informants who were strong supporters of the integration of ethics at IBS. We carried out 37 interviews (the response rate was 53.6 %). To achieve such a response rate, the research team made multiple contacts with IBS faculty, explaining the purpose of the research and stressing the confidentiality of the interview. The responses were facilitated by the duration of the data collection. When faculty members were not available, other dates for interviews were offered.

Our final sample is very similar to the population of the faculty members at IBS. Out of 37 interviews, 32 were men (86.5 % in the sample and 89.3% in the IBS faculty at the time of the inquiry), and 5 women (13.5 % in the sample and 10.7% in the IBS faculty).

We also have compared our sample according to the age, the time spent at IBS, title (assistant, associate, professor). Thus, the average employment tenure is very similar for our sample and for the IBS faculty population: 24.3% of our sample has been working for up to 5 years at IBS at the time of the interview (21.4% for the whole IBS faculty), 18.9% more than 5 years and up to 10 years (20.4% for the IBS faculty population) and 56.8% more than 10 years (58.3% for the population). These and other details show that the sample was quite representative of the population of the faculty members at IBS.

The average interview duration was 63 minutes. All interviews were taped and transcribed. Most interviews were done at the office of the informants, except some rare cases done by telephone. To conduct the interviews, we used a specific questionnaire. The standardization of the data collection was ensured by the use of this standard questionnaire for all the interviews (Graebner and Eisenhardt 2004). Each interview started with the description of the topic of the research. The informants were interviewed on the understanding that their business school name or their name would not be used in the research. We promised respecting anonymity of responders. During the interview process, when necessary, we probed for clarification or

examples to allow a complete understanding of the respondent's view. In some cases, the respondents were simply asked to clarify their ideas. Idiosyncratic questions were occasionally necessary to obtain clarification and details. They were also important to show to the respondents that their answers were valuable, and they offered the opportunity to give a full picture of the informant's point of view using the required time and without interruption (Miller, Cardinal and Glick 1997).

All interviews were taped and transcribed by professional staff word-for-word following transcription rules (Edwards 2001). A content analysis was done through different iterative cycles to identify codes and themes or categories concerning the integration of ethics in business schools.

Findings

In analysing the interviews, we identified no differences in the answers attributable to department membership, age, sex or nationality of faculty members. Across the 37 interviews, we identified four key drivers within the organizational culture as being significant for the integration of ethics in a business school: shared ethical values, strategic mission, ethical heroes and ethical reification.

Shared ethical values

Faculty members have also emphasized the importance of key ethical values for the integration of ethics. Over the years, IBS has created a specific organizational culture with a set of shared ethical values. A top IBS manager recognized the importance of the common values:

“We have very good faculty and staff that actually are not only very good professionally but also share some values irrespective of whether they come from Europe or from Africa, from Asia, from America. I think that is very important. So, we are different in many ways but also, we share a few values, and this is very, very important”.

The influence of the shared ethical values has a lot to do with the fact the IBS has been founded with the aim to integrate ethics and ethical values were developed long side.

What is more important is the kind of values that allow the school despite diverse stakeholders. Indeed, we found three values were frequently mentioned: a humanistic approach, service to people and collaborative spirit.

Thus, many IBS professors emphasized respect and concern for each person and people-oriented behaviour. Hence, a professor explained the success of IBS as the importance given to each person:

“I think our success comes from the fact that it is human-centred, meaning that individuals who work here, individuals who come to study here, are paid more individual attention rather than treated as another student or another assistant, etc. So, they are really treated as a unique individual. This is a very human approach. I think that what we do here at IBS, and I think many share these values, is that basically for many people numbers mean less than relationships and attitudes towards people. So, the person will always be before the number”.

Another professor said:

“We are very, very elegant in that sense. We are very ethical, really. We think of the impact on people”.

Finally, all our informants stressed the collaborative spirit. One professor explained:

“Something that I like very much at IBS is that knowledge is shared, courses belong to the department, and it is like a public good and it is a public good that people take it seriously.... I

have been given a course, but it is the result of a lot of work from previous people, a lot of accumulated experiences and it is distilled”.

A faculty member stressed:

“People here are extremely generous with their time, very generous to share their experiences, and to mentor you as well. There is a culture of no competition between colleagues; we all embarked to make IBS a place of excellence. So, the idea of the common good, I think it is practiced here”.

The collaborative spirit is reinforced by the multiplication of team projects between faculty members. It is worth noting that when professors describe their school, they usually refer in the interview not to “I”, but to “we”. Thus, a professor stated:

“In my case, what I always do is I always check others. So, I always talk to others, we are a team of a few, and I always ask for counsel, so I go and I say what do you think?”

Ethical-Principles-Driven Strategic Mission

The mission is defined here as the enduring set of fundamental principles guiding strategic decisions made in a business school. A top manager was clear about the importance of the mission:

“Not talking about ethics, not educating specifically in ethics, is leaving out one of the essential parts of modern business education”.

The link between ethics and the mission is visible in the IBS organizational purpose, which is mainly to transform people through management education. This is clearly explained by one of the respondents:

“In the mission of IBS, it is said that we want to provide a transformational experience for managers. We want the students to interiorize, to think, to help them to understand that they should consider ethics since society will be better if this perspective is taken into account”.

Moreover, the convergence between the strategic mission and ethics is, for the faculty, necessary for IBS, but also for any firm. Thus, the position of ethics at IBS has led the school to elaborate a shared vision of what a good company, good management and a good manager are. The belief is widely shared that the purpose of the school is to transform people into good managers and that being good managers means being ethical. So prioritizing ethics leads IBS faculty members to embedding ethics in the definition of the appropriate practices in business to build a shared vision of the importance of ethics for any firm. For example, a professor described his understanding of a good manager:

“You cannot be a good manager without being a good person. We are talking of people. What is specific of management is that you are talking about managing people. Therefore, you have to do with people, through people, influencing yourself. It is what makes ethics crucial”.

Another professor, who is also an IBS senior manager, recognized:

“You cannot pretend that you are giving people the tools and the skills for their personal development as a business leader without touching on this aspect. It is ... a really important part of what a good leader is about... When people are asked who they most admire as leaders, they talk about people with very fine moral integrity and with main ethical characteristic. It would be a contradiction in terms to pretend to be a business school willing to develop leaders and at the same time not touching upon ethics”.

Finally, many scholars have stressed the criticism about the priority given to short-term financial objectives and shareholder value maximization at the expenses of other important goals. The credo of IBS faculty is the opposite. Thus, a professor stressed:

“From the inside of the school, it is clear that we are encouraged as faculty members and also for our students, to stay away from technical optimization and look for, maybe, the well-being of people, rather than short term competitive advantage of a company”.

Similarly, another academic explained:

“The obsession of many business schools, but not us, is short term effectiveness. Business schools are sometimes obsessed with short-term results. For IBS, ethics has always to do with the long run. Ethics is what you do to yourself through others in the long run.”

Thus, the importance of ethics integration has lead stakeholders that it was necessary to share a conception of a good manager that includes some ethical component and that the objectives of the firm cannot be only financial targets on the short-term. The chain of argumentation at IBS is that the school aims at transforming people to become good managers, and that a good manager is a person with integrity, which is human centred.

Ethical Embodiment in Ethical Champions

During our research, we asked the informants to give the name of potential respondents within IBS with a special ethical sensibility. The most frequently cited names were of the school founders, senior faculty members and top managers. All faculty members stressed the impact of past deans, presidents of the university to which IBS belongs and leaders who play a significant role in prioritizing ethics. One professor noted:

“The Chancellor of our university has influential leadership at the top management of IBS business school regarding the importance of ethics. The Chancellor is an important stakeholder, not a shareholder, who is deeply interested in ethics”.

An academic also explained:

“The Dean continuously repeats that every session must be a masterpiece and a repeatable masterpiece, every session, every article, every action of cooperation with the media, every consulting, everything has to be a masterpiece. That is our mission. Our mission is to produce masterpieces continuously in everything”.

We have to clarify the link between masterpieces and ethics. At IBS, a masterpiece is to do the best potential work for the people that you are serving. Working as a community, each member of IBS should deliver the best output to help others do their work. Working hard to achieve the best results is a way to be in collaboration with others. Indeed, “masterpieces” are not isolated as selfish target for professors, but this excellence is a process of respecting the high quality of the transformative experience that IBS wants to deliver to its students.

Faculty members can also be ethical champions. The professors are in consensus concerning the importance of ethics in their school. However, the consensus is not total on the level of personal engagement regarding ethics. The faculty is supportive of the integration of ethics with two different attitudes. The first approach includes active supporters of the integration of ethics at IBS. Senior tenured professors are in this group. One of these described ethics as a core reason to become an academic:

“The motivation for me to go into graduate school was very ethical... If I did not introduce ethics, I would be miserable, and I wouldn’t be doing this work”.

Hence, a professor explained the integration of ethics in his sessions:

“It comes naturally in the discussion. Exactly, because it is about engaging with the world and helping people build organizations, lead people and create new products”.

The second attitude to ethics is to be a passive supporter, which includes many young not-tenured faculty members. These junior professors are interested in ethics but have other

priorities. Several academics explained that ethics was important for the school, and they only introduce ethical discussion in their class from time to time, almost by accident:

“As a professor not specialized in ethics, the way it should be is to be prepared if ethical issues are discussed in the class... I cover ethics occasionally. In my technical courses, I have a very passive attitude regarding ethics. I discuss the topic only if students raise ethical issues” or “In my teaching, I would say that ethics is very rarely an angle” or “In most of my technical course, I cover ethics in reaction to the student questions”.

Regarding the prominence of Ethical Champions to spread ethics, IBS gives special emphasis to the selection and socialization of faculty. A faculty member was especially clear:

“We want to hire professors for whom ethics is important. The primary effort is thus to select professors well who share basic ideas on ethics. The socialization process is also important. ... You select professors to some degree by the demands that you put on them.... So that if they don’t accept ethics, they will not last long at IBS and they will want to go somewhere else.”

At IBS, socialization takes the shape of senior professors mentoring the juniors. In mentoring, senior faculty present ethics as a priority and this can further increase the ethical sensitivity of junior members. Thus, a head of department explained:

“The older professors have to socialize with the younger faculty members to understand this type of considerations. IBS should make better managers and also better professors”.

A key part of the socialization is faculty training. Thus, a young faculty member described:

“Every year, the associate Dean for faculty asks one of the most senior professors to put together a series of speakers who are fulltime faculty members at IBS, to discuss various ways in which we can improve our performance on the job. Typically, this is not about discussion of research topics. ...It is about what happens between the professor and the students”.

Ethical Embodiment in Ethical Reification

The study of the IBS case showed the importance of ethical reification. The importance given to reification by our respondents was a surprise of our empirical inquiry. Ethical reifications are clues to the prioritization of ethics at IBS and of the results of this. In our inquiry, we observed some reification of ethics at IBS through ethical structures, specific altruistic projects, the presence of ethics in the alumni magazine, and the quality of the facilities.

Thus, IBS has created over time various “ethical structures” that are institutions shaping the relationship between its members. Hence, IBS has a Business Ethics Department, not only for teaching and research purposes, but also to carry out advisory work to other faculty members. It is charged with organizing seminars and conferences and regularly organize conferences and publishes on specific issues on ethical matters in journals. The department, therefore, has gained respectability within IBS and externally. Another example of structure are the mentoring groups for professors and students. In education institutions, group discussions are widely used way in developing moral reasoning (Ohree et al, 2022; Wong , 2022) in order to create communities of philosophical inquiry (Garcia-Moriyon et al. 2020). Students are grouped in teams and have a professor mentoring them. Interactions under the supervision of faculty members allow all students to be assisted in the diverse situations that they may face in the school, often regarding very personal issues. IBS mentoring groups allow faculty and students to discuss the career interests, values, preferences, and convictions of the latter.

One original ethical structure that is seen as strong reification of the importance of ethics is the creation by IBS of other business schools in emerging countries, leading a junior faculty member to express his strong belief in the ethical values of IBS:

“IBS has played an important role at starting similar business schools in less privileged countries. You see from time-to-time people from African countries coming to our programs here. You can see there is substance, there are efforts of the school. I trust it”.

Ethics become concrete by shaping specific training programs, which are done only to help other countries or organizations. When meeting the people in charge of these programs, they stressed to us the value driven strategy, which inspired them in creating them. For example, an accounting professor showed to us a picture of young Africans done during such programs and was describing other projects that he was trying to fund about education.

Furthermore, the ethical reification is reflected in IBS facilities, such as the buildings, classrooms, library, restaurants and gardens. IBS has very clean and pleasant facilities, which employees continuously work to maintain. Every summer, painters “refresh” the facilities. Seeing staff at work maintaining the facilities is for the professors more than cleaning the building. All for this is a manifestation of concern for others’ well-being, care of environment, and an expression of the school’s excellence. A top IBS manager recounted an anecdote to one of the authors:

“When the CEO of X (name of very recognized international firm) came here with his top management team, he described our garden and facilities as very well maintained and said that this was the sign of a top institution”.

CONCLUSION

Our findings can be contrasted with the existing literature on integrating ethics into business education.

Firstly, contrary to our literature review, external factors do not seem to play a role in the integration of ethics in our case. External pressures, such as accreditation agencies, media, public opinion, or rankings were never mentioned to explain the importance given to ethics at IBS. A few authors suggest that the content of ethical discourse in a business school is likely to be higher if the business school is a prestigious institution, as is IBS (Snelson-Powell et al., 2016). Rather than being driven by external constraints, its organizational culture pushes IBS to prioritizing ethics. While much of the literature has suggested that organizational size, financial resources, expertise, and prestige are key determinants of the sustainability of policies (Matten and Moon, 2004, Rasche and Gilbert, 2015; Snelson et al., 2016), our research shows that the organizational culture is also a crucial element. Thus, various components of the organizational culture explain the emphasis on ethics such as roots of the school, shared values, strategic mission or ethical champions.

Further, the case of IBS showed the importance of the convergence of several factors to allow the integration of ethics in a business school. Painter-Morland et al. (2016) stressed that the most critical factor to integrate sustainability in a business school is the level of strategic and institutional commitment. Indeed, rather than being pushed by a single factor, the integration is facilitated by the multiplicity of the factors. This convergence is driven by historical events (the roots of the school, the ethics of the founders and their strategic vision at the beginning), by push drivers (factors developed by the management) and pull drivers (factors developed by people at lower hierarchical levels of IBS such as professors or staff). As Snelson-Powell et al. mentioned (2016), the strategic intention alone is not sufficient for the integration of ethics in a business school. IBS is a clear example that the strategic intervention should be convergent with the organizational culture and also the existing organizational structures and processes such as selection and socialization of new faculty.

In addition to this convergence, there is a clear need for the integration for internal discussion about ethics in a business school. This allows to come to a similar understanding of business faculty members about what is ethics. Thus, in spite of some differences in the definition of ethics, we realize that there is a similar understanding of ethics for most IBS faculty members based on human excellence and on the importance of virtues. This is line with virtue ethics and with conviction that human beings have the capacity of moral discernment, which includes distinguishing virtues from vices. This is an old idea, defended by Socratic thinkers (Socrates, Plato, Aristotle) about 2,500 years ago, and it has also been confirmed empirically by examining philosophical and religious traditions in China (Confucianism and Taoism), South Asia (Buddhism and Hinduism), and the West (Athenian philosophy, Judaism, Christianity, and Islam) (Peterson and Seligman 2004; Dahlsbaard and Peterson 2005). IBS faculty avoid the problem mentioned above of discussing various philosophies of ethics, which, according to Donaldson, “can easily lead to skepticism about any ethics” (Donaldson 2005: 112) or to an unabashed relativism (Solomon 1992b). On the other hand, ethics is not reduced to evaluating ethical issues or dilemmas but focused on human excellence (Melé 2009).

Secondly, an interesting contribution of our research is to show the importance of ethical reification. In this paper, we do not take reification as the process of forgetting the primordial patterns of relating to the other and the self that are based on empathy and care (Honneth, 2008). We take the word in the tradition of Wenger as “the process of giving form to our experience by producing objects that congeal this experience into 'thingness'” (1998: 58). Wenger explained that every community of practice produces artefacts, such as tools, procedures, stories, and language that reify some aspect of its practice. So, we define ethical reification as the process of giving form to ethical experience. our study showed the importance of ethical reification.

The ethical reifications are not anecdotic, but they could be used in the integration of ethics through different ways. These artefacts have three functions regarding the integration of ethics: to give tangible clues of ethics, to stress a positive image of stability or seriousness, and to communicate to diverse stakeholders. Thus, a response to the potential decoupling between the discourse pro-ethics and the darker realities (Rasche and Gilbert, 2015; Shin et al., 2022) but also the lack of stake-holders engagement (Thomas and Ambrosini, 2021), business schools could show the existence of ethics through tangible artefacts. One function of the ethical reification is then to make tangible ethics such as giving a nice working environment to employees since the IBS Dean takes care of them. Ethical reifications allow IBS to demonstrate that ethics is substantial and not only present for questions of image. Further, reification gives an image of permanence and stability. The ethical reifications give weight to the ethical practices within a school. For example, IBS mentoring groups allow faculty to discuss, between themselves and with students, not only the students’ career interests but also their values, preferences and convictions. The mentoring sessions are repeated interactions that show that ethics is real at IBS, seriously discussed.

Another function of the ethical reification is to communicate about ethics to diverse people. Ethical reification is a symbolic mean to communicate about ethics that could be understood from various points of view. In other words, faculty members could understand the key messages of the clues of ethics despite having different socio-cultural backgrounds.

Fourthly, the reasons given about why ethics is present at IBS can be grouped in two categories: the intrinsic importance of ethics in business education and drivers to introduce ethics in a BS, e.g. its institutional consistency. The intrinsic importance of ethics lies in seeing ethics as a dimension of every human activity, one which affects other people and, above all, the agent,

since good behaviour improves the agent's moral character and disposition to act ethically in subsequent actions. Inasmuch as management refers to persons, moral ethical behaviour - and the moral character which fosters it - is part of a good management. In addition ethical behaviour tends to foster trust, reputation, long-term performance, and other organizational features (Melé 2012, Chapter 1). In IBS these consequences obviously are considered but not as the only motive for acting ethically. What faculty members of IBS emphasize is that ethics is an essential aspect of good management.

Finally, another contribution of our research is to empirically show the importance of the shared worldview in the integration of ethics (Giacalone and Thomson, 2006). A worldview refers to a set of beliefs that identifies "what objects or experiences are good or bad, and what objectives, behaviours, and relationships are desirable or undesirable" (Koltko-Rivera, 2004: 4). The shared worldview is part of the "hidden curriculum" (the implicit messages that students receive regarding appropriate conduct) and also influences all stakeholders such as professors and staff. In their theoretical paper, Giacalone and Thomson argued that many business schools teach students an "organization-centered worldview", that over-emphasizes the centrality of business in society, and the necessity to increase wealth (2006).

On the contrary, Giacalone and Thomson proposed to promote a human-centred worldview in business schools, that puts the "business environment as one of many components in a system, and profitability as but one goal to achieve" (2006 : 270). The human-centred worldview is founded on ethical values associated with the best of the human condition (Giacalone and Thomson, 2006), altruism (Cameron, Dutton, and Quinn, 2004), concern for community (Inglehart, 1997; Ray and Anderson, 2001).

The case of IBS shows that the worldview is largely shared by the faculty members. Indeed, over the years IBS scholars have developed a specific view of what it is to be a good firm (such as a good business school), a good manager and a good faculty member. The shared perception of the faculty is that ethics is a key element of the school. So prioritizing ethics leads IBS faculty members to embedding ethics in the definition of the appropriate practices in business to build a shared vision of the importance of ethics for any firm. In this shared worldview, IBS have developed key values such as a humanistic approach, sense of service, and spirit of collaboration, which foster a good ethical climate. These values are moral values in the sense that they are essentials for the collective well-being.

An issue with the integration of ethics is clearly the difficulty to be accepted by diverse faculty members. Ethical relativism could be seen as an obstacle to the integration of ethics. Accepting relativism implies to see ethics as a matter of pure opinion. But the case of IBS is stimulating to show that a set of values could be shared by a disparate faculty with different nationalities, religious backgrounds, gender and age. Professors at IBS think that there are some values and virtues accepted by various people (Peterson and Seligman, 2004; Melé and Sánchez Rude, 2013).

A common characteristic of these values is that they put people at the heart of the school. Indeed, when some scholars describe business schools as a temple to knowledge and inquiry (March, 2003), the human-centred worldview of IBS emphasizes a distinct priority: putting human development as the key mission, this automatically put human agency at the centre of many decisions. This leads to reject a consequentialist view of business school. At IBS the end does not justify the means. When several authors have presented business schools as an environment for the development of identity of the students (March, 2003; Petrigliery and

Petrigliery, 2010, Khurana and Snook, 2011), we should add that they also influence the identity development of faculty (indeed any stake-holder). Adapting the words of Khurana and Snook (2011), we could also say that business schools should help professors to address the most central existential puzzles such as Who am I? What does it mean to teach, research and lead? How do I define success as an academic? And what should I do with my life? Higher education institutions such as business schools should push their students to engage in a reflexive inquiry and self-awareness (Conroy, 2021, Friedland and Jain, 2022). In the eyes of faculty members, the good business school is a place for the personal development of people for the good of society. IBS as a transformation place was a credo shared by all our respondents. Placing transformation of people as a priority implies obviously to help students and faculty to respond to the crucial existential questions, just described.

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