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LOYOLA UNIVERSITY CHICAGO

AN EXPLORATORY STUDY OF THE
CURRICULAR INTEGRATION OF ETHICS IN EXECUTIVE MBA PROGRAMS

A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO
THE FACULTY OF THE GRADUATE SCHOOL
IN CANDIDACY FOR THE DEGREE OF
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

PROGRAM IN HIGHER EDUCATION

BY

JAIME M. FRANCO

CHICAGO, IL

AUGUST 2011

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For my parents, Lilia and Juan.

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ABSTRACT

News headlines of corporate scandals have unleashed a contentious debate of whether or not graduate management education has contributed to corporate collapses and the resultant financial crisis. In particular, questions abound as to the willingness of Executive MBA program (EMBA) administrators and faculty to integrate ethics into the curriculum.

A sizable amount of research has been conducted and published on the curricular integration of ethics in graduate management education. Unfortunately, very little is known about the curricular integration of ethics in EMBA programs. Over time, the number and popularity of EMBA programs have grown. Executive MBA programs--by the nature of their admission requirements attract a diverse range of working professionals. And as such, enrollment in EMBA programs is generally of corporate executives, managers, and other business leaders who have many years of professional or managerial experience.

Career paths of EMBA program graduates will vary as the career paths of most graduates but those who choose to continue their careers in management and reach the executive rank have the potential to make decisions that may have a deep and penetrating effect which ripples across the globe, often times reaching seismic proportions. Given the potential impact of unethical decision-making of EMBA graduates on global economies,

it is paramount that a closer look be taken at the curricular integration of ethics in EMBA programs.

The research conducted in this study includes a documentary examination of seven U.S. Executive MBA programs, which are accredited by the Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business (AACSB). The purpose of the study is to investigate to what extent and in what ways Executive MBA programs are designed to address ethical decision-making for business executives who matriculate in these programs. To that end, this study seeks to identify ethics-related knowledge, skills, and dispositions associated with Executive MBA programs such that graduates acquire the tools needed to ensure—to the extent possible—appropriate ethical decision-making.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

The beginning of the 21st century was ravaged by numerous white-collar corporate scandals – Enron, WorldCom, and Adelphia just to name a few. These scandals appear to symbolize a broad and penetrating crisis in corporate governance. In particular, the crisis involving corporate executive decision-making at Enron and WorldCom had a profound and costly impact on many areas of the U.S. economy. It is estimated that the scandals at Enron and WorldCom cost the U.S. economy approximately \$35 billion or .34 percent of Gross Domestic Product (GDP), which is equivalent to the United State’s annual expenditures on Homeland Security (Graham, Litan, & Sukhtankar, 2002).

Enron

Former Enron chief financial officer and Northwestern University MBA graduate, Andrew Fastow, “defrauded Enron's shareholders and enriched himself and others by, among other things, entering into undisclosed side deals, manufacturing earnings for Enron through sham transactions, and inflating the value of Enron's investments” (Thomsen, 2004, p. 6). Fastow’s malfeasance resulted in his plea in a federal court in Houston on January 14, 2004. He was sentenced to 10 years in prison and he cooperated with authorities by providing information that implicated his former bosses, ex-Enron CEOs, Jeffrey Skilling and Kenneth Lay (Rogers, 2004).

Former Enron chief executive officer and Harvard University MBA graduate, Jeffrey Skilling, gained ill fame as the man who orchestrated one of the largest corporate crimes in American history. The 52-year-old Skilling stood stoically, his hands clasped before him, as he was sentenced to more than 24 years of imprisonment following conviction on 19 counts of fraud, insider trading, and conspiracy (Pasha, 2006b).

The fraudulent activities at Enron led to Enron's bankruptcy in December 2001 (Pasha, 2006a). Enron's executive decision-making practices affected all stakeholders. More than 4,000 Enron employees lost their jobs and life savings while investors lost billions of dollars (Pasha, 2006a). Enron's collapse marked the first in a series of high-profile corporate scandals that rocked the nation after the 1990's economic boom. Other scandals included corporate giants WorldCom, Global Crossing, Adelphia, and Tyco (Pasha, 2006a).

Adelphia

Timothy Rigas joined Adelphia Communications Corporation, his family business, after graduating from the University of Pennsylvania's Wharton School of Business. Timothy Rigas became Adelphia's executive vice president, chief financial officer, chief accounting officer, and treasurer. Timothy Rigas and father John Rigas were responsible for the collapse of the fifth largest cable provider in the United States (Hemingway, 2007). In 2002, the Securities and Exchange Commission filed charges against Adelphia in one of the most extensive financial frauds ever to take place at a public company (Cutler, 2002).

According to the Securities and Exchange Commission, Director of Enforcement, “This case presents a deeply troubling picture of greed and deception at a large, publicly-held company” (Cutler, 2002, p. 110). The Securities and Exchange Commission charged that Adelphia fraudulently excluded billions of dollars in liabilities from its consolidated financial statements by hiding them; falsified operations statistics and inflated earnings to meet Wall Street’s expectations; and concealed self-dealing of corporate funds to pay for corporate executives’ lavish lifestyles. In addition, the United States Attorney’s Office for the Southern District of New York filed criminal charges against several Adelphia corporate executives, including Timothy Rigas (Cutler, 2002).

In 2004, a federal jury found Adelphia Communications Corporation’s founder John Rigas and son Timothy Rigas guilty of conspiring to loot the cable television company of millions of dollars (Masters & White, 2004). Timothy Rigas, 47, was found guilty of two bank fraud counts and 15 counts of securities fraud and sentenced to 20 years to prison (Masters & White, 2004). According to Masters and White (2004), “Prosecutors have said the Adelphia case was also one of the worst recent examples of corporate titans milking a public company for private financial gain” (p. E01).

According to President George W. Bush (2002), his administration pressed for greater corporate integrity and, as a result, Congress passed one of the most far-reaching reforms of American business practices since the time of Franklin Delano Roosevelt. “This law says to every dishonest corporate leader: you will be exposed and punished; the era of low standards and false profits is over; no boardroom in America is above or beyond the law” (Bush, 2002, p. 1).

President George W. Bush signed into law one of the toughest corporate governance statutes ever passed in American history (Wagner & Dittmar, 2006). The Public Company Accounting Reform and Investor Protection Act, also known as the "Sarbanes-Oxley Act" was passed in 2002 following a series of corporate bankruptcies and allegations of executive management malfeasance, most notably at Enron and WorldCom (Keating, 2006).

Pundits argue that alternative solutions other than legislating ethical behavior can and should be implemented to harness unethical decision-making. Certainly past legislative enactments such as the passage of the Sarbanes-Oxley Act of 2002 have failed to demonstrate that the federal government has been able to mitigate unethical and illegal decision-making taking place in and out of corporate boardrooms (Stevens, 2004). Perhaps past and present failed attempts now validate more than ever the need for involvement of other approaches, such as higher education, to provide sustainable solutions. The potential role and contribution of higher education in addressing the ailments that have ravaged corporate America can no longer be dismissed.

Sarbanes-Oxley Act of 2002

To frame the issues surrounding corporate governance, a historical review of the American government's attempts to regulate by legislation and elicit ethical behavior from employees of corporations is warranted. According to Keating (2006), the Sarbanes-Oxley Act of 2002 is the most significant, corporate securities legislation since the Securities Act of 1933 and the Securities and Exchange Act of 1934. The Sarbanes-Oxley

Act of 2002 has dramatically changed the work and role of auditors and the operations and financial disclosures of publicly traded corporations (Keating, 2006).

The 1920s experienced a period of industrial growth in the United States with a corresponding surge in stock prices. The Securities Act of 1933 and 1934 were Congressional responses to the growth in the 1920s and the first broadly-based attempt to elicit ethical behavior from corporations, the securities markets, and the accounting profession through federal legislation. In the past, attempts at regulation were centered on detection rather than prevention, providing no clear effective strategy for preventing management fraud (Rockness & Rockness, 2005).

The 1990s brought an unprecedented era of fraudulent reporting and unethical corporate management behavior. The dot.com phenomena; an economy based on technology, communications, day-trading, and a roaring financial market; and a surge of initial public offerings, often creating instant wealth, made this period unlike any other time in history (Rockness & Rockness, 2005).

The early 2000s, not unlike the late 1900s, experienced a continued period of white-collar crime, resulting in the passage of the Sarbanes-Oxley Act that was meant to contain the growth of white-collar crime. More specifically, provisions 303, 304, and 306 in the Sarbanes-Oxley Act seek to promote ethical conduct by boards of directors, corporate executives, and key employees (Rockness & Rockness, 2005). The Sarbanes-Oxley Act takes a much stronger approach to legislating ethical behavior than American businesses had experienced in the past. Furthermore, the Act takes a strong punitive approach to regulating public accountants, corporate management, and investment houses

calling for an ethical tone at the top as well as an ethical corporate culture (Rockness & Rockness, 2005).

All things considered, the Sarbanes-Oxley Act's main focus is on regulating corporate conduct in an attempt to promote ethical behavior and prevent the fraudulent financial reporting failures such as the ones recorded in previous decades (Rockness & Rockness, 2005). The legislation directly applies to the board of directors, audit committees, the chief executive officer (CEO), chief financial officer (CFO), and all other management employees who have influence over the accuracy and adequacy of external financial reports (Rockness & Rockness, 2005).

The Sarbanes-Oxley Act not only legislates strong punishment for wrongdoers but also prescribes guidelines for corporations to establish an ethical culture in order to maintain a high level of integrity. Wagner and Dittmar (2006) suggest that organizations with a strong governance structure provide discipline and structure; instill ethical values in employees and train them in the proper procedures; and exhibit behavior at the board and executive levels that the rest of the organization will want to emulate. The latter is especially important as the ethical beliefs and practices of executives are cited as key to determining the ethical culture of an organization (Green, 2004).

The requirements of the Sarbanes-Oxley Act are significant and warrant exposure in business courses either in a required accounting or management core course, especially in graduate management education (Keating, 2006). More extensive coverage may be desirable for students pursuing an accounting or financial career or participants in an executive management business administration program (Keating, 2006). Green (2004)

takes a similar position except that he believes that, “the lack of readily available management tools, combined with the urgency created by the Sarbanes-Oxley Act, have sent many managers and board members scurrying back to school to bone up on accounting principles” (p. xv). Perhaps higher education can do a much better job of reinforcing ethical behavior than have Congressional legislative responses.

Background

Past and present issues suggest a broad and deep-seeded epidemic in American corporate governance. Perhaps given more attention, the crisis can be better addressed by higher education rather than by legislation. Regardless of the strategies used to abate management fraud, the complexity of the crisis at hand urges a closer examination of college and university curricula because these institutions are among society’s major agents of socialization. Recently, some business ethics faculty have suggested that the marginalization of business ethics in favor of other “hard” business courses is one of the main reasons for a deterioration of ethical conduct in business (Crane, 2004).

Through occupational norms that define the kinds of competencies to be acquired via education and the conditions under which they are to be used, a social system prepares its members to occupy the various roles available within it (Schein, 1967). Certain occupational roles, notably those within “the professions,” also require a period of focused preparation such as education in a professional school. In the professional schools, each candidate learns the specific knowledge, skills, and values which will be necessary for responsibly fulfilling his or her professional duties (Schein, 1967). Both the Enron and Adelphia cases suggest that there may have been a grave break in the social

system because high-ranked executives have not responsibly fulfilled their professional duties.

Learning to be a business manager is no small task but rather involves a process of acquiring (1) a certain body of knowledge, (2) skills in implementing this knowledge, and (3) the attitudes and values that define how and when and for what ends the knowledge and skills are to be used (Schein, 1967). Thus, managing in today's complex business environment requires at a minimum three domains: (1) body of knowledge, (2) skills to put theory into practice, and (3) attitudes and values to determine when to apply the knowledge and skills.

Now more than ever before, a strong sense of leadership, ethics, and responsibility is required of business leaders if businesses are to meet the expectations of society. Without a doubt, the United States is confronted with diverse issues including issues related to the environment, industrial competitiveness, the educational system, the decay of inner cities, the assimilation of a diverse work force, and the balancing of work and family (Piper, Gentile, & Parks, 1993).

The belief that business education should include discussions of leadership, ethics, and corporate responsibility has long been common among those responsible for shaping the business school curriculum (Piper, et al., 1993). Robert Gordon and James Howell, in their 1959 landmark report on management education, stated that, "business education must be concerned not only with competence but also with responsibility, not only with skills but also with the attitudes of businessmen" and that "business schools

have an obligation to do what they can to develop a ‘sense of social responsibility’ and a high standard of business ethics in their graduates” (Piper, et al., 1993, p. 9).

In the late 1980s, scandals, evidence of rapidly diminishing trust, heightened environmental concerns, excesses associated with deregulation, and fundamental questioning of American practice and competitiveness in the wider global context raised doubts as to the sufficiency of management education and brought issues of leadership, ethics, and corporate responsibility back to the forefront (Piper, et al., 1993).

More recently, federal legislation such as the Sarbanes-Oxley Act and numerous lawsuits have made it impossible for businesses and graduate management schools to ignore ethics (The Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business, 2007c). According to *Beyond the Grey Pinstripes* report (2003), the percentage of MBA programs that require at least one ethics, sustainability, and society or corporate social responsibility course has increased from 34% in 2001 to 45% in 2005.

Research suggests that education, and in particular graduate management education, has a positive effect on decision-making. Moreover, it is believed that business schools have a much greater long-term impact on the thinking patterns of corporate leaders and managers than do legislation and media coverage (MacDonald, 2007).

Business ethics as a course of study traces its roots to the mid-1970s, but the field has only grown significantly over the past five to ten years, according to Michael Hoffman, Executive Director of the Center for Business Ethics at Bentley College. He traces its growth largely to two factors: tougher regulations and scrutiny in the press.

Both factors have proliferated demand for corporate compliance departments, ethics officer positions, and ethics-savvy business school graduates (MacDonald, 2007).

Business ethics pedagogy has been extensively debated throughout the years. The question of whether ethics can be taught and how it should be integrated into the curriculum appears to be at the center of the debate. For example, some management educators have questioned the Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business's (AACSB) approach to achieving quality in ethics pedagogy because the AACSB International does not require an ethics course for all business programs. The AACSB International believes that:

There is no implication in the [accreditation] standards that designate particular courses or treatments. Schools should assume great flexibility in fashioning curricula to meet their missions and to fit with the specific circumstances of particular programs. For example, ethics may be grouped with other topics to integrate learning or call for special pedagogical treatment. Schools are expected to determine how ethics and topics occur in the learning experiences of students, but accreditation does not mandate any particular set of courses, nor is a prescribed pattern or order intended. The school must justify how curricular contents and structure meet the needs of the mission of the school and the learning goals for each degree program. (2007a, p. 1)

Notwithstanding the lack of an accreditation standard specifically addressing the curricular integration of ethics in undergraduate and graduate business curricula, the Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business (AACSB) promotes the belief that while ethical decisions transcend traditional functional areas, ethics theory is best taught in a dedicated course. Therefore, the AACSB International in *The Latest in Business Ethics* (2007c) suggests that the optimal curriculum combines at least one dedicated course in business ethics with an integrated approach where ethics principles are applied in traditional courses. Based on interviews of business school personnel

conducted by the Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business International, this is not yet being done at most schools.

Academic researchers believe on the one hand that higher education, especially after Enron's collapse, realized that it had not done enough to integrate ethics, sustainability, or corporate social responsibility themes into the curriculum. As a result, the current trend is to integrate these themes throughout the business curriculum so that the curriculum becomes part of the thinking process of a business executive (MacDonald, 2007).

However, practitioners believe that patterns of moral behavior are formed long before a student reaches college—perhaps even as early as during very early childhood. For example, Alex Pollock, a resident fellow at the American Enterprise Institute and former CEO of Federal Home Loan Bank of Chicago, believes that a key period for shaping a person's moral character falls between the ages of 2 and 10 (MacDonald, 2007).

Regardless of competing viewpoints, researchers and practitioners agree that executives today require better ethics training (MacDonald, 2007). The Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business International Ethics Education Task Force in *Ethics Education in Business Schools*, “urges and encourages administrators and faculty in business education to contemplate their current approaches to ethics education and to explore methods to strengthen this vital part of the curriculum” (2004, p. 7)

The utility of graduate business education has been a subject of great controversy especially when, for example, corporate executives such as Fastow, Skilling, and Rigas,

all graduates of Ivy League business schools, are found guilty of crimes that have a resounding and penetrating effect on the U.S. economy. It appears as though all three former corporate executives fit the profile of most American CEOs, which is cause for alarm.

A study conducted by Bassiry and Dekmejian (1993) examined the aggregate profile of individuals leading America's 800 largest companies as listed in *Forbes* in 1989. They determined that 22.1 percent of the total sample of CEOs held MBA degrees. Of the 22.1 percent holding an MBA degree, 78 percent of CEOs graduated from the nation's top business schools – Harvard, Pennsylvania (Wharton), Stanford, NYU, Dartmouth (Amos Tuck), Northwestern (Kellogg), Columbia, Chicago, Michigan, Cornell, and Indiana. Harvard Business School dominated with 37 percent of MBAs awarded, followed by Stanford (10 percent), and the University of Pennsylvania (9 percent) (Bassiry & Dekmejian, 1993).

For the past 13 years, Spencer Stuart, an executive search firm has conducted research on the educational background and professional experience of CEOs for leading companies in the United States. The most recent study examined CEOs of Standard and Poor's (S&P) 500 companies. The author of this study, Felicelli (2007), found that 40 percent of these CEOs earned an MBA degree and 22 percent of this group earned their MBA at Harvard.

Although the graduation data presented above are specific to MBA programs, the data should be extrapolated to better understand the need for the curricular integration of ethics in Executive MBA programs. According to the Executive MBA Council (2007)

and the Global MBA Graduate 2007 Survey General Data Report (2007) the Executive MBA experience compares favorably in several key areas to other MBA experiences. For example, “Executive MBA graduates rate the quality of faculty, fellow students, curriculum, admissions, program management, student services, and career services higher than graduates from full-time or part-time MBA programs” (Graduate Management Admission Council, 2007, p. 44).

According to the Graduate Management Admission Council (GMAC), Executive MBAs are a response to the needs of students who cannot give up full-time employment for one or two years (Sheikh, 2007). Furthermore, “Executive programs attract older students, whereas younger students are more likely to enroll in full-time programs” (Sheikh, 2007, p. 2).

An analysis of Graduate Management Admission Test data by the Graduate Management Admission Council (GMAC) revealed that the average age of part-time applicants is 29 years old, with an average GMAT score of 490. While full-time applicants average 26 years of age, with an average GMAT score of 540. Executive applicants average 36 years of age, with an average GMAT score of 564. Overall, “these averages, indicate that though the programs may not differentiate much on curriculum, they do differ in the nature of their applicants and, presumably, their student bodies” (Sheikh, 2007, p. 9).

According to a study conducted by Sheikh (2007), a statistically significant difference exists in course offerings between Executive and full-time MBA programs especially between the Finance and Accounting cluster which includes, for example,

Finance, Financial Accounting, Principles of Accounting, and the People and Government cluster which includes Business and Government, Ethics, and Legal Environments. The curriculum differences between Executive MBA programs may be attributed to the fact that executives enrolling in MBA programs may expect the program to take better advantage of their accumulated knowledge, taking into account years of experience which a typical Executive MBA candidate has prior to enrolling in a program (Sheikh, 2007).

Overall, Executive MBA programs offer the widest variation of course offerings when compared to part-time and full-time programs. For Executive MBA candidates, leadership and innovation are a key and integral part of their educational experience perhaps because executive students are seeking skills that can be applied to their current work environment (Sheikh, 2007).

Published research on the admission process and predicted success of students in EMBA programs is sparse (Owens, 2007). Yet, Owens (2007) suggests, “common variables, GMAT Quantitative and Verbal scores and UGPA, used to select applicants to FT and PT graduate management programs are also appropriate to use when making selections for executive education” (Owens, 2007, p. 8). Though Owens’ study looked at several common admission factors, other variables are used by executive programs during the selection process such as interviews. According to the Executive MBA Council (2006), 84% of Executive MBA programs require interviews prior to admitting an applicant.

Vast differences between timelines of MBA and Executive MBA programs also exist. For example, students enrolled in an executive program take about twice as long between completion of an undergraduate degree and enrollment in an MBA program as students enrolled in full-time programs (Sheikh, 2007), which perhaps may be due in large part to age differences (Sheikh, 2007). A trend has also emerged in the duration of EMBA programs. “Since 2003, the number of institutions reporting longer EMBA programs of 21-22 months decreased. Similarly, the number reporting shorter programs of 17-18 months slightly increased” (Owens, 2007, p. 1).

The average number of applicants to Executive MBA programs in 2007 was up 25 percent from 2005 and the average Executive MBA program length in 2007 was 20.4 months, compared to 20.3 months in 2003 (Executive MBA Council, 2007). The growing enrollment trends, coupled with the relatively shorter length of the Executive MBA program compared to the traditional MBA program warrants a deeper examination of the curricular inclusion of ethics in Executive MBA programs.

Definitions

For the purpose of this study, the definition of *business ethics* is adopted from a research study conducted by Lewis (1985) that examined 208 documents and 185 questionnaires distributed to a random sample of blue-collar workers and white-collar executives. According to the study, “business ethics is moral rules, standards, codes, or principles which provide guidelines for right and truthful behavior in specific situations” (Lewis, 1985, p. 382). *Corporate governance* is defined as the general set of customs, regulations, habits, and laws that determine to what end an organization should be

managed (The Aspen Institute, 2006). *Ethical decision-making* in organizations is explained by the interaction of individual and situational components. An individual reacts to an ethical dilemma with cognitions determined by his or her moral development stage. A person's cognitive moral development stage determines how an individual thinks about ethical dilemmas--his or her process of deciding what is right or wrong in a particular situation (Trevino, 1986).

Many have defined *competency* and most definitions are very similar. Chyung, Stepich, and Cox (2006) have combined the definitions of competency provided by the National Center for Education Statistics and the International Board of Standards for Training and Performance Instruction to obtain a more robust definition. According to Chyung, Stepich, and Cox (2006), a competency includes both a means and an end. "The means are knowledge, skills, or abilities and the end is to effectively perform the activities of a given occupation or function to the standards expected in employment" (Chyung, Stepich, & Cox, 2006, p. 307). The purpose of identifying competencies in curriculum design is to increase the probability of transforming learning experiences into performance-based outcomes. To that end, competencies are used to ensure that learners are able to demonstrate selected behaviors after they have acquired the necessary combination of knowledge, skills, and abilities.

Purpose of the Study and Research Questions

The purpose of this study is to investigate to what extent and in what ways Executive MBA programs (EMBA) are designed to address ethical decision-making for business executives who matriculate in these programs. To that end, I seek to identify ethics-related knowledge, skills, and dispositions associated with Executive MBA programs such that graduates acquire the tools needed to ensure—to the extent possible—appropriate ethical decision-making.

To address this study's purpose, I organize my examination around one central research question: To what extent and in what ways do U.S. Executive MBA programs offer ethics-related courses (or units within courses) which are designed to enhance the ethical decision-making of graduates? To better understand my overarching research question and to build a stronger foundation, I address in this study three sub-questions. One, what ethics-related courses (or units within courses) do Executive MBA programs offer to students? Two, are these ethics-related courses (or units within courses) required or elective in the curriculum? And three, what ethical knowledge, competencies, and dispositions are addressed in the ethics-related courses (or units within courses)?

The research conducted in this study includes a documentary examination of seven U.S. Executive MBA programs, which are accredited by the Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business (AACSB). The documentary analysis will include an in-depth study of institutional, program, and course related content. And as such, collecting a wide range of curriculum related content should assist in determining

whether Executive MBA programs are designed to address ethical decision-making of graduates.

Significance of the Study

This research study is important because it builds upon and contributes to the body of knowledge that currently exists in higher education. First and foremost, some critics suggest that the traditional business education model, especially the U.S. MBA program, condones or even facilitates a climate in which ethical conduct becomes secondary to profit maximization (Balotsky & Steingard, 2006).

More than ever before, this criticism had led graduate business programs to re-evaluate their curriculum and its impact on workplace conduct. However, the value of teaching ethics is not a new concern. Over 25 years of research has been conducted on the pedagogies used and the outcomes achieved in teaching ethics (Balotsky & Steingard, 2006).

Balotsky and Steingard (2006) agree that, “given the amorphous character of ethical inquiry, it is perhaps not surprising that little consensus on an answer has been reached among researchers and practitioners; no uniform model of ethical analysis has emerged, nor has a set of variables surfaced that measure or validate the effectiveness of the process” (p. 6). Therefore, constructing an ethics knowledge and competency model may prove beneficial in building a consensus on the types of courses that should be required to ensure the inclusion of key ethics competencies in Executive MBA programs.

Second, MBA programs face intense criticism for failing to impart useful skills, failing to prepare leaders, failing to instill norms of ethical behavior, and even failing to

lead graduates to good corporate jobs. These criticisms are made not only from students, employers, and the media but also from deans of some of America's most prestigious business schools, including Dipak Jain at Northwestern University's top-ranked Northwestern University School of Management (Bennis & O'Toole, 2005). This research will assist Executive MBA program administrators and faculty in determining whether or not their curriculum incorporates key competencies, which may be essential in shaping norms of ethical behavior.

Third, this research will assist Executive MBA program administrators and faculty with managing the curriculum without losing their focus on ethics. To that end, administrators and faculty can determine whether or not their programs have adopted key ethics competencies which should be associated with Executive MBA programs and which provide rich learning experiences for business executives by contributing to their professional and personal growth and development, ultimately guiding them during their decision-making processes.

An Overview of the Study

This study consists of a comprehensive documentary analysis of the curricula of seven U.S. Executive MBA programs to determine the extent to which an ethical knowledge base, ethical competencies, and ethics-related dispositions are included. Curriculum content from each of the seven Executive MBA programs will be collected and analyzed at the institutional level, the program level, and the course level. At the institutional level the following documents will be collected: mission statements, value statements, student honor codes/codes of ethics, and student codes of conduct. At the

program level, the following content will be collected: course catalogs, student program handbooks, co-curricular program activity descriptions, and course descriptions. And at the course level, core course syllabi will be collected focusing primarily on student learning objectives, student learning outcomes, course assignments, and assigned textbook readings. In addition, course textbooks and descriptions of co-curricular core course activities will also be collected and analyzed.

According to the Executive MBA Council (2011), an organization that fosters excellence and innovation worldwide in Executive MBA programs, 200 Executive MBA programs exist in the United States.

The AACSB International was founded in 1916 and grants accreditation for undergraduate and graduate business administration and accounting programs (The Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business, 2007a). According to the AACSB International, accreditation represents the pinnacle of achievement for business schools throughout the world. Institutions that earn accreditation confirm their commitment to strengthening their curriculum's quality through peer review. Moreover, AACSB International believes that accreditation is the trademark of excellence in management education (The Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business, 2007a).

AACSB International accreditation assures stakeholders groups that business schools “manage resources to achieve a vibrant and relevant mission; advance business and management knowledge through faculty scholarship; provide high-caliber teaching of quality and current curricula; cultivate meaningful interaction between students and a

qualified faculty; and produce graduates who have achieved specified learning goals” (The Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business, 2007a, p. 1).

As of December 2008, 44 institutions, or eight percent of the total AACSB International Council membership, had a graduate business administration program accredited by AACSB International (The Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business, 2007b). The criteria used for program case selection in this study produced seven U.S. Executive MBA programs, which will be examined in depth in this documentary research study.

Chapter Summary

Corporate executives engage in discretionary decision-making behaviors affecting the lives and well being of others. Their decisions and acts have the potential of producing tremendous social and economic consequences particularly in the realms of health, safety and welfare of consumers, employees, and the community at large (Trevino, 1986). However, despite a number of surveys, very little is known about what might influence the ethical decision-making practices of management (Trevino, 1986). This critical situation in corporate America warrants a deeper understanding of the inclusion of ethics in graduate management curricula, especially in Executive MBA curricula.

Whether the Sarbanes-Oxley Act will impact the ethical behavior of business executives remains to be seen (Stevens, 2004). Time will reveal whether ethical behavior can be legislated by the federal government and whether stricter punishments will stop egregious and greedy behavior (Stevens, 2004). Unfortunately, in higher education and,

in particular, graduate management education, ethics courses are commonly sacrificed to courses that are cash cows or fads as a result of political maneuvering (Swanson, 2004).

At any rate, assertions that ethics cannot be taught fly in the face of reality.

Swanson (2004) suggests that, “while social and behavioral skills are partly determined early in life, there is growing evidence that they can be learned and improved through exposure to educational programs that blend theoretical principles and practice” (p. 52).

The growing body of evidence supports the idea that ethics courses must be infused throughout the Executive MBA curriculum and underscores the importance of ethics education. Swanson (2004) further suggests that, “although one ethics course won’t solve all ills, it could be the only opportunity some students have to grasp a saner view. It might also keep some of them out of jail” (p. 54).

The need for colleges and universities to reclaim ethics education takes on more urgency when one considers that business school graduates, especially MBA graduates, are sent out into society to occupy key positions of great significance and influence within corporations (Swanson, 2004). Their decisions affect the quality of life for millions or even billions of people around the world, and their professional, fiduciary, and civic responsibilities parallel those of doctors, lawyers, teachers, engineers, and others (Swanson, 2004).

CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Introduction

Almost two decades ago, students themselves were calling for the inclusion of ethics into the MBA curriculum. Students believed that, “as the saying goes, you can’t teach an old dog new tricks. But if that [ethical] awareness once prevents you from doing something or makes you think twice, it helps” (Magner, 1989, p. A31).

Today, this is no different. In 2007, the Aspen Institute conducted a study of 15 business schools titled, “Where will they lead? 2008 MBA Student Attitudes about Business & Society.” The Institute surveyed 1,943 MBA students about their attitudes toward the relationship between business and society. The Aspen Institute study suggests that MBA programs influence the way in which students perceive the role of business in society especially when the students become managers and leaders. In addition, the study finds that as students progress through their MBA programs, they feel less confident that their business school is preparing them to face values conflicts on the job (The Aspen Institute, 2008).

The efforts of MBA programs in injecting a substantive ethical curricular experience over two decades has been dismal at best. This can be evidenced by the numerous ethics-related scandals that have rocked corporate boardrooms across America. If the recent scandals are used as a litmus test then it becomes very difficult not to pass

judgment that schools responsible for building character and educating graduate students to lead ethical lives have done a poor job of inculcating ethical decision-making skills and providing the necessary tools to make ethical decisions.

One of the most important issues surrounding ethics and its inclusion into the executive business curriculum is that administrators, faculty, students, and the public at large oftentimes view ethics as a “soft” subject, which does not warrant serious attention. Giacalone, Jurkiewicz, and Knouse (2003) believe that “core areas, such as accounting, finance, and marketing, are seen as *hard* skills-based courses, whereas the ethical issues in these professions and human resources are viewed, often with disdain, as *soft* and conceptual” (p. 591). Incorporating and ultimately threading ethics into a learner-centric curriculum requires the application of a comprehensive pedagogical strategy, which includes theory, research, and practice (Giacalone, et al., 2003).

Traditionally, theory, objective analysis, and higher order decision matrices have characterized ethics education. But in order “to grasp the ambiguities as well as complexities of real ethics problems, students must grapple with the realities of applying ethics to human behavior within organizational settings” (Giacalone, et al., 2003, p. 592). The resultant effect of grasping ethics as a practice is that students come to the realization that ethics requires that they conceive of ethical systems holistically.

The literature review in this chapter describes (a) ethical theories, (b) ethics in professional education, (c) curricular integration of ethics, and (d) trends in ethics pedagogy in Executive MBA programs in order to provide a better understanding for the need to further study the inclusion of ethics courses in Executive MBA programs.

Ethical Theories

According to Boylan (2000), “Ethics is the science concerning the "right" and "wrong" of human action” (p. 2). To Boylan, the words right and wrong refer to judgments, which are usually assigned to people or to actions according to some standard. Over the centuries there have been great debates to determine the standard.

It is customary to divide ethical theories into two groups, usually called teleological and deontological. The most prominent historical examples of a teleological and deontological theory are utilitarianism and the ethical theory of Immanuel Kant, respectively. Aristotle’s ethics theory is another prominent theory and is based on the concept of virtue (Boatright, 2000).

Consequentialist Theory: Utilitarianism

Teleological theories suggest that the rightness of an action is determined solely by the amount of good consequences or the extent of the outcome the action produces. Hence, “Actions are justified on teleological theories by virtue of the end they achieve, rather than some feature of the actions themselves. Thus, the concept of goodness is fundamental in teleological theories, and the concepts of rightness and obligation, or duty, are defined in terms of goodness” (Boatright, 2000, p. 32). Utilitarianism is considered a teleological or consequentialist theory and holds that an individual’s obligation, or duty, in any situation is to perform the action that will result in the greatest possible balance of good over evil (Boatright, 2000).

According to Boylan (2000), “Utilitarianism is a theory that suggests that an action is morally right when that action produces more total utility for the group as a

consequence than any other alternative does” (p. 66). Oftentimes this notion is referred to as "the greatest good for the greatest number." The emphasis on calculating—quantitatively--the general population's projected consequential utility among competing alternatives appeals to many especially because it underlies democracy and capitalism. Thus, at a macro level, when no moral issues are at stake, Utilitarianism should determine the way a decision should be made. This notion is so deeply engrained that if a person were to act otherwise, someone could declare that he was not carrying out his duties properly (Boylan, 2000).

Boylan (2000) suggests that Utilitarianism is consonant with the way individuals make decisions because this theory may appeal to the consequential goals and the three prime states, pleasure, happiness, and goodness, which people try to maximize. Another reason might be its kinship to the way in which individuals make most non-moral decisions. Yet another reason might be because most individuals apply Utilitarianism to make rational decisions every day. “This is the reason that Utilitarianism is so easy to understand and apply. Most adults can apprehend and readily apply the utilitarian slogan "the greatest good for the greatest number." This would be an important advantage for any theory that aspired to be adopted by some society” (Boylan, 2000, p. 80).

Non-consequentialist Theories

Deontological theories, in contrast to teleological theories such as utilitarianism, deny that consequences are relevant to determining what we ought to do. “Deontologists typically hold that certain actions are right not because of some benefit to ourselves or others but because of the nature of these actions or the rules from which they follow.

Thus, bribery is wrong, some say, by its very nature, regardless of the consequences” (Boatright, 2000, p. 33). Other examples of non-consequentialist reasoning in ethics include arguments based on principles such as the Golden Rule (Do unto others as you would have them do unto you) and they also include those that appeal to basic notions of human dignity and respect for other persons. “Obligation, or duty, is the fundamental moral category in deontological theories, and goodness and other concepts are to be defined in terms of obligation, or duty” (Boatright, 2000, p. 33).

Cost-benefit Analysis

Based on what has been published thus far on Executive MBA programs some may conjecture that faculty in graduate business schools unintentionally teach students to base their ethical decision-making primarily on an economic point of view. A cost-benefit analysis— a key economic concept— is simply a means for achieving an efficient allocation of resources. Business decisions that evaluate investment opportunities in terms of their return are thus instances of cost-benefit analysis. However, it is important to note that there is an important difference between a business decision and what is generally described as cost-benefit analysis. “Companies usually calculate the anticipated costs and benefits only for themselves, whereas legislators, social planners, regulators, and other users of cost-benefit analysis generally ask what the costs and benefits are for everyone who is affected” (Boatright, 2000, p. 40).

According to Boylan (2000), “cost-benefit analysis in non-moral matters is what business is about. And since a very large part of our everyday life depends on the actions of businesspeople, we all depend on their acting in just that way. If they do not, they are

committing malpractice” (p. 79). And according to Boatright (2000), because of the extremely narrow focus of cost-benefit analysis on economic efficiency in the allocation of resources, it is not commonly used as a basis for personal morality but rather used as a means for making major investment decisions and decisions on broad matters of public policy. Cost-benefit analysis is not a complete ethical theory, but it is a Utilitarian form of reasoning with a limited but important range of application. Cost-benefit analysis like any other ethics theory is not necessarily intended to be the only means for making decisions.

Since many people, business people included, reside in self-contained worlds that dictate how they should act and make decisions on a day-to-day basis, it is crucial that students matriculated in programs such as Executive MBA programs learn how to apply ethical theories along a spectrum ranging from simple to complex decision-making.

Ethics in Professional Education

Universities are uniquely placed to teach future leaders how to think honestly and clearly, how to deal with problems in an intelligent and responsible way without resorting to unexamined ideologies or prejudices. “A failure of the university to cultivate thinking skills in students and faculty is a lapse in its community responsibility. And the university carries this responsibility largely by default” (Thomson, 1991, pp. 99-100). No other institutions in modern societies can fill this function and responsibility. Boylan and Donahue (2003) suggest:

We define ethics as the process of reflection on the moral meaning of actions. The definition is meant to be broad and foundational and to incorporate several components of ethics education. Ethics is first and foremost a process. It is not simply the study in which one grasps some fundamental truths in one static

moment of time and applies these in a deductive manner in other aspects of one's life. (p. 5)

They believe, rather, that ethics is a continuous process in which an individual is constantly engaged in a dialogue with ideas, people, history, traditions, cultures, other disciplines, and other students. Furthermore, ethics is not a discrete body of knowledge that individuals acquire, apply, and use in particular situations. "It [ethics] entails an ongoing appropriation of ideas of the good as they relate to the changing situations, contexts, and developments in individuals' and groups' lives" (Boylan & Donahue, 2003, p. 5).

According to Pletz (1999), during ethical decision-making or what he calls moralizing, one can find ethical responses to specific situations in two ways. "One is to give a directive or a moral outcome and then try to justify it. The other way is to look at the process involved in making individual ethical decisions and then to make some specific suggestions about the process" (Pletz, 1999, p. 60). To that end, ethical decision-making is predominately a matter of balancing different ethical interests when different moral considerations point in different directions. Balancing different ethical interests can also assist individuals to see additional ethical alternatives that they may have otherwise overlooked, and which could have impeded their progress toward a more balanced moral life (Pletz, 1999).

Professional education prepares students to engage in the practice of the profession and to give them the skills to become competent practitioners. Part of that training is to introduce students to the values and norms that serve to construct the profession itself. Ethical conflicts abound in the professions and it is the role of educators

to give students the necessary skills to resolve the critical ethical issues they will face in their future work (Boylan & Donahue, 2003). Boylan and Donahue (2003) believe that “It is difficult to think that one could be well trained in the professions without a conscious understanding of the moral parameters of the profession and a developed view of how the profession fits into a larger social and cultural context” (p. 15). Furthermore, they believe that it is the role of ethics across the curriculum to provide a process of inquiry that will allow students the opportunity to examine the value assumptions of the profession and to give them the opportunity to critically appropriate these values in light of their own value constructs.

Without much debate, the literature suggests that there are three arenas of moral decision-making where students encounter ethical challenges in which they will need to engage the process of ethical reflection. Boylan and Donahue (2003) suggest that the three arenas are situated “in the personal lives of each student, in the disciplines that shape the curriculum in which students learn, and in education in the professional schools of the university where students are introduced to concepts, norms, and practices of professional life” (p. 91).

Moreover, professional education is more than simply the gaining of knowledge and technique. It is also an introduction to the moral framework that serves as the basis for the profession. And as such, “Every profession manifests a set of values and norms that communicate an understanding of what is considered to be good, important, and worthwhile in the conduct of professional practice” (Boylan & Donahue, 2003, pp. 91-92). Professions are based on a set of beliefs about what constitutes the right and wrong,

an understanding of how the profession seeks to preserve and advance the good or goods in a particular society, and what distinct activities are seen to be consistent with advancing this idea of the good both in and out of the profession. “In a profession, certain values and types of behaviors are understood as appropriate and internal to the good of the profession. To act in accord with those standards is considered to be the right way to engage in professional practices” (Boylan & Donahue, 2003, pp. 91-92). Every profession has a particular way of understanding the moral life of the profession. Boylan and Donahue (2003) suggest that:

The goal of professional education should be to give each prospective professional the ability to understand and reflect upon the moral basis of the profession. To be a morally good professional one must possess skills of moral reflection as well as the practical knowledge, information, and techniques that constitute the profession. (p. 92)

Professional ethical decision-making can be based on conceptual conditions that derive from a fundamental understanding about human reasoning and logical analysis-- whichever this may be-- coupled with a classical framework. “Introducing students to these modes of moral justification and providing a framework in which they are interrelated to form a holistic moral framework is an important goal for ethics across the curriculum in professional schools” (Boylan & Donahue, 2003, p. 99).

In 1991, Ghorpade conducted a study to assess the state of ethics education in MBA programs located in the U.S. Based on his extensive research, Ghorpade suggests that “Inquiries into the ethics content of the MBA curriculum are sparse” (Ghorpade, 1991, p. 892). Perhaps the sparseness of ethics content is due in large part because, unlike the medical profession which observes and supports medical ethics deriving from the

Hippocratic Oath or the American Bar Association's *Model Rules of Professional Conduct*, organizations such as AACSB International, the American Management Association, and the Academy of Management have not crafted an ethics oath or code which can be universalized to the entire management profession.

Without extensive debate, conventional wisdom suggests "Every student who enters the classrooms of our colleges and universities already has a set of values, moral outlooks, and ethical standards that shape his or her behavior and moral decisions. These moral worldviews originate from a variety of sources—from parents, religious and ethnic communities, from churches, synagogues, and mosques, from the culture of which they are a part" (Boylan & Donahue, 2003, p. 37). If ethics education is to have a perduring effect then it must take into account preexisting experiences and frameworks and address both their content and substance so that the student has the ability to critically assess his or her own ethical standards and appropriate an original and authentic set of ethical decisions (Boylan & Donahue, 2003).

According to Boylan and Donahue (2003), ethics education involves the process of reflection on the moral meaning of actions. In the broadest sense, ethical education reflects on actions with a goal to assess personal actions in light of their moral meaning. And from a professional context, "Professions have ethical content in two ways: in the views they present according to assumptions they work with, and the consequences that ensue in light of the decisions that members of a profession actually make" (Boylan & Donahue, 2003, p. 7; Conger & Xin, 2000).

Professional education trains students to engage in the practice of a specific profession and to enhance skills to become competent practitioners. Part of a student's training is to introduce him or her to the values and norms that serve to construct the profession itself (Boylan & Donahue, 2003). Moreover, ethics theory and practice are two independent elements involved in the task of ethical discourse and ethics education (Boylan & Donahue, 2003).

Gosling and Mintzberg (2006) also argue the following:

A little ethics education—a “course” in ethics, treated as yet another function—can give students the conceptual basis for distinguishing between consequentialist (results-oriented) and deontological (duty-based) value systems. But this alone hardly assists students and/or employees with making the choices that express their moral standing. Wise choices are made in relation to socially determined values and ideas, and almost always in conversation with others. (pp. 424-425)

Additionally, in order for education to have a long-term impact on the ethical choices made by practicing managers, education must extend beyond technical language and concepts, to a platform where everyday matters that arise in managerial practice can be discussed (Gosling & Mintzberg, 2006).

Boylan and Donahue (2003) advance the hypothesis that successful ethics education engages the lived experiences of students and compels them to examine both the theoretical coherence and practical meaning of their moral lives. To that end, it is paramount that ethics competencies are integrated into the Executive MBA curricula in a manner in which they draw on multiple worldviews engaging students who have experienced distinct and multiple realities.

Curricular Integration of Ethics

According to Boylan and Donahue (2003), “The goal of university education is not to form character, although surely in the educational process character is formed, values are transmitted, and individuals appropriate a set of beliefs and convictions. A university curriculum is not however the place where the character formation process occurs directly” (p. 12). Rather, it is the academic discipline that provides the student the knowledge necessary to assess and appropriate a set of values that is coherent and defensible.

Lisman (1996) subscribes to the belief that education has a significant and powerful role in revitalizing a sense of morality among young people. In addition, Lisman believes that students must be educated that the roots of most world problems not only result from lapses of individual character but also stem from unjust social structures. As such, “Our colleges and universities can use this strategic position to encourage students to think more deeply about ethical issues and strengthen their powers of moral reasoning” (Lisman, 1996, p. 2).

The objective of incorporating ethics competencies into the curriculum can be carried out in many different and unique ways. For example, one can require an ethics course for everyone in a degree program. Or one can also develop an ethics component within professional-oriented courses. As a matter of fact, several academic fields such as business, nursing, paralegal studies, and public policy integrate ethics into the curriculum (Lisman, 1996). Unfortunately, most colleges do not have required ethics courses and since many professional studies programs already have an extensive curriculum, faculty

and administration are reluctant to add yet another course to degree requirements (Lisman, 1996).

An assumption often made is that if people sharpen their analytical thinking skills about ethics, they will presumably make better moral decisions. However, Lisman (1996) suggests “many ethical issues of the day involve conflicts, not over whether or not one should be moral, but over how to apply these moral norms or principles in concrete situations. Students need guidance in accomplishing this task” (p. 5).

Lisman (1996) believes that the overarching goal of the integration of ethics within the curriculum is to assist students to learn how to think more critically about ethical situations and make better ethical decisions. A secondary goal of curricular integration of ethics is to promote moral growth. Both of these goals can be accomplished by providing students a complete learning experience in which they engage in critical reflection over ethical situations and dilemmas. Regardless of the method in which ethics competencies are integrated into the curriculum, Lisman (1996) believes that:

We want people who are not merely rational but who are affectively engaged in moral matters (which, of course, implies rational engagement as well). We want people to care about justice and honesty, and so forth, not merely be able to analyze dilemmas that involve these norms. (p. 38)

According to Boylan and Donahue (2003), ethics education typically focuses on what is right and wrong but rarely focuses on theoretical frameworks. “It presumes a situation of dialogue in which the student is challenged to engage the ideas at hand and to come to some critical appropriation of them for the purpose of applying these insights to the issues and situations of the present and future” (Boylan & Donahue, 2003, p. 3).

The challenge of the college and university—so it is presumed—is to challenge and lead students to stand in a new place with regards to ideas that they encounter in their world. To that end:

In ethics education to be led out means to engage actively the theories, ideas, and concepts of the good that are presented in the learning process and to appropriate them critically in application to the situations of the day. In this process a transformation occurs in the student's mode of moral knowing. (Boylan & Donahue, 2003, p. 4)

Accreditation

Business ethics pedagogy has been extensively debated throughout the years. The question of whether ethics can be taught and how it should be integrated into the curriculum appears to be at the center of the debate. For example, some management educators have questioned the Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business's (AACSB) approach to achieving quality in ethics pedagogy because the AACSB International does not require an ethics course for all business programs. The AACSB International believes that:

There is no implication in the [accreditation] standards that designate particular courses or treatments. Schools should assume great flexibility in fashioning curricula to meet their missions and to fit with the specific circumstances of particular programs. For example, ethics may be grouped with other topics to integrate learning or call for special pedagogical treatment. Schools are expected to determine how ethics and topics occur in the learning experiences of students, but accreditation does not mandate any particular set of courses, nor is a prescribed pattern or order intended. The school must justify how curricular contents and structure meet the needs of the mission of the school and the learning goals for each degree program. (2007a, p. 1)

Notwithstanding the lack of an accreditation standard specifically addressing the curricular integration of ethics in undergraduate and graduate business curricula, the Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business (AACSB) promotes the belief

that while ethical decisions transcend traditional functional areas, ethics theory is best taught in a dedicated course. Therefore, the AACSB International suggests that the optimal curriculum combines at least one dedicated course in business ethics with an integrated approach where ethics principles are applied in traditional courses. Based on interviews conducted by the Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business International (2007c), this is not yet being done at most schools.

Even though the Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business International does not prescribe ethics courses, AACSB International suggests that seven learning goals relate to ethics pedagogy. They are: (1) learn to identify ethical issues, (2) identify frameworks, (3) learn to use ethical decision making, (4) understand the role of ethics in all management functions, (5) question common views such as "earning a profit is the sole goal in business," (6) understand the role of public perception in defining ethics, and (7) get exposure to ethics across cultures.

In addition, AACSB International has developed standards related to ethics education. The eligibility standards for AACSB International accreditation state that "an institution or the business programs of the institution must establish expectations for ethical behavior by administrators, faculty, and students" (The Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business, 2007a, p. 1). AACSB interprets the former clause by stating:

AACSB believes that ethical behavior is paramount to the delivery of quality business education. Schools are encouraged to develop "codes of conduct" to indicate the importance of proper behavior for administrators, faculty, and students in their professional and personal actions. Schools also may foster ethical behavior through procedures such as disciplinary systems to manage inappropriate behavior and through honor codes. (2007a, p. 1)

Furthermore, AACSB International has adopted three accreditation standards related to ethics education. They are as follows: *Standard 13: Individual Faculty Educational Responsibility*; *Standard 14: Student Educational Responsibility*; and *Standard 15: Management of Curricula*. Of these three accreditation standards, Standard 15 is the only standard, which explicitly addresses ethics education. The portion of the Standard that addresses master's level ethics education states:

Normally, the curriculum management process will result in undergraduate and master's level general management degree programs that will include learning experiences in such management-specific knowledge and skills areas as: Ethical and legal responsibilities in organizations and society; Financial theories, analysis, reporting, and markets; Creation of value through the integrated production and distribution of goods, services, and information; Group and individual dynamics in organizations; Statistical data analysis and management science as they support decision-making processes throughout an organization; Information technologies as they influence the structure and processes of organizations and economies, and as they influence the roles and techniques of management; and Domestic and global economic environments of organizations. (The Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business, 2007a, p. 1)

Eschewing the argument that teaching ethics in business education is an oxymoron and given the apparent limited guidance by accreditation agencies in assisting graduate management education programs in the curricular integration of appropriate ethics related courses, it is important to establish guidelines as to what should be included in an ethics curriculum especially in Executive MBA programs.

Trends in Ethics Pedagogy in Executive MBA Programs

In the 1980s, education for executives consisted primarily of university-based programs or seminars offered by specialized training organizations (Conger & Xin, 2000). Faculty who taught executives in these programs primarily decided training content. Back then, the curriculum consisted of teaching the latest theories and techniques

for effective management largely by studying case studies and listening to lectures by notable academics. Many of these programs in essence were abridged MBA programs (Conger & Xin, 2000).

A shift occurred in the early 1980s and another shift accelerated in the 1990s. The resultant outcome was shaped by new challenges such as global competition, rapid advances in technology, waves of mergers and acquisitions, and a growing emphasis on cost cutting. The most important realization was that education could actually be turned into interventions that were capable of building important organizational competencies (Conger & Xin, 2000). According to Conger and Xin (2000), the outcome was that “educational programs moved from being university-based and standardized to in-company and customized” (p. 76). Furthermore, “The content focus also shifted from functional knowledge to subjects such as leadership and organizational change; programs changed from teacher-centered to learner-centered and from general case studies to real-life problems the company faced” (Conger & Xin, 2000, p. 76). Courses that addressed globalization, employee diversity, organizational learning, and e-commerce are standard today but were largely absent in 1990 (Conger & Xin, 2000).

A few companies, such as General Electric, Philips, and Ernst and Young, realized that education was beneficial to the individual enrolled in an executive education program that served as a tool that could assist in aligning their organizations to strategic imperatives (Conger & Xin, 2000). In summary, executives realized that education was beneficial for the employee and added value to an organization. For that reason, Conger and Xin (2000) believe that executive education should increasingly be guided by three

objectives: “(1) to build awareness and support for strategic transitions, (2) to facilitate large scale organizational change necessary to realize new strategic directions, and (3) to build depth of leadership talent” (p. 78). Conger and Xin (2000) believe that these objectives should drive executive education and “at the onset, macro-organizational issues such as strategic shifts and organizational design determine the learning needs” (p. 79). For starters, such forces influence who will be the owners or sponsors of learning. And the owners are the ones who play a pivotal and powerful role in determining the “who,” “what,” and “why” questions associated with any curricular initiative. Moreover, “The learning objectives also determine the content and types of learning materials and the instructional pedagogies that are most appropriate” (Conger & Xin, 2000, p. 79).

According to Conger and Xin (2000), six trends redefine the character of executive education. They include: (1) learning needs: a shift from functional knowledge to strategic leadership and organizational change; (2) learning content: a shift toward ever-greater customization; (3) pedagogy: a shift toward action-learning and feedback pedagogies; (4) participants: a shift to learning in executive cohorts; (5) integrating mechanisms: a shift toward the cascading of learning experiences; and (6) instructors: growing use of the executive teacher.

Many faculty members express a desire and need to integrate ethical issues into their courses. However, many faculty are reluctant to do so because of concerns about diluting the curriculum and the vulnerability to student complaints about teaching values (Lisman, 1996). Nonetheless, changes in the business curricula have been based on extrinsic and intrinsic forces. “The tension between autonomy and self-interest on the one

hand and the common good or the collective well-being on the other are core tensions in both the ethos of democratic liberalism and most ethical conflicts in business” (Boylan & Donahue, 2003, p. 108). Most of the major ethical conflicts in business can be understood and resolved by contextualizing them in the larger schema of the social and political ethos of which they are a part (Boylan & Donahue, 2003).

According to Latham, Latham, and Whyte (2004), “Executive programs typically emphasize the synergistic use of core competencies and delivery systems in a way that enables one to truly master business administration” (p. 3). Master of Business Administration programs have undergone many changes over the years due in large part to market demands. For example, the 1960s were marked by a demand for professionalization in the MBA program and the 1990s were marked by a demand for globalization. Latham, Latham, and Whyte (2004) argue that a third wave of change is required for university-based MBA programs that wish to survive and prosper. They believe that “This change should be aimed at fostering the capacity of MBA students to integrate various functional perspectives to meet the complex business challenges of the 21st century” (Latham, et al., 2004, p. 4). They are referring to integrative thinking and define it as “the capacity to take a cross-functional, multidisciplinary approach to the solution of unstructured business problems” (Latham, et al., 2004, p. 3).

In addition, Latham, Latham, and Whyte (2004) suggest that “Most Executive MBA education programs are holistic in that key thrusts are referred to constantly with an emphasis on the acquisition of one competency before undertaking another” (p. 10). Also, “If business schools are to remain competitive and retain their ability to create

value for their participants, they must adopt executive education values and practices in redesigning their MBA programs. Executive programs are customized for organizational partners, foster the integrative thinking of participants, and directly prepare organizations to meet the challenges of the global economy” (Latham, et al., 2004, p. 16).

The pedagogies utilized in Executive MBA programs have to be diverse and facilitating. For example, “Lecturing is fine as far as it goes. It can be a delight when done well, and sometimes stays in memory” (Gosling & Mintzberg, 2006, p. 426). Conventional pedagogical approaches such as the case study is widely used in higher education and is characterized as having strengths and limitations in its use. According to Gosling and Mintzberg (2006):

Conventional case discussions certainly bring experience to the classroom, but not as experienced by the participants. As stories, cases can be wonderful rhetorical devices, transporting the audience, in imagination, into other worlds. But cases are taught firmly on the professor’s agenda, with learning outcomes often defined in advance. Often worst of all, in conventional use cases require students to pronounce on things they know hardly anything about. (p. 426)

The case study approach to teaching is widely recognized and used in teaching ethics. “As applied to ethics, the case method attempts to provide concrete examples of ethical issues or dilemmas in which students can develop ethical insight through analysis of a case study” (Lisman, 1996, p. 73). Many times a case study allows students to gain practice in applying newly acquired ethics competencies as they choose a course of action following an analysis of dilemmas.

Action learning in Executive MBA programs is a growing trend. However, Gosling and Mintzberg (2006) suggest that:

Action learning is a fine idea too, so long as the action is real, not added in some artificial way, and the learning takes precedence over the action. All too often, the action is contrived, added to managers' days that are busy enough with their own projects, and trumps the learning. (p. 426)

Each of the conventional approaches mentioned above can prove to be useful in furthering and aiding in the use of experienced reflection. "Here the participants are encouraged to consider the classroom inputs in terms of their own experiences, to confront new ideas with old beliefs, individually, in small groups and across the whole class" (Gosling & Mintzberg, 2006, p. 426).

Now more than ever before, "Executive education is undergoing a gradual but radical transformation. Programs today are far more innovative, learner centered and relevant to immediate company needs than ever before. In this new century, executive education has the potential to play an even greater role as an essential lever to facilitate strategic transitions" (Conger & Xin, 2000, p. 73). An exploratory study was conducted by Conger and Xin and co-sponsored by the International Consortium of Executive Development Research (ICEDR) and the Leadership Institute at the University of Southern California. The ICEDR is an international alliance of approximately 47 leading global organizations and 26 academic institutions. It is the world's largest global learning network and research center in executive and human resource development. The Leadership Institute is an applied research center devoted to the study of leadership focused on the study of leadership topics such as leadership development and training (Conger & Xin, 2000).

According to Conger and Xin (2000), when ICEDR respondents were queried, the overwhelming majority believed that executive education should enhance the overall

leadership and change management effectiveness of executives. Accordingly, they found that a shift toward action-learning and feedback pedagogies dominates executive education. The general pedagogical trend in executive education is toward greater learner involvement, especially through action-learning (Conger & Xin, 2000). In this case, action-learning refers to a variety of management education approaches in which managers use issues from their own companies as the basis for teaching and learning. Programs that adopt action-learning usually and typically involve team-based experiential exercises that aim to solve real-life problems with immediate relevance to a company (Conger & Xin, 2000). The adoption of these approaches occurs perhaps because research in adult learning suggests that individuals generally are more motivated to learn when they are actively involved in the learning process and when they can cope with issues of relevance to their lives and careers (Conger & Xin, 2000).

In addition, a survey revealed that 60 percent of firms reported the extensive use of case studies and lectures in 1995-1996 but only 44 percent reported the use of these methods in 1997-1998 (Conger & Xin, 2000). Also, feedback exercises, such as 360-degree (multi-rater) feedback programs, were likely to be used extensively by 76 percent of all respondents. Additionally, action-learning involving company projects also received a 76 percent response rate for extensive use in 1997-1998 (Conger & Xin, 2000).

Another trend in Executive MBA programs has been a shift to learning in executive cohorts. This is the case as more corporations are leaning away from vertical (hierarchical) to a more horizontal (leveled) governance architecture where corporations

can better leverage internal and external environments, competencies, and strategies. This architecture suggests that learning needs to involve entire executive teams (Conger & Xin, 2000).

Another pedagogy shift has been the use of cascading learning experiences. This pedagogy is effective when educational efforts are cascaded downward throughout the entire organization. An effective cascading effect serves to facilitate the translation of corporate strategic initiatives with a broad reach to the front-line management team where many of the actionable strategies are executed.

Another pedagogical trend in executive programs has been the use of executives as teachers. A survey conducted by Conger and Xin (2000) suggests that utilizing a variety of instructors was the most popular method used by companies. More specifically, the use of executives and company managers or staff with specialized knowledge to teach has increased in recent years.

Given the trends in graduate management education coupled with the increasing criticism and concern over the analytical and technical orientation of MBA training, Datar, Garvin, and Cullen (2010) argue that business schools are at a crossroads and must seriously evaluate their value propositions. Datar, Garvin, and Cullen (2010) also suggest that:

The standardization of the past, with its near exclusive focus on analytical knowledge, is slowly but surely being replaced by innovation and differentiation, with greater attention to action, implementation, exercising judgment when applying knowledge to practice, skill building, and personal development—all aimed at developing leaders and entrepreneurs who are able to create, build, and sustain organizations. (p. 106)

According to Datar, Garvin, and Cullen (2010), graduate management education must move quickly on two fronts to remain a viable and respected educational option. These two fronts include improving teaching and thinking, reasoning, and creative problem-solving skills; and focusing more attention on ethics, accountability, and social responsibility (Datar, et al., 2010).

The numerous issues and approaches discussed above, which are being utilized in Executive MBA programs, may or may not assist with altering the ethical decision-making of students and graduates. Perhaps Executive MBA program administrators and faculty would be better equipped to integrate ethics into their curriculum if their pedagogical repertoire included an ethics knowledge and competency model that would provide guidance for integrating key ethics competencies in Executive MBA programs. The resultant outcome of having such a model would be that administrators and faculty might be able to better guide students in the acquisition of necessary competencies, which are needed to enhance students' ethical decision-making.

Chapter Summary

The integration of ethics competencies into a curriculum and in this case, an Executive MBA curriculum, becomes challenging at many levels. Without extensive debate, administrators, faculty, students, and other stakeholders believe that people learn about ethical decision-making at a very early age. And as such, this line of thought suggests that each student who enters college and university classrooms already holds a set of values, moral outlooks, and ethical standards that shape his or her behavior and moral and ethical decisions. If such is the case, then the integration of ethics

competencies into the curriculum becomes an unnecessary and costly proposition at many levels.

The integration of ethics competencies into a curriculum becomes a value proposition to an institution or an academic program such as an Executive MBA program when administrators, faculty, students, and stakeholders believe that learning occurs at multiple stages in an individual's development. American society is replete with examples of institutions that have integrated ethics into the curriculum because they are committed to lifelong learning and have come to understand that learning occurs along a continuum and not only during the early stages of a child's development.

The evolution of Executive MBA programs in the United States was and is due in large part to market demands and public perception regarding the value of these programs. The 1960s were marked by a demand for professionalization and the 1990s were marked by a demand for globalization in the MBA program. But what does the Executive MBA program look like today? How has it evolved to meet societal demands in the early 21st century? How have business schools integrated ethics competencies into their Executive MBA program and how has this made a difference in the curriculum and more importantly, in the lives of graduates? Are graduates of Executive MBA programs equipped with the appropriate competencies needed to take on ethical dilemmas and make ethical decisions in their workplace and at home? Could the scandals that have troubled American public and private corporate boardrooms be a sign that today's graduates and, in particular, Executive MBA graduates, are ill-equipped to harness the ethical challenges that they are faced with day after day because educational programs

have remained dormant and have become vestiges of time? I am confident that this documentary research study will provide important insights about the curricular integration of ethics in Executive MBA programs.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

Introduction

This research study examines the curricular integration of ethics in Executive MBA programs. The research conducted in this study will include an analysis of seven U.S. Executive MBA programs housed within graduate business management institutions that are accredited by the Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business (AACSB) International.

The World Wide Web, enabled through the Internet, has emerged to become a primary resource for conducting research on a vast array of subjects including colleges and universities (Carnevale, 2005). Many stakeholders including potential students, current students, and various department staff members view websites for sources of critical information regarding schools, curriculum design, and pedagogy. Colleges and universities have come to rely on their websites to disseminate timely and accurate information about their institutions in an expedient and cost effect manner (Hossler, 1999). As the World Wide Web has evolved, “web sites have become the primary and preferred source of information for students” (Steele, 2002, p. 15).

Now more than ever before, colleges and universities have moved swiftly to embrace web technology and utilize their websites as sources of information to

prospective, current, and former students. “Web technologies offer the opportunity for our colleges and universities to move from having a historic focus on processes to being information- and communications-based institutions” (Katz, 2002, p. 15). Given the increasing trend in utilizing websites as a source of critical information for stakeholders, it is possible that a comprehensive content analysis can be conducted to examine the curricular integration of ethics in Executive MBA programs.

Curriculum content from each of the seven Executive MBA programs will be collected and analyzed at the institutional level, the program level, and the course level. At the institutional level the following documents will be collected: mission statements, values statements, student honor codes/codes of ethics, and student codes of conduct. At the program level, the following content will be collected: course catalogs, student program handbooks, co-curricular activity descriptions, and course descriptions. And at the course level, core course syllabi will be collected focusing primarily on student learning objectives, student learning outcomes, course assignments, and assigned textbook readings. In addition, course textbooks and descriptions of co-curricular core course activities will also be collected and analyzed. Each content item will serve to determine how each program conveys to the world its posture on the inclusion of ethics throughout its Executive MBA program. This chapter addresses the research rationale and design, data collection procedures, data analysis, trustworthiness and ethical considerations, and limitations of the methodology.

Rationale for Research Method

In order to identify specific program competencies and ultimately to address this study's research questions, I chose to use a qualitative research design using documentary content analysis. According to Krippendorff (2004), "Content analysis is a research technique for making replicable and valid inferences from texts (or other meaningful matter) to the contexts of their use" (p. 18). The utilization of documents, increasingly neglected by social researchers, has become largely the preserve of historians; therefore, it is only logical to turn to historians for advice on how to approach different kinds of documents. The growing popularity of the Internet and electronic mail has created a new type of document, the virtual source, which has major implications for the future of documentary research (McCulloch, 2004).

According to McCulloch (2004), "the emergence of virtual documents, stored electronically rather than on paper, heralds a new age for documentary-based studies. It brings with it exciting new opportunities for documentary research" (p. 34). Chief among them is the opportunity for researchers to study in an unobtrusive and un-reactive manner large amounts of information. More importantly, the Internet carries content, which changes the conventional definition of documentation. Nonetheless, online documents can provide sources of valuable evidence for educational and social researchers. "Indeed, they constitute a source that is potentially of immense significance for documentary research" (McCulloch, 2004, p. 38).

According to Patton (1980), "qualitative designs are naturalistic in that the researcher does not attempt to manipulate the research setting. The research setting is a

naturally occurring event, program, relationship, or interaction that has no predetermined course established by and for the researcher” (p. 41). There are several reasons why a qualitative research design is appropriate to address the research questions in this study. First and foremost, a qualitative approach forces researchers to acknowledge their own assumptions so that beliefs in these familiar convictions can be suspended and evidence examined in a new and productive manner (Edson, 1988).

Another characteristic of qualitative inquiry is that it seeks to make phenomena more complex and describes life in both the past and the present. Another characteristic inherent in a qualitative research design is the belief that qualitative inquiry informs an understanding of educational research by expanding one’s frames of reference (Edson, 1988).

According to Edson (1988):

Qualitative approaches to research, for example, provide a means of counteracting the extreme rationalization of researchers in the logical--positivist tradition and helps us to question the search for universal and eternal generalizations. By changing the set of lenses through which we view the world, we come to recognize, in the words of Kenneth Burke, that ‘a way of seeing is always a way of not seeing’ (quoted in Tyack, 1976). By raising questions, challenging assumptions, embracing complexity, and expanding our frames of reference, qualitative inquiry provides educational researchers with an important lesson: knowledge that our understanding as individuals and our ability to understand as researchers is limited. (pp. 45-46)

Perhaps the aforementioned points are made too simply but they are suggestive that all research--no matter what methods are employed--is qualitative in aim and must retain a qualitative perspective. Edson (1988) suggests that even a study such as a dissertation, whose primary purpose may be a quantitative formulation, has a qualitative

situation or context out of which it grows and from which its conclusions must be formulated.

Moreover, in education, qualitative research of various kinds has already enjoyed an extensive tradition, long pre-dating quantitative methodologies (Freebody, 2003). The literature of the 1920s and 1930s provided several key examples of the increasing use of documents in educational and social research. “The basic concern of these works was to reveal the nature of the social life of particular communities in a number of specific contexts. Documents were central to this kind of examination, whether the study was based entirely on documentary sources of different kinds, or whether it employed them in concert with a range of other kinds of source material” (McCulloch, 2004, p. 13).

According to Freebody (2003), “qualitative research has been characterized politely but less “scientific” than quantitative approaches. In fact, the opposite case can be respectably made: qualitative approaches to the documentation of educational activities can explicitly make space for the unforeseen, the statistically non-normal, and the culturally non-mainstream” (p. 70). Moreover, proponents of qualitative researcher believe that:

Research activities structured through the logics of quantification leave out lots of interesting and potentially consequential things about the phenomenon - interesting and consequential not just in terms of the concerns and understandings of educators, but also in terms of the richness of the accounts of educators' experiences. By comparison, many have felt that quantitative research projects made available relatively stripped down portrayals that seriously limit the potential for application to professional practice. (Freebody, 2003, p. 35)

Therefore, qualitative researchers—myself included—“must employ an interpretive frame of reference in order to bring meaning to experience. In this sense, qualitative

inquiry is not merely a search for knowledge for knowledge's sake, but a search for the significance of knowledge” (Edson, 1988, p. 46).

Research Design

Content analysis is a widespread technique in the social sciences. According to Hodson (1999), “The heart of content analysis is the coding of material from existing sources. Content analysis spans many disciplines in the social sciences” (p. 5). After a topic is selected and a set of relevant documents is identified and assembled, the research then specifies the themes of interest. The documents are then read and coded according to these themes. In classic content analysis, the number of variables coded is oftentimes small, ranging from a dozen to a few dozen (Hodson, 1999).

Content Analysis

There are different content analysis frameworks that have been proposed for research. Marshall and Rossman (1989) propose that the first step in a content analysis is to establish specific objectives to be achieved or hypotheses to be tested.

Marshall and Rossman (1989) suggest that the second step of content analysis is to locate data relevant to the chosen objectives. Having selected the data to be analyzed, the researcher must establish an empirical link between the data selected and the inferences the researcher plans to make from the data.

The third step in the planning phase of the content analysis is the development of a plan to obtain a representative sample of possible data. Once the researcher has selected the content, the researcher needs to devise a coding or classification system (Marshall & Rossman, 1989).

And the fourth and final step in planning a content analysis is to decide on the specific analytical procedures to be used. The most common methods used to analyze data are absolute frequencies, exploring relationships, cross-tabulations, or chi-square (Marshall & Rossman, 1989). Marshall and Rossman's framework is similar to other frameworks in that it is simple but it does not appear to offer a robust methodical approach, which is necessary for this study.

Hence, the framework that will be used in this study is Krippendorff's. Krippendorff's framework (2004) is intended to serve three main purposes. One, the prescriptive purpose is used to guide the conceptualization and design of practical content analytical research. Two, the analytical purpose is to facilitate the critical examination and comparison of the published content analysis. And three, the methodological purpose is to point to performance criteria and precautionary standards that researchers can apply in evaluating ongoing content analysis (Krippendorff, 2004).

According to Krippendorff (2004), a content analysis framework generally employs six conceptual components. They are: (1) a body of text, the content that a researcher has available to begin the analytical effort; (2) a research question that the researcher seeks to answer by examining the text; (3) a context of the researcher's choice within which to make sense of the text; (4) an analytical construct that operationalizes what the researcher knows about the context; (5) inferences that are intended to answer the research question, which constitute the basic accomplishment of the content analysis; and (6) validating evidence, which is the ultimate justification of the content analysis.

According to Krippendorff (2004), “Most content analyses start with data that are not intended to be analyzed to answer specific research questions. They are texts in the sense that they are meant to be read, interpreted, and understood by people other than the analysts” (p. 30). That said, researchers have to acknowledge that the textuality they rely on is not the only one that counts but how other people view the text is also very important.

Research questions are the targets of the researcher’s inferences from available texts. A research question is analogous to a set of hypotheses. “However, in contrast to scientific hypotheses, which are pitted against direct observational evidence, the research questions of content analysis must be answered through inferences drawn from texts” (Krippendorff, 2004, p. 31), because scientific hypotheses are accepted on account of a preponderance of evidence in support of the hypothesis and the rejection of others. However, inference from texts pertains to a phenomenon not observed during a content analysis.

Content analysis must first begin with research questions. For example, when research is motivated by specific questions, analysts can begin efficiently from sampling relevant texts to answering given questions. Moreover, researchers who begin with a research question, read texts for a purpose and not for what the author may lead them to think (Krippendorff, 2004). The pursuit of answers to research questions also grounds content analysis empirically. “Formulating research questions so that the answers could be validated in principle protects content analysts from getting lost to mere abstractions or self-serving categorizations” (Krippendorff, 2004, p. 32).

In general, according to Krippendorff (2004), research questions have the following characteristics: they potentially can be answered by the examination of a body of text (abductively inferable); they delineate a set of hypothetical answers from which analysts choose; they relate to inaccessible phenomena; and they allow for validation—at least in principle—by acknowledging another way to observe or substitute the occurrence of the inferred phenomena.

“In a content analysis, the context explains what the analyst does with the texts; it could be considered the analyst’s best hypothesis for how the texts came to be, what they mean, what they can tell or do” (Krippendorff, 2004, p. 33). That said, “content analysts need to make their chosen contexts explicit, so that the results of their analyses will be clear to their scientific peers and to the beneficiaries of the research results” (Krippendorff, 2004, p. 34). Without a detailed explanation of the context, the steps that a researcher takes may not make sense to others and the results obtained may not be validated by other means.

Analytical constructs operationalize what the researcher knows about the context, specifically the network of correlations that are assumed to explain how available texts are connected to the possible answers to the research questions and the conditions under which these correlations could change. “In addition, analytical constructs also render knowledge of the context portable to other content analyses of similar contexts and make it possible for students and critics to examine the procedures that a researcher has been using” (Krippendorff, 2004, p. 35). In essence, “The purpose of all analytical constructs

is to ensure that texts are processed in reference to what is known about their use”

(Krippendorff, 2004, p. 36).

Abductive inference is central to content analysis in that the inference proceeds across logically distinct domains, from particulars of one kind to particulars of another kind (Krippendorff, 2004). For example, one might date a document from the vocabulary used within it or one might infer the problems of a city from the concerns expressed in letters written to the city’s mayor’s office. Researchers conducting a content analysis must draw inferences about phenomena that are not directly observable, and they are often equally resourceful in using a mixture of statistical knowledge, theory, experience, and intuition to answer their research questions from available texts (Krippendorff, 2004).

According to Krippendorff (2004), “Any content analysis should be validatable in principle. Because the *raison d’être* of content analysis is the absence of direct observational evidence, validation may be difficult or infeasible, if not impossible, in practice” (p. 39). Moreover, “the point of requiring that content analyses be validatable in principle is to prevent analysts from pursuing research questions that allow no empirical validation or that yield results with no backing except by the authority of the researcher” (Krippendorff, 2004, p. 39).

Content Analysis Strengths and Limitations

Every research technique has its own strengths and limitations and content analysis is no exception. There are four main distinguishing features of content analysis according to Krippendorff (2004). First, content analysis is an unobtrusive technique unlike other techniques where certain situations may compromise the validity of the research (i.e., experimenter and interviewer interaction effects on subjects).

Second, content analysis can handle unstructured matter as data. For efficiency, researchers can gain considerable advantage if they can impose a structure on the data so that the results can readily and quickly be analyzed. One of the many limitations of surveys or questionnaires is that they force respondents to select predefined choices preventing a respondent's voice to be freely heard. Hence, "The chief advantage of the unstructuredness of content analysis data is that it preserves the conceptions of the data's sources, which structured methods largely ignore" (Krippendorff, 2004, p. 41).

Third, content analysis is context sensitive and thus allows the researcher to process data texts that are significant, meaningful, and informative. Content sensitive methods acknowledge the textuality of data. They recognize data are read by and make sense to others, and they proceed by reference to contexts of their own.

Fourth, content analysis can cope with large volumes of data. "Although content analysis can be used to analyze small samples of texts (in fact, this is quite common, especially in the academic world, where funds are few and stakes are not as high as in politics, commerce, or medicine), such uses do not realize the technique's full potential" (Krippendorff, 2004, p. 42). Important and worth discussing for purposes of claiming the

legitimacy of this study is the fact that, “The exponentially growing Internet is an unimaginably large but for the most part unmined source of content analysis data” (Krippendorff, 2004, p. 43).

According to Krippendorff (2004) a researcher proceeds from texts to results by ensuring that the research design incorporates the following procedures: (1) unitizing, (2) sampling, (3) recording/coding, (4) reducing, (5) abductively inferring, and (6) narrating.

Unitizing involves systematically distinguishing segments of text that are of interest to the researcher. Sampling allows the researcher to limit observations to a manageable subset of units that are statistically or conceptually representative of the set of all possible units, the population or universe of interest. Recording/coding bridges the gap between unitized texts and someone’s reading of them, between distinct images and what people see in them, or between separate observations and their situational interpretations.

Reducing data allows researchers to be more efficient, especially when large volumes of data are implicated. And in qualitative pursuits, rearticulations and summaries reduce the diversity of text to what truly matters. “Abductively inferring contextual phenomena from texts moves an analysis outside the data. It bridges the gap between descriptive accounts of text and what they mean, refer to, entail, provoke, or cause. It points to unobserved phenomena in the context of interest to the analyst” (Krippendorff, 2004, p. 85).

Abductive inferences distinguish content analysis from other modes of inquiry. Narrating the answers to researcher questions amounts to the researchers making their

results comprehensible to others. Oftentimes this entails explaining the practical significance of the finding or the contributions they make to the available literature. Lastly, the components of a content analysis discussed above do not need to be organized in linear fashion and may include iterative loops.

Population

The population from which the sample will be drawn consists of 200 Executive MBA programs. According to the Executive MBA Council (2011), there are a total of 300 Executive MBA programs worldwide and running a query within the Directory of EMBA Programs database located on the Executive MBA Council website returns a total of 200 Executive MBA programs located throughout the United States. In this case, since there are too many cases to code given available resources, sampling techniques are appropriate.

Sampling strategy

According to Krippendorff, there are several elements that need close attention when devising a sampling strategy. Krippendorff (2004) suggests that:

Relevance sampling is not probabilistic. In using this form of sampling, an analyst proceeds by following a conceptual hierarchy, systematically lowering the number of units that need to be considered for an analysis. The resulting units of text are not meant to be representative of a population of texts; rather, they are the population of relevant texts, excluding the textual units that do not possess relevant information. (p. 119)

Following this logic, four criteria are used to select the population of relevant texts or cases in this study.

The four criteria that guide the selection of the seven cases are as follows: (1) the educational program must be an Executive MBA program, (2) the institution must hold

AACSB International accreditation for its graduate business administration program(s), (3) the Executive MBA program must be offered by a U.S. institution of higher learning, and (4) the Executive MBA program must be based primarily in the United States.

Applying these four criteria narrows the 200 Executive MBA programs to a total of seven. These programs are dispersed throughout the United States.

According to Hodson (1999), “The theoretical goals of the study play an important role in determining the criteria for selecting cases” (p. 17). And Krippendorf (2004) suggests that:

Sampling problems do not arise when analysts can answer their research questions by examining all texts of a particular population of texts, such as all of a given writer’s works, all issues of a newspaper within a chosen period, all documents generated by a legal proceeding, the complete medical record of a patient, or all e-mails received and answered by a certain office, on a certain issue, and during a certain period of time. (p. 113)

In this study sampling issues should not arise because the selection criteria listed above will be judiciously followed.

After applying the four sampling criteria discussed above, seven Executive MBA programs were identified for this study. To prevent the Executive MBA programs included in this study from being identified, they were given the following pseudonyms: Amethyst University, Pearl University, Agate University, Ruby University, Topaz University, Sapphire University, and Turquoise University.

Institutional Consent

While this study does not involve human subjects, a letter will be sent to all seven Executive MBA program administrators requesting content and documents not available on institutional websites (see Appendix A). Sets of curricular documents from each Executive MBA program will be used for the purpose of informing this dissertation.

Data Collection Procedures

According to Bassey (1999), “there are three major methods of collecting research data: asking questions (and listening intently to the answers), observing events (and noting carefully what happens) and reading documents” (p. 81). Content from seven institutions will be “read” by the researcher of this study.

Documentary Methodology

With very little debate, it is clear to most, that the World Wide Web, enabled through the Internet, has revolutionized communications and has provided new channels of disseminating information. This study leverages the Internet to formulate a clearer program portrait of each Executive MBA program by examining each program’s website. More specifically, in this study a wide range of online documents such as course descriptions, course syllabi, codes of conduct, values statements, mission statements, and general website page content will be downloaded from the World Wide Web. Content not available via the World Wide Web will be requested from each Executive MBA program. All content will be amassed and analyzed to assist with determining how the sample of Executive MBA programs conveys to the world their posture on the inclusion of ethics throughout their Executive MBA program.

Data Analysis

According to Stake (1995), “there is no particular moment when data analysis begins. Analysis is a matter of giving meaning to first impressions as well as to final compilations” (p. 71). Stake (1995) and Fred Erickson, a highly respected writer on qualitative studies, believe that the most prominent characteristic of qualitative inquiry is its emphasis on interpretation. And, according to Stake (1995), “interpretation is a major part of all research” (p. 9). From observations and other data, researchers draw their own conclusions or, more plainly stated, try to make sense of the data collected. For example, Miles and Huberman (1994) propose a data analysis model which includes three elements: (1) data reduction: process of selecting, focusing, simplifying, abstracting, and transforming the “raw” data; (2) data display: an organized display of information that allows conclusion drawing and action taking; and (3) conclusion drawing/verification: sense-making of the data and building consensus.

Thinking about research analysis as a puzzle is helpful to understanding that qualitative data sets are complex and ambiguous. LeCompte (2000) believes that:

Analysis is a bit like taking apart puzzles and reassembling them. However, puzzles cannot be completed if pieces are missing, warped, or broken. Similarly, if pieces of data are incomplete or biased, research results cannot provide a complete picture of a program or a good solution to problem. (p. 146)

LeCompte’s perspective on research analysis provides an alternative point of view on how to manage qualitative data sets due to their complexity and ambiguity.

Since qualitative data are incomplete and biased “qualitative data have no initial intrinsic organizational structure or meaning by which to explain the events under study, researchers (or in this case, educators) must then create a structure and impose it on the

data” (LeCompte, 2000, p. 147). Because of this, the structure or framework is created in multiple stages and forms the basis for assembling data into a viable explanation or solution.

LeCompte (2000) proposes that “doing” research analysis requires five steps. The steps are as follows: (1) *tidying up*, (2) *finding items*, (3) *creating stable sets of items*, (4) *creating patterns*, and (5) *assembling structures*. When analyzing the data I will use LeCompte’s five-step model. The first step, *tidying up*, refers to performing all of the “housekeeping” activities ensuring that the researcher is well organized and prepared to make a preliminary assessment of the data set.

The second step in the data analysis process is *finding items* (LeCompte, 2000). Items are “the specific things in the data set that researchers code, count, and assemble into research results” (LeCompte, 2000, p. 148). In other words, the data are sifted until the researcher separates the relevant from the irrelevant.

The third step in the data analysis process according to LeCompte (2000) is *creating stable sets of items*. According to LeCompte (2000):

Once initial items have been identified, researchers must organize them into groups or categories by comparing and contrasting items (Glaser & Strauss, 1967), or mixing and matching them, somewhat like the reading readiness tasks in workbooks that elementary school children use to compare and contrast like and unlike objects. (pp. 148-149)

The resulting lists constitute a taxonomy, category, or classification scheme.

The fourth step in the data analysis process is *creating patterns* (LeCompte, 2000). Once stable taxonomies have been created, then patterns need to be identified. “Identifying patterns involves seeing how taxonomies can be clumped together in

meaningful ways. Patterns are made up of taxonomies that seem to fit together or be related to one another” (LeCompte, 2000, p. 150).

Finally, the fifth step in the data analysis process is *assembling structures* (LeCompte, 2000). LeCompte describes this step as assembling groups of patterns into structures, or groups of related or linked patterns, that when aggregated build an overall description of the program or problem being studied. LeCompte (2000) believes that, “if the data are good and analysis skillfully done, such descriptions can help participants see more clearly how to solve problems, improve programs, assess their effectiveness, or develop theories explaining what happened” (p. 151).

Content Analysis

One particular rich source of information about educational programs can be a program’s online records and documents. “The nature of program records and documents will vary from program to program, but in contemporary society all programs leave a trail of paper that the evaluator can follow and use to increase knowledge and understanding about the program” (Patton, 1980, p. 152).

According to Patton (1980), “program documents provide valuable information because of what the evaluator can learn directly by reading them; but they also provide a stimulus for generating questions that can only be pursued through direct observation and interviewing” (p. 152). It is important to note that program documents are subject to a variety of measurement errors: “They may be incomplete; inaccurate; selective; in that only certain aspects of a program (that is, positive aspects) are documented; and they are often highly uneven in quality, with great detail on some occasions and virtually nothing

for other programmatic components” (Patton, 1980, p. 158). Understanding when program documents are incomplete is extremely important. Program documents that are incomplete, inaccurate, or selective can lead to misinformation that distorts the research findings.

Several researchers such as Tesch hold particular perspectives on content analysis. Tesch (1990) suggests:

A central idea in content analysis is that the many words of the text are classified into much fewer content categories. While the “recording units” are sometimes larger than words (sentences, paragraphs, or themes), the basic procedure in content analysis is to design categories that are relevant to the research purpose and to sort all occurrences of relevant words or other recording units into these categories. (p. 79)

Once the aforementioned is accomplished then the frequency of occurrences in each category would be counted and certain conclusions would be drawn (Tesch, 1990).

The method explained above is just one example of the many approaches to data analysis but according to Tesch (1990), “the only qualitative procedure in content analysis, i.e., the one in which numbers don’t play any role at all, is the exploration of word usage, where researchers want to discover the range of meaning that a word can express in normal use” (p. 80). During the data analysis procedure, target words are extracted along with specified amount of text before and after the target words.

“Researchers can then group together those words in which meaning is similar and establish how broadly or narrowly a certain term is construed by the author of the text, or they may compare word uses among groups of authors” (Tesch, 1990, p. 80).

Reviewing online content may become a daunting task as defining the sampling units for a website content analysis is often a difficult and unsatisfying task. A website

has no physical boundaries in the usual sense, which could assist with determining the start and end of the content under analysis (Rossler, 2002). Further complicating online content analysis or coding is determining which parts of a website have to be analyzed, and in particular how deep the coding needs to go into the architecture of a particular website (Rossler, 2002).

The following steps will be taken to collect the data for the analysis of the curricular integration of ethics in the seven Executive MBA programs included in this study: (1) institutional and program websites will be accessed to obtain information about the integration of ethics in the mission statement, vision statement, and value statement; student honor code/ethics code and code of conduct; and course requirements and course descriptions; (2) student handbooks and co-curricular program activity descriptions will be obtained from each Executive MBA program and then analyzed to partially determine the extent of the integration of ethics in the curricula; and (3) course syllabi, required textbooks, and co-curricular course activity descriptions will be requested from each Executive MBA program and/or accessed at each program's website.

The following steps will be taken during the analysis of Executive MBA curricular documents: (1) program-wide documents (e.g., mission statements, student handbooks, codes of conduct, and oaths of honor) will be coded and analyzed to identify ethics-related themes and ethical knowledge, competencies, and dispositions; (2) course specific content such as course objectives will be manually coded for ethics-related themes as well as for ethical knowledge, competencies, and dispositions; and (3) all remaining course specific content such as course descriptions, course syllabi, course

assignments, and required textbooks will be analyzed to determine: pedagogical methods used in ethics education and ethics-related themes.

To address this study's purpose, I organize my examination around one central research question: To what extent and in what ways do U.S. Executive MBA programs offer ethics-related courses (or units within courses) which are designed to enhance the ethical decision-making of graduates? To better understand my overarching research question and to build a stronger foundation, I address in the study three sub-questions. One, what ethics-related courses (or units within courses) do Executive MBA programs offer to students? Two, are these ethics-related courses (or units within courses) required or elective in the curriculum? And three, what ethical knowledge, competencies, and dispositions are addressed in the ethics-related courses (or units within courses)?

Trustworthiness and Ethical Considerations

According to Stake (2003), "the value of the best research is not likely to outweigh injury to a person exposed. Qualitative researchers are guests in the private spaces of the world. Their manners should be good and their code of ethics strict" (p. 154). I intend to apply a strict code of ethics as I conduct this study.

Trustworthiness

According to Lincoln and Guba (1985), "the basic issue in relation to trustworthiness is simple: How can an inquirer persuade his or her audiences (including self) that the findings of an inquiry are worth paying attention to, worth taking account of? What arguments can be mounted, what criteria invoked, what questions asked, that would be persuasive on this issue?" (p. 290) In addition, Erlandson, Harris, Skipper, and

Allen (1993) suggest that “trustworthiness is a matter of concern to the consumer of the report who will use the research for thought or action” (p. 160).

Consequently, Lincoln and Guba (1985) suggest four elements that can establish trustworthiness. They are (1) credibility, (2) transferability, (3) dependability, (4) and confirmability. In addition, Lincoln and Guba (1985) suggest that certain techniques can be employed to establish credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. Chief among these techniques are prolonged engagement and persistent observation, triangulation, peer debriefing, negative case analysis, and member checking to establish credibility; thick description to facilitate transferability; and auditing to establish dependability and confirmability (Y. S. Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Credibility (or internal validity) involves ensuring that the inquiry activities assisted the researcher with collecting data or information that actually occurred within the context of the research design. And several activities that can assist with ensuring credibility are prolonged engagement, which is the investment of sufficient time to achieve certain purposes; persistent observation adds the dimension of importance to what otherwise may appear as an insignificant finding; triangulation, which refers to the use of multiple and different sources, methods, investigators, and theories to improve the probability that the finding and interpretations will be found credible; peer debriefing, which is the process of exposing oneself to a disinterested peer and probe for aspects of the inquiry which were overlooked; negative case analysis, which is the process of refining the hypothesis until all known cases or scenarios are accounted for; and member

checking, perhaps the most important activity of all, whereby data, interpretations, and conclusions are tested with participants (Y. S. Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Applying all activities listed above to ensure credibility may be an insurmountable task given the design of this study. Notwithstanding, prolonged engagement with content and persistent observation of potential changes in online content may ensure greater credibility of the data. Unlike content found in a book, online content has the propensity to constantly change. To that end, the content analysis in this study will only include documents retrieved on a particular date and time.

In this study, triangulation will be accomplished by obtaining multiple sources of data from seven different Executive MBA programs from across the U.S. The various sources of data include course syllabi, handbooks, and mission statements just to name a few. The triangulation design which includes analyzing different institutional cases and various sources of data should strengthen the credibility of the study.

Transferability (or external validity) refers to the responsibility of the researcher to provide the breadth and depth of information, or a “thick description,” so that another can determine for him or herself whether or not transferability judgments are possible (Y. S. Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Furthermore, the breadth and depth of the content analyzed should provide sources of information which should assist in illustrating themes and provide evidence that supports the themes or key findings that address the research question. And, it is through providing these direct sources from the content which is analyzed that transferability will be achieved.

Dependability (or reliability) and confirmability (or objectivity) require an audit component in order to establish trustworthiness. The role of the auditor discussed here runs parallel to the role of a fiscal auditor, which is to make an inspection, and provide verification, and an attestation to the accuracy and fairness of the research (Y. S. Lincoln & Guba, 1985). In order to establish trustworthiness in this study, a second person will review each critical step of the content analysis ensuring the accuracy and fairness of the research. This person has experience in research and is a graduate of an MBA and doctoral program.

According to Erlandson, Harris, Skipper, and Allen (1993):

If ethical inquiry is to have an impact on human knowledge, either by adding to an overall body of knowledge or by solving a particular problem, it must guarantee some measure of credibility about what it has inquired, must communicate in a manner that will enable application by its intended audience, and must enable its audience to check on its findings and the inquiry process by which the findings were obtained. (p. 28)

Ethical Considerations

According to Punch (1986), “the view that science is neutral and beneficial evaporated in the wake of the Nuremberg Trials (detailing the Nazis’ “medical experiments” in concentration camps) and in the horrifying aftermath of the atomic bombs dropped on Japan in 1945. Controlling science, however, raises acute practical, ethical, and legal questions that are difficult to resolve” (p. 29). Those questions confront humankind with fundamental dilemmas ranging from the protection of subjects to the freedom to conduct research and publish findings.

In today’s research arena, codes of ethics for professional and academic associations are the conventional format for implementing moral principles. Most major

scholarly associations have adopted codes of ethics with an overlapping emphasis on four guidelines for directing research (Christians, 2003). According to Christians (2003) these four guidelines are as follows: (a) informed consent, which insists that subjects have the right to be informed about the nature and consequences of experiments in which they are involved; (b) deception, which insists that researchers design experiments free of active deception; (c) privacy and confidentiality, which insists on safeguards that protect subject identity; and (d) accuracy, which insists that data must be accurate or valid.

“Among the most significant dimensions of the legal framework that affect documentary researchers are copyright, freedom of information and data protection” (McCulloch, 2004, p. 48). These legal requirements relate closely to the ethical problems that can arise in documentary research. One instance of this is the issue of whether specific institutions and individuals should be identified (McCulloch, 2004). The data used to inform this research will be made available either on request or accessed via each program’s website and as such, this study will not identify any individual institution’s policies by name. Instead, pseudonyms for institutional names will be used.

Limitations of the Methodology

In academic and research circles it is well understood that qualitative researchers strive to demonstrate that their studies are credible. Creswell and Miller (2000) suggest that the validity of a study is predicated on two major perspectives: “The lens researchers choose to validate their studies and researchers’ paradigm assumptions” (p. 125). Using a particular lens to validate a study and a researcher’s paradigm assumptions can put into question a study’s credibility. All in all, there are many issues other than validity and

reliability that affect and concern the research design and the list is exhaustive but the most salient issues that will be discussed below are generalizability and sampling (Bogdan & Biklen, 1982).

According to Bogdan and Biklen (1982) people who are uncertain as to whether they should look for a “typical” situation—one that is most similar to others of its type—or an “unusual” situation, an exceptional case, are oftentimes stymied from choosing the situation that mitigates the concerns surrounding generalizability. In essence, “Researchers who choose to go to the “typical case” route are concerned about generalizability as it is traditionally defined” (Bogdan & Biklen, 1982, p. 62).

Researchers who employ this strategy are oftentimes seeking to learn something general by studying one case. However, researchers are challenged with whether their study meets the true definition of generalizability and oftentimes leave it up to readers to come to their own conclusions concerning generalizability (Bogdan & Biklen, 1982).

Intentionally choosing the unusual case or “falling” into a case seriously leaves the question of generalizability open to debate as well. To avoid uncertainties with obtaining generalizability, “The researcher has to determine what it is he or she is studying; that is, of what is this a case?” (Bogdan & Biklen, 1982, p. 63)

The issue of whether to select a typical or an unusual case needs to be weighed against making a decision that makes the method look deceptively simple. So that this does not become an issue, the researcher needs to be familiar with relevant theoretical knowledge of the field of inquiry and skillful in isolating the variables that are significant from the variables that are irrelevant (Best & Kahn, 1989). According to Best and Kahn

(1989) there appears to be a tendency on the part of researchers, to choose cases that are spectacular rather than those that are truly significant. Choosing cases that are spectacular can affect the research method, design, and outcome.

Narrowing the focus of the study will in many cases make examining the entire population of interest manageable. In other words, internal sampling allows researchers to make decisions and provides a general idea of what is going to be studied, who is going to be interviewed, and the extent of what and how much documentation will be reviewed (Bogdan & Biklen, 1982). Narrowing one's scope can also affect the credibility of the study. According to Bogdan and Biklen (1982):

There are dangers in relying exclusively on a small number of subjects, but you should not approach internal sampling with the idea that you have to spend the same amount of time with everyone. Similarly, with documents and other material, some pieces of data are simply richer and deserve more attention. (p. 63)

In general, the sources of data that will be relied upon to nourish the study need to be balanced so that the study's credibility is not jeopardized.

Thus far I have discussed research design as an ever-evolving process, a process that ebbs and flows and oftentimes morphs into unexpected dimensions. "Qualitative studies that report how many people do this and how many people do that, rather than generating concepts and understandings, are not highly regarded by qualitative researchers" (Bogdan & Biklen, 1982, p. 71). Qualitative studies that do not generate concepts and understandings lose credibility and contribute very little to furthering a discipline's existing body of knowledge.

Another important limitation worth mentioning is the issue of personal biases and judgments. According to Asher (1976), "As in all research, the observers in case studies

must be cautious in letting personal biases and judgments influence their observations. The rule in all research is to record facts and only facts at the time of observation and later interpret the facts in light of theory” (p. 149). Importing one’s personal biases and judgments into a study is equally damaging to a study’s credibility. To mitigate this, facts and only facts must be recorded and facts must be replicable by other observers and ensure that while interpretations differ, the facts remain constant.

Subjective bias is also a constant threat to objective data gathering and analysis. According to Best and Khan (1989), “The danger of selecting variable relationships based upon preconceived convictions and the apparent consistency of a too limited sample of observations may lead the researcher to an unwarranted feeling of uncertainty about the validity of his or her conclusions” (p. 94). In other words, to strengthen a study’s credibility and to minimize operational threats, researchers must be objective to the extent possible. The use of objectivity in this study to gather and analyze data will minimize subjectivity as the researcher will use codification rules to ensure that data obtained are reliable and valid (See Appendix B).

Chapter Summary

The use of content analysis in education is not a new phenomenon. Today, content analysis has become a widespread technique in the social sciences (Hodson, 1999). More and more content analysis is viewed as much an art as it is a science; it is a technique for making inferences by objectively and systematically identifying specified characteristics of messages (Marshall & Rossman, 1989). These characteristics of content analysis are appealing to a broad spectrum of researchers in varied disciplines. Given the

widespread use of content analysis and the level of respect that the research method has achieved in various disciplines, I will be extremely attentive to being trustworthy and ethical while I conduct this study.

CHAPTER FOUR

RESULTS

Introduction

This qualitative research study examines the curricular integration of ethics in Executive Master of Business Administration (EMBA) programs. More specifically, the research conducted in this study includes an analysis of U.S. Executive MBA programs housed within graduate management institutions that are accredited by the Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business (AACSB) International.

The purpose of this study was to investigate to what extent and in what ways Executive MBA programs are designed to address ethical decision-making for business executives who matriculate in these programs. To that end, I sought to identify ethics-related knowledge, skills, and dispositions associated with EMBA programs such that graduates acquire the tools needed to ensure—to the extent possible—appropriate ethical decision-making. The latter was accomplished by thoroughly examining EMBA program-wide curricular content. Particular attention was given to EMBA core courses and units within core courses which contained ethics-related content especially given that the core course component of a curriculum provides a basis for shared knowledge, measurable milestones, and builds *esprit de corps* (Datar, et al., 2010).

The data collected for this documentary study was vast and varied. As a result, the analysis of each Executive MBA program included in this study began with an in-depth analysis of institutional, program, and course-related content with a corresponding shift from the macro to the micro level. And as such, collecting a wide range of content such as institutional mission, vision, and value statements; program handbooks; codes of ethics and conduct; course descriptions; and course syllabi provided multiple sources where examples and “thick” descriptions could be drawn from to better determine whether EMBA programs are designed to enhance ethical decision-making of graduates.

The purpose of this chapter is to present key findings across curricular content collected from the seven Executive MBA programs included in this study in an effort to address this study’s main research question: To what extent and in what ways do U.S. Executive MBA programs offer ethics-related courses (or units within courses) which are designed to enhance the ethical decision-making of graduates? The chapter is organized by first providing a general overview of EMBA programs included in this study to provide a rich context to better understand the key findings. The chapter then addresses the curricular integration of ethics in the EMBA programs included in this study by focusing on program-wide documents such as mission, vision, and value statements followed by a discussion on program admission requirements, course sequence practices, and co-curricular activities. The chapter then hones in on specific content from ethics-related core courses and elective courses in an effort to address two of this study’s three research sub-questions: What ethics-related courses (or units within courses) do Executive MBA programs offer to students? And, are these ethics-related courses (or

units within courses) required or elective in the curriculum? The chapter concludes by addressing this study's third and last research sub-question: What ethical knowledge, competencies, and dispositions are addressed in the ethics-related courses (or units within courses)?

General Overview of Executive MBA Programs in Study

This section provides a general overview of the seven Executive MBA programs included in this study in an effort to provide a rich context to better understand subsequent key findings. The general overview of EMBA programs addresses the following topics: admissions data, enrollment data, student profile, faculty profile, and tuition.

The data analyzed for this chapter suggest that Executive MBA programs included in this study are representative of a broad cross section of EMBA programs. Moreover, the data collected primarily from school websites depict colorful and vivid portraits of programs that fall within a spectrum of educational philosophies. That is, programs that purport to unify various components of the curriculum for a globalized society.

Although the focus was on top-ranked institutions, I believe that the Executive MBA programs included in this study are bellwethers for graduate management education and are representative of various trends. Furthermore, many of the EMBA programs included in this study have been in operation for many years providing an opportunity to better understand the evolution and trajectory of the EMBA program over several decades. For example, one of the EMBA programs included in this study has been

in operation since the early 1940s while one program was founded as recently as the early 2000s (Quacquarelli Symonds, 2011).

In 2009, Executive MBA programs were evaluated and ranked by *Bloomberg BusinessWeek* using a highly publicized methodology which consists of two main sources of data—a survey of EMBA graduates and a survey of EMBA program directors. According to *Bloomberg BusinessWeek's* most recent EMBA program rankings published in November and on odd numbered years, four of the seven EMBA programs included in this study were rated among the top 10 best EMBA programs in the world. Two of the seven EMBA programs were ranked second tier and one was not ranked because the program lacked adequate response rates in one or more of the ranking surveys (Bloomberg, 2005).

A total of six Executive MBA programs were housed within graduate management schools and had been designated as Doctorate-granting Universities, Research Universities (very high research activity), while one had been classified as a Special Focus Institution, Schools of Business and Management by The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching. In addition, five of the seven graduate management schools were identified as having an institutional control of Private, Non-For-Profit while two were identified as Public, Non-For-Profit (The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, 2010). Furthermore, all seven graduate management schools were accredited by the Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business (2007b).

In an effort to protect anonymity, as promised to each of the seven Executive MBA programs selected for this study, the EMBA programs were given the following pseudonyms to protect them from being identified: Agate University, Amethyst University, Pearl University, Ruby University, Sapphire University, Topaz University, and Turquoise University.

Admissions Data

Given the vast uniqueness of admission requirements between all seven Executive MBA programs included in this study coupled with the need to better understand the degree to which ethics becomes an important factor in the admission process warranted an analysis of admission requirements. In an effort to maintain program confidentiality, specific identifying information regarding a school's admission requirements was not provided below.

The Executive MBA Council has collected numerous data on Executive MBA program admissions such as the number of students admitted per admission cycle. As shown in Table 1, the mean number of new students admitted for the seven Executive MBA programs included in this study was 67 while the range was 51 to 98 (Executive MBA Council, 2011).

Table 1. Business School and Executive MBA (EMBA) Program Characteristics

Characteristic	Mean	Range
EMBA New Student Admission	67 students	51 – 98 students
EMBA Enrollment	300 students	98 – 568 students
EMBA Program Length	20 months	15 – 24 months
EMBA Student Age	37 years	35 – 39 years
EMBA Student Work Experience	13 years	10 – 15 years
Business School Faculty	141 faculty	42 – 277 faculty
Business School Full-time Tenured Faculty	56 faculty	26 – 102 faculty
Business School Full-time Non-tenured Faculty	58 faculty	10 – 175 faculty
EMBA Program Tenured Faculty	76 faculty	61 – 100 faculty
Business School Tenured Faculty with Doctorate	56 faculty	27 – 102 faculty
Business School Non-tenured Faculty with Doctorate	59 faculty	26 – 104 faculty
EMBA Tuition	\$112,278 dollars	\$90,000 - \$155,000 dollars

Based on Executive MBA program websites, admission cycles varied from school to school. For example, Pearl University's prospective students have one of three options for applying: (1) twice during the month of September at the main campus, (2) twice during the month of January at the main campus, and (3) once during the month of January at a satellite location (Pearl University, 2011a). Ruby University's EMBA program has a rolling admission process and accepts a cohort of students once every fall (Ruby University, 2011a) while the Amethyst University EMBA program accepts students once a year during the summer and has five application "rounds" (Amethyst University, 2011a). Turquoise University's EMBA program's application review cycle occurs on a rolling basis for the class entering during the month of August and has two application "rounds" (Turquoise University, 2011a).

Agate University admits students in June and has a total of three application "rounds" (Agate University, 2011a) while the Sapphire University EMBA program staff review applications in the order in which they were received. Noting that students are encouraged to submit their application as early as possible for the EMBA program that begins in the fall (Sapphire University, 2011a). Lastly, Topaz University's EMBA program admits students in the fall and has four application "rounds" (Topaz University, 2011a).

Upon further review of the data collected for this study, all seven Executive MBA programs required that students complete an online entrance application with each online application requiring students to provide varied information. Overall, the majority of the EMBA programs did not have a business course pre-requisite as part of their admission

requirements. All but one program required or gave preference to a particular undergraduate major and as a result of admission requirements being so varied, students were admitted from a wide range of academic backgrounds. However, Sapphire University's EMBA program's admission requirements stated that although no specific undergraduate major was required, the Admissions Committee closely reviews courses students have previously taken to ensure students have the quantitative and analytical preparation required to successfully complete the EMBA program. All students entering Sapphire University's EMBA program must demonstrate knowledge of algebra and differential calculus before beginning the program (Sapphire University, 2011a).

All seven Executive MBA programs included in this study required that students have previous managerial work experience. However, the length of managerial experience varied from program to program. Agate University required that students remain employed full-time during their enrollment in the EMBA program. Furthermore, all but Sapphire and Turquoise University's admission requirements required the Graduate Management Admissions Test (GMAT) or similar entrance exam.

All seven Executive MBA programs required that students submit a personal essay. Ruby University stood out from the other six EMBA programs by requiring that a student submit a total of three essays. Of particular interest was that one of the essays required that a student discuss his or her professional objectives and in particular asked a student to discuss why he or she was interested in pursuing a degree from an institution which emphasized a global educational experience. Essay two required a student to select and discuss what historical leader he or she most respected while essay three required the

student to choose a significant ethical dilemma that he or she was currently facing and within a broader context, discuss the impact of the dilemma on the global business community as the dynamics of globalization grows in pace and in complexity. Essay three also required that a student select a topic that he or she was passionate about and asked a student to identify the ethical challenges associated with the topic. In addition, the essay required that a student opine whether or not individual companies and managers could act ethically in support of global standards (Ruby University, 2011a).

As to student entrance interviews, all seven Executive MBA programs required them. Ruby University required a total of four interviews while according to Turquoise University's EMBA program website, only "serious prospects" would be interviewed (Turquoise University, 2011a).

Application fees were required by all seven Executive MBA programs and the fees ranged from \$125 to \$200. In addition, none of the EMBA programs except Amethyst University's Executive MBA program required a "Credential Verification." According to Amethyst University's website:

We do this to deter fraudulent applications and preserve the integrity of our community. If you are admitted and submit your tuition deposit, you will be provided with instructions on the verification process. You will also be responsible for the fee for this service. Any omission, falsification or misrepresentation in your application, including violations of GMAT, GRE, or any ESL testing policies, is grounds for automatic revocation of all offers of admission and financial assistance, or expulsion from the Global Executive MBA program. (2011a, p. 1)

While Sapphire University's EMBA program puts applicants on notice that the MBA office reserves the right to verify that information and documentation submitted to the school are complete and accurate (2011a).

Additional admission requirements common to all seven Executive MBA programs included a requirement that a student submit a curriculum vitae, official transcripts from all universities attended, and letters of recommendation. All schools appeared to require a letter from a student's employer outlining the employer's support of time and/or financial commitment. The majority of the schools also required that a student's employer certify that he or she would be able to attend all required classes.

A deeper review of admission requirements revealed that only Pearl University's Executive MBA program required that applicants sign an honor code pledge as part of the application process. This falls in contrast to Amethyst University which required that each admitted student sign a statement indicating that he or she accepted the provisions of the Honor Code and the Honor Code Bylaws without reservations as a condition to being admitted to the EMBA program.

Enrollment Data

All things treated equally, enrollment trends today reveal that students are increasingly obtaining MBA degrees through part-time and Executive MBA programs (Datar, et al., 2010). The enrollment trends heighten the importance and the need to determine the extent and ways in which U.S. Executive MBA programs offer ethics-related courses (or units within courses) which are designed to enhance the ethical decision-making of graduates.

Data published in *Bloomberg BusinessWeek's, Best Business Schools 2010, Business School Rankings & Profiles*, indicated that student enrollment varies substantially from business school to business school. The self-reported total graduate

management student enrollment mean for the seven schools was 1,760 and their reported range was 470 to 3,501 (Bloomberg, 2010). *Bloomberg BusinessWeek's, EMBA, Business School Rankings & Profiles 2010*, suggest that Executive MBA student enrollment also varies substantially from program to program. As shown in Table 1, EMBA programs have self-reported that the mean number of matriculated students at any given time was 300 with a range of 98 to 568 students (2010). Students enrolled at the seven business schools included in this study primarily enrolled on a full-time versus part-time basis. For comparison purposes, the mean full-time MBA student enrollment was 717 with a range of 180 to 1,177 versus the mean part-time MBA student enrollment of 568 with a range of zero (some schools of business do not offer part-time enrollment) to 1,641 (Bloomberg, 2010).

Student Profile

Student profiles vary among graduate schools. The Executive MBA student profile was no different. The EMBA student profile when compared to the traditional MBA student profile typically had unique characteristics. For example, EMBA students were older than students enrolled in traditional MBA programs--oftentimes because of admission criteria that require years of work experience. According to EMBA program websites and as shown in Table 1, the mean student age of enrollment was 37 years while the range was 35 to 39 years of age. In addition to being diverse in student age, EMBA programs varied substantially in gender composition. According to data collected by *Quacquarelli Symonds*, the percentage of female students matriculated in each of the seven EMBA programs was as follows: Agate University, 21%; Amethyst University,

31%; Pearl University, 19%; Ruby University, 24%; Sapphire University, 28%; Topaz University, 30%; and Turquoise University, 10% (2011).

Executive MBA program websites also revealed that the mean student work experience before matriculating in EMBA programs varied from program to program. The mean student work experience for the seven schools included in this study was 13 years and the range was 10 to 15 years of work experience (see Table 1). Besides having several years of work experience, many EMBA programs required students to have several years of management experience. For example, Ruby University's EMBA program required applicants to have at least three years of middle or senior managerial experience. The school reported on its website that the majority of its students have an average of 12 to 15 years of managerial work experience (Ruby University, 2011a).

Faculty Profile

It comes as no surprise that all institutions have particular hiring and teaching strategies evidenced, for example, by the number of faculty that they employ. *Bloomberg BusinessWeek's, Best Business Schools 2010, Business School Rankings & Profiles*, indicated that the mean number of faculty employed by business schools housing the seven Executive MBA programs included in this study (see Table 1) was 141 and the range was from a low of 42 to a high of 277 faculty (Bloomberg, 2010).

Many business schools also formulate unique tenure strategies oftentimes reflected in the number of full-time tenured and full-time non-tenured faculty employed. *Bloomberg BusinessWeek's, Best Business Schools 2010, Business School Rankings & Profiles* reported that the number of full-time tenured and full-time non-tenured faculty

varied from business school to business school (see Table 1). The mean number of full-time tenured faculty versus full-time non-tenured faculty at the seven business schools included in this study was 56 and 58 respectively. The range of full-time tenured faculty versus full-time non-tenured faculty was 26 to 102 (tenured) and 10 to 175 (non-tenured) respectively. Moreover, the mean of tenured faculty teaching in Executive MBA programs was 76 and the range was 61 to 100 tenured faculty (2010).

Another characteristic most often reported by business schools was the number of faculty members who are employed with advanced degrees (e.g., Ph.D.). *Bloomberg BusinessWeek's Best Business Schools 2010, Business School Rankings & Profiles*, provided graduate school data on tenured versus non-tenured faculty doctoral degree attainment (see Table 1). Of the seven business schools housing Executive MBA programs in this study, the mean of tenured versus non-tenured faculty doctoral degree attainment was 56 and 59 respectively. The range for tenured faculty doctoral degree attainment was a low of 27 to a high of 102 faculty while the range for non-tenured faculty doctoral degree attainment was 26 to 104 faculty (2010).

In addition, the seven Executive MBA programs included in this study have also reported the percentage of tenured faculty teaching in their respective programs. The percentage of tenured faculty in EMBA programs was as follows: Agate University, 65%; Amethyst University, 75%; Pearl University, 100%; Ruby University, 76%; Sapphire University, 71%; Topaz University, 61%; and Turquoise University, 87% (Bloomberg, 2010).

Tuition

Data collected from Executive MBA program websites revealed that tuition substantially varied from program to program because of variables such as program length which averaged 20 months and ranged from 15 to 24 months; program format (e.g., five EMBA programs divided their academic year into quarters and two EMBA programs reported using a semester system); and reputation just to name a few. As shown in Table 1, the mean tuition for the full EMBA program across the seven programs included in this study was \$112,278 and ranged from \$90,000 to \$155,000.

Curricular Integration of Ethics in Executive MBA Programs

The previous section provides detailed descriptions of the larger landscape of Executive MBA programs. This section, however, shifts the focus from a larger context to an in-depth examination of the curricular integration of ethics in seven EMBA programs included in this study by focusing on program-wide documents such as mission, vision, and value statements followed by a discussion on program admission requirements, course sequence practices, and co-curricular activities.

Executive MBA programs often differed sharply in their primary orientations and centers of gravity as many schools differentiated themselves on the basis of certain themes. For example, some schools espoused an inclination toward their commitment to globalization while others to general management or leadership development. However, none of the seven schools included in this study espoused an inclination toward a commitment to ethics.

According to the Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business (AACSB):

In general, appropriateness for higher education for management implies learning experiences and career preparation that goes well beyond skill training. It conveys an expectation of education about the context within which management careers develop, as well as capacities for direct applications of functional skills. (2011b, p. 1)

To this end, one would expect a graduate management educational institution to have program-wide documents such as an accessible mission, vision, or value statement and perhaps an honor code that together express a sense of its educational *raison d'être*, particularly what it expects its students to learn and how that learning can be used to benefit the social order. However, this was not the case across all seven EMBA programs included in this study.

Program-wide Documents

A review of program-wide documents such as mission, vision, and value statements revealed ethics-related themes which were integrated into the Executive MBA curriculum of the programs included in this study.

Davis, Ruhe, Lee, and Rajadhyaksha (2007), report an interesting finding. They report that because business schools have been under extreme pressure to address ethics in their curriculum, most schools have made efforts to change, however, mission statements remain untouched. These authors have also found that school mission statements have placed greater relevance on some character traits over others. Davis, Ruhe, Lee, and Rajadhyaksha (2007) support their claim by stating:

For example, religious schools' mission statements emphasized such traits as compassion, loyalty, friendliness, and generosity. Secular schools emphasized traits of openness to learning new things and discovery more than religious schools. Thus, while both types of missions emphasized the development of character traits, greater emphasis seemed to be placed on some traits in a particular context than another. (p. 102)

The following analysis of seven Executive MBA programs revealed similar results.

Mission, Vision, and Value Statements

Sets of curricular documents were carefully analyzed and the mission statement is merely one of many possible documents describing and confirming an institution's position on education and is the most enduring, respected, and public of these documents.

Typically business schools such as six of the seven business schools included in this study will be part of a larger institution. And as such, the mission statement of the business school should be complimentary to the mission of a larger organization.

Looking across the seven graduate management institutions that house their respective Executive MBA programs, varied mission, vision, and value statements abound. Overall, each institution's mission statement appeared to be an important document which guided the graduate management school's decision-making process by spelling out overall goals, providing a sense of direction, and guiding programmatic decision-making as evidenced by a unique EMBA curriculum design. More specifically, the mission statement appeared to provide a framework or a context within which an institution's strategies were formulated as evidenced by each Executive MBA program having a distinct purpose, a unique program design and course offering, and a rather particular pedagogical approach.

Coding of the seven institutions' mission statements revealed the following common themes: learning, students, faculty, community, and environment. Six of the seven mission statements made specific reference to the theme, "leader development" and seek to develop future and global leaders. Amethyst University was the only institution

that made reference to ethics. It did so within a very ample and yet vague context. Coding also revealed that overall ethics was not a perduring theme in institutional mission statements.

According to Amethyst University's mission statement, the school's intention is to attend not only to a student's intellectual growth but also to a student's development as an adult committed to high ethical standards and full participation as a leader in his or her communities. Amethyst University's mission statement also made reference to preparing future members of the learned professions for lives of skilled and ethical service by providing excellent graduate and professional education (2011d). Each mission statement collected for this study was unmistakably written to give the global community a sense of an institution's *raison d'être* while especially giving prospective students the opportunity to better determine if their personal aspirations aligned with those of their favored institutions.

The educational vision should be deeply rooted in the institution's identity and practices and not easily disregarded or discarded when someone such as a dean, program director, or inspired faculty leader moves on (Meacham & Gaff, 2006). Moreover, organizations use vision statements in different ways but for the most part, vision statements are commonly used to give members of a company or organization an opportunity to look at their areas of expertise and to collectively decide on the future direction of their enterprise. Ruby University, Topaz University, and Turquoise University are the only universities that published vision statements on their institutional websites. However, not one of the three graduate management schools integrated ethics-

related content into its vision statement. Overall, the three schools included verbiage in their vision statements declaring each school's goals were to either sustain its reputation, to be one of the best business schools, to be a highly respected business school, or to be the world's leading learning community (Ruby University, 2011b; Topaz University, 2011d; Turquoise University, 2011b).

Unlike the mission and vision statements, a value statement typically consists of a brief aspirational enumeration of the normative commitments that an organization makes to its stakeholders (Painter-Morland, 2008). Keeping the former in mind, four of the seven business schools published value statements on their school's website. Of these four business schools, two integrated ethics-related language into their value statements. Sapphire University's value statement, published on its institutional website, was divided into four main components: Students, Scholarship, Community, and Action. The Students component stated that, "We are dedicated to cementing in our students an ethical core, and to developing their sophisticated analytical knowledge and leadership preparedness" (2011b, p. 1). Moreover, Turquoise University's graduate management institution's value statement revealed that the business school is dedicated to developing skilled, ethical leaders capable of solving critical problems (Turquoise University, 2011b).

Several questions were raised when coding of value statements revealed that only two business schools integrated ethics-related language into their value statements. The fact that so very few business schools included in this study integrated ethics-related language into their value statement is of concern especially because value statements are ubiquitous and viewed as an aspirational enumeration of the normative commitments that

an organization makes to its stakeholders. The questions that were raised included whether business schools that offer Executive MBA programs are truly committed to integrating ethics into their curriculum? And if so, why don't value statements reflect an institution's commitment to integrating ethics into the curriculum? If ethics is not being integrated into an institution's value statement then when and how is ethics being integrated into the Executive MBA curriculum?

Oaths of Honor and Codes of Conduct

According to Painter-Morland (2008), "Those things that represent moral truths or ideals within an organization are often referred to as "core values." These values are usually organized and discussed in "values statements," "codes of ethics," or "codes of conduct" (p. 21). Painter-Morland (2008) also believes that like a value statement:

A code of ethics is normally slightly longer, but still aspirational rather than directive in tone. Codes of conduct, however, are directive in form and intent. Their purpose is to provide employees [students] with behavioral guidelines. In many cases, these codes are supported by a whole hierarchy of policy documents and organizational procedures. This array of documents has long been regarded as one of the most important elements of a successful ethics management program. (p. 122)

In higher education, most schools adopt disciplinary systems, oaths, service projects, and other methods to direct and promote specific behaviors, values, and dispositions. Yet, another way in which students learn about behaviors (i.e., ethical behaviors) is through the ethical climate that they observe in their respective business schools. Preparing students for ethical decision-making should be a key component of the preparation of ethical business leaders because almost all business people, regardless of

their level in an organization, face issues of potential harm and fairness on a regular basis (Education Ethics Task Force, 2004).

All seven of the business schools that house their respective Executive MBA program included in this study had an honor code or similar policy (e.g., oath of honor) used to either direct ethical behavior or to prevent specific unethical behavior. Five of the seven business schools drafted their own honor codes while two business schools adopted and enforced the honor codes established by their larger institution.

Similar to mission, vision, and value statements, honor codes vary from business school to business school as do disciplinary procedures for honor code breaches. Overall, each honor code and corresponding bylaws or constitutions that govern honor codes contained language that defined ethical-related behaviors, values, and dispositions which were deemed acceptable and not acceptable. Moreover, the analysis of honor codes revealed that more often than not, honor codes are not used to prescribe ethical-related behaviors, values, and dispositions but rather are used to define the types of violations, inappropriate actions or behaviors, and potential actions taken against students who violate an honor code or academic policy and procedure. Overall, honor codes were punitive and prescribed those behaviors that the institution believed to be unbecoming of students.

Upon further review of honor codes, Amethyst University, Pearl University, and Ruby University showed the greatest variation in honor code language and most varied in the ways in which they addressed violations or inappropriate actions committed by students. The other four schools included in this study had similar honor codes providing

minimal insight to this study. And as such, the following analysis focused on Amethyst University, Pearl University, and Ruby University in an effort to garner as much revealing information on the unique and differentiating components of each honor code.

Amethyst University's Honor Code was created to promote a set of ethical standards. Amethyst's honor code states:

The University is a community of scholars and learners, committed to the principles of honesty, trustworthiness, fairness, and respect for others. Students share with faculty and staff the responsibility for promoting a climate of integrity. As citizens of this community, students are expected to adhere to these fundamental values at all times, in both their academic and non-academic endeavors. (2009, p. 45)

The remaining sections of Amethyst's Honor Code listed the various types of punishable violations such as lying, cheating, stealing, and failure to report.

Amethyst University's Honor Code Bylaws comprise a lengthy document that addressed disciplinary procedures such as charges, rights, and judicial board proceedings, penalties, notifications, and appeals. Judicial board actions occurred when a conviction was found. The violations ranged from minor, moderate, to severe. For example, a minor cheating violation carried the punishment of reprimand and recommended failure of the assignment or course. A severe cheating violation was grounds for suspension for not less than one semester or expulsion (Amethyst University, 2009). Before matriculating at the Amethyst University School of Business all students were given a copy of the Honor Code and the Honor Code Bylaws. And a condition of acceptance into the School required that each student sign a statement indicating that he or she accepted the provisions of the Honor Code and the Honor Code Bylaws without reservations (Amethyst University, 2009).

The Pearl University Honor Code governed student conduct pertaining to all academic, placement, and extracurricular activities associated with Pearl's Executive MBA program. The purpose of the Pearl University Honor Code was to promote the qualities of honesty and integrity so that each student can fully develop his or her potential. The Honor Code starts by listing violations and then proceeds to elaborate on the Code. A student convicted of dishonesty in academic work is subject to punishments ranging from failure in a course to suspension or expulsion from the University. Students are not permitted to drop any course when a charge of academic dishonesty is pending. It is the responsibility of the faculty to review all cases of academic dishonesty, such as plagiarism, cheating, fabrication, and aiding and abetting dishonesty (Office of Student Affairs, 2009).

After listing violations and defining each one, Pearl University's Executive MBA program handbook formally introduces the Honor Code. According to Pearl's EMBA handbook, "The Pearl University Honor Code governs student conduct pertaining to all academic, placement, and extracurricular activities associated with the Pearl University School of Management" (Office of Student Affairs, 2009, p. 16). Furthermore, the Honor Code is "administered by its students and is based on the concept of self-government. The efficacy of this honor code model is dependent on a high-degree of students' dedication to the ideals of honesty, integrity, and equal opportunity" (Office of Student Affairs, 2009, p. 13). The Honor Code listed specific behaviors that the School required each student to uphold. The behaviors ranged from not seeking unfair advantage to

upholding the Honor Code by reporting all material violations and by fully cooperating in all Honor Code proceeding (Office of Student Affairs, 2009).

Pearl University's Executive MBA Honor Code proceedings are presided over by the Honor Code Chair, a second year EMBA student and a Vice-Chair, a first year EMBA student. The Honor Code Committee is responsible for interpreting the Honor Code. The Honor Code Committee includes the EMBA Program's Honor Code Chair and an academic representative from each domestic EMBA class. The most severe action that could be taken against a student is "exclusion" from the University. When a student is excluded from the University, his or her transcript is stamped with the following phrase, "Excluded for Academic Dishonesty" (Office of Student Affairs, 2009, p. 17).

Ruby University's Executive MBA program had a rather elaborate Code of Honor framed around three main components: developing trust through honesty, respecting all members of the community, and leading by example. The main values or dispositions integrated into the Code of Honor include maintaining integrity, striving for the highest level of excellence, valuing diversity, honoring all people, expressing disagreement respectfully, confronting all forms of unethical behavior, and holding oneself and others accountable (Ruby University, 2009).

According to Ruby University's Student Bulletin:

Students whose inappropriate behavior comes to the attention of the School may be subject to disciplinary measures including reprimand, suspension, fines, and dismissal. EMBA program Honor Council provides a method for adjudication of disciplinary/Honor Code violations that will be used in most situations. The Vice-President for Full-Time Programs or designated representative retains the authority to act expeditiously whenever immediate remedial action is required to assure the safety and security of the campus and the community. (2009, p. 175)

The Student Bulletin also included detailed sections on controlled substance use, alcohol use, possession of weapons, and sexual assault procedures and reporting.

By and large, the analysis of honor code-related content for all institutions included in this study revealed that content had more to do with the administration of honor codes rather than delineating behaviors, values, and dispositions that schools looked to promote in their students.

Course Sequence Practices

Each of the seven Executive MBA programs included in this study showed unique characteristics in different areas of curriculum design and in particular the curricular integration of ethics or ethics-related courses in the curriculum. Overall each EMBA program varied in the number of core courses that were integrated into the curriculum. Of the seven schools included in this study, the mean number of courses that constituted the core component of the EMBA curriculum was 16 and the range of required core courses was 12 to 22. Both Ruby and Turquoise Universities EMBA programs' academic year was based on a semester system with each EMBA program requiring students to complete 22 and 21 core courses respectively. Ruby University and Turquoise University may have skewed the range given that they operated on a semester system versus a quarter system.

Across all seven EMBA programs, the placement of core ethics or ethics-related courses within the curriculum varied. For example, Pearl University's EMBA core course on ethics was placed in the last quarter of the EMBA program. Amethyst University's two EMBA leadership development courses which contained ethics-related instructional

units were identified as courses pertaining to a group of multi-courses sequenced at different intervals throughout the EMBA curriculum. The first course was offered during the first quarter of the EMBA program and the second course was offered toward the end of the EMBA program.

The inclusion of an elective component in the Executive MBA curriculum varied from program to program. For example, three of the seven EMBA programs did not have an elective course requirement. Amethyst University's EMBA program did not require that students enroll in elective courses but allowed students to enroll in an optional sixth term. Agate University, Pearl University, Sapphire University, and Topaz University EMBA programs did require an elective component. All four EMBA programs required that students enroll in no more than two to four courses. However, these four business schools by design relegated the elective course requirement to the end of the EMBA program.

Co-curricular activities

Contextual influences on the learning process and resultant acquisition of knowledge, competencies, and dispositions abound in each of the seven Executive MBA programs included in this study. These contextual influences range from scholastic accreditation organizations to programmatic traditions to co-curricular activities. Analysis of the seven Executive MBA programs revealed that contextual influences on the learning process of EMBA students varied from school to school. However, none of the co-curricular activities reported by the seven Executive MBA programs on their respective websites directly addressed ethics or ethics-related topics.

Indirectly, Executive MBA programs included in this study provided—by way of their respective websites—a detailed account of the robust co-curricular activities available to students which ranged from offering a global experiential learning program such as the one offered by Pearl University’s Executive MBA program. The most typical co-curricular activities reported on program websites included an Expert Series, Speaker Series, Special Events, Partners’ Program, Business Card Series, just to name a few.

Executive MBA Program Ethics-related Course Offerings

A comprehensive review of the Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business’ Accreditation Standards and resultant pedagogies, even if oftentimes tenuous, provides insights into how and what course content should be integrated into the business curriculum. The ACCSB does not prescribe but rather advocates that accredited schools should set as learning goals the inclusion of two separate kinds of learning, general knowledge (e.g., communications abilities, problem-solving abilities, ethical reasoning skills, and language abilities) and management-specific knowledge (e.g., accounting, management science, marketing, human resources, operations management, and change management) (2011a). Consequently, relying on ACCSB’s Business Standards as a framework for assessing business curricula, revealed that course content (and units within courses) of all seven Executive MBA programs did integrate general knowledge and management-specific knowledge in varying degrees of success.

In broad strokes, the research conducted on the schools included in this study appears to suggest that the Executive MBA curriculum is no more or no less than an assembly of educational experiences that collectively constitute an educational program.

In general, the curriculum of each of the seven EMBA programs included in this study played two important roles. The curriculum served as a “playbook” which captured the regulations and requirements of a degree and it was an expression of an institution’s educational philosophy. Positioning each program side-by-side and viewing each program through an appreciative inquiry lens, gave an opportunity to appreciate the rare subtleties and yet stark contrasts that existed across programs. The resultant imagery was one of a carefully chosen palette of diverse knowledge, competencies, and dispositions that at first sight appeared to blend together to enhance the ethical decision-making of Executive MBA students.

This section seeks to address this study’s first and second research sub-questions: one, what ethics-related courses (or units within courses) do Executive MBA programs offer students? And two, are these ethics-related courses (or units within courses) required or elective in the curriculum? Addressing these two questions is accomplished by looking at key elements within the Executive MBA core curriculum component such as course descriptions, course syllabi, learning objectives and learning outcomes, teaching methods, course assignments and assessments, and course readings. The section concludes with an analysis of EMBA elective course offerings.

Core Courses

Executive MBA programs included in this study were largely prescriptive, cohorted, lock-step programs that lacked flexibility. This could largely be attributed to the length of duration of each EMBA program leaving very little room for flexibility in the number and types of courses offered. Programs operated on very different schedules

and divided their academic calendars in extremely unique ways. All seven EMBA programs integrated general knowledge and management-specific knowledge into their EMBA curriculum as evidenced by each program's course offerings.

However, several of the programs included in this study did not offer ethics or ethics-related courses in the core course component of the curriculum and no Executive MBA program offered ethics or ethics-related courses in the elective course component of the curriculum. However, the findings of this study suggest that schools often designed quasi leadership development courses that acted as proxies for ethics courses. Overwhelmingly, leadership development courses contained ethics-related instructional units which served the purpose to teach students about ethics.

Each business school had its own unique course nomenclature and course naming convention making it extremely difficult to compare and contrast courses between schools. To this end and to ensure the anonymity of the seven graduate management schools included in this study, course titles were relabeled with the title of their corresponding academic discipline. For example, a course offered by Agate University titled, Finance I, Introduction to Financial Statements would have been relabeled as Finance and referenced throughout this study as Agate University's Finance course. In total, 113 core course descriptions and 90 core course syllabi were coded and analyzed.

Course Descriptions

Course descriptions oftentimes provided a brief description of course content, theories, and teaching methods used throughout a course. A course description gave a student an opportunity to learn about the professor's learning objectives and planned

learning outcomes. In general, the course description provided a succinct but clear idea of what the course was all about. The following section entails an analysis of Executive MBA core course descriptions.

An analysis of 113 core course descriptions across the seven Executive MBA programs included in this study revealed only four EMBA core course descriptions contained the word ethics either in the course title or within the actual course description. As gleaned from all four course descriptions, Pearl University and Amethyst University included the word ethics in their course titles while Agate University and Topaz University made reference to the study of ethics in the actual course description.

Agate University's Marketing course description primarily described the course as an examination of the international market environment and how the environment affects the design and implementation of successful marketing strategy in global markets. The course description stated that the course was designed to provide students with the "skills in the discussion of such issues as business ethics, trade protectionism, marketing practices of MNCs, and transfer pricing" (Agate University, 2011b, p. 1). Although the course description stated that the course would cover skills in the discussion of business ethics, the corresponding course syllabus did not include instructional activities such as required readings or course assignments that would suggest that the marketing course contained ethics-related instructional units.

Amethyst University's Ethics course description primarily described the course as covering traditional Human Resources Management topics such as compensation and benefits management, incentive systems, and diversity just to name a few. Amethyst

University's Executive MBA core course description also stated that the faculty teaching the course would introduce a set of questions which concerned what student's would need to learn to be an effective leader.

The course description also stated that students would learn how they could contribute to their organization and why others should respect and listen to them. The course description further stated that the faculty teaching the course would challenge students to reflect on their own personal strengths and weaknesses. The faculty would also challenge students to develop specific strategies for making a difference in the organizations to which they belonged (Amethyst University, 2011b). Although Amethyst University's Ethics course did include the word ethics in the course title, the course description itself did not make reference to ethics or ethics-related topics. Upon further research of Amethyst University's course numbering system, it was determined that the course description which was published on the school's website containing the word ethics in its title had not been updated to match the course's current title. The course was not an ethics-related course but rather a leadership development course which contained ethics-related instructional units.

Pearl University's Executive MBA Ethics course description stated that the course examined the anatomy of leadership in modern organizations while highlighting the ethical challenges facing corporate leaders in the rapidly changing business environment (2011b). Additional themes were not gleaned from Pearl University's Ethics course description as the course description was written in one sentence consisting of 21 words.

Although not seemingly an Ethics course but rather a course which contained

ethics-related instructional units, Topaz University's Organizational Development course description specified similar learning outcomes as those included in Pearl University's Ethics course description. According to Topaz University's Organizational Development course description, "the course introduces the foundations of strategy and competitive analysis, innovation as a strategic imperative, different frameworks for analyzing and designing organizations, key issues in effective managing and leading, social network analysis, and ethics in practice" (2011b, p. 1).

Topaz University's Executive MBA course description stated that students:

Will be introduced to the pedagogical methods of case analysis, group problem solving, and group presentations as a means of developing the skills and strategies associated with effective managerial action. The course is structured as a full-time, in-residence "boot camp" and the pace is intense. The course also provides an opportunity to get to know your fellow students in the program as well as many of the core faculty who will teach the core courses in the first year. Scheduled prior to your first day of class, this experience is designed to prepare you for the rest of your MBA career. You'll be introduced to your class and small-study team and work with them intensively. (2011b, p. 1)

The course description further stated that the course would be held for five days in a business-class hotel and that the course covered topics in organizational design, organizational culture and power, group processes, competitive analysis, corporate strategy, and business ethics.

Although Topaz University's Organizational Development course description stated that the course was designed to prepare each student for the rest of his or her MBA career, the analysis of the corresponding course syllabus did not suggest that ethics was an important and crucial aspect in the preparation of students. As later discussed in this chapter, according to the course syllabus, the course required 15 course readings from

publications such as the *Harvard Business Review*, *Academy of Management Journal*, and *The New Yorker*, however only one reading covered the topic of ethics. The professor who taught the Organizational Development course at Topaz University's EMBA program required that students read on the last day of class, a 1998 article titled, *Managing Your Career* written by Linda Hill. The article discusses--in less than a page--the ethical dimension of leadership (Hill, 1998).

The analysis thus far continues to suggest that the sparse inclusion of words or themes relating to ethics in course descriptions requires further analysis of additional content such as course syllabi to fully determine the extent of the curricular integration of ethics in the seven Executive MBA programs included in this study.

Course Syllabi

Without much debate, a syllabus is an important part of a student's learning experience. It is so important that a syllabus more often than not is used by students as a learning aid. For example, in a syllabus, there is likely to be an institutional mission or vision statement giving a student the opportunity to learn about an institution's educational philosophies or values. A course may also be designed with broader philosophical underpinnings in mind and as such a syllabus may assist to teach other broader lessons. For example, faculty might include the description of the policy on academic dishonesty and provide a discussion on why academic dishonesty is a problem. Or, faculty might include the institution's policy on plagiarism and why it is a concern. Through additional descriptions, the syllabus might also help students understand professional responsibilities such as arriving on time to class or teach students about

responsibility and accountability by requiring that faculty be notified when a student will be absent. Finally, as identified during the coding and analysis of course syllabi, a syllabus can serve as a model of professional thinking and can convey to a student faculty beliefs and values. For the same reasons mentioned above, a closer look at course syllabi follows.

As shown in Table 2, across the seven Executive MBA programs included in this study, 90 core course syllabi were collected and analyzed from a total possible 113 course syllabi, a collection rate of 80%. The collection rate of syllabi for each EMBA program included in this study was as follows: Agate University, 80%; Amethyst University, 92%; Pearl University, 100%; Ruby University, 82%; Sapphire University, 94%; Topaz University, 64%; and Turquoise University, 57%.

Coding of 90 Executive MBA core course syllabi revealed that Amethyst University offered two Leadership Development courses and Pearl University offered one Ethics course that included content and instructional activities related to ethics. A closer look at the courses integrating ethics or ethics-related content revealed that most of the subtle instructional variances seen across courses were in the selection of teaching methods and the specific articles, cases, exercises, or problem sets chosen by a faculty member. Given the close similarities in instructional activities documented in course syllabi obtained for this study, the following analysis will focus on unique instructional activities that faculty at Executive MBA programs used in the classroom.

Table 2. EMBA Program Core Course Description and Syllabi Collection Rates

School	EMBA Core Courses	Core Course Descriptions Collected	Core Course Description Collection Rate	Core Course Syllabi Collected	Core Course Syllabi Collection Rate
Agate University	15	15	100%	12	80%
Amethyst University	12	12	100%	11	92%
Pearl University	13	13	100%	13	100%
Ruby University	22	22	100%	18	82%
Sapphire University	16	16	100%	15	94%
Topaz University	14	14	100%	9	64%
Turquoise University	21	21	100%	12	57%
Total	113	113	100%	90	80%

But first, comparing ethics or ethics-related course descriptions with their respective and corresponding course syllabi revealed that by and large there was a rather large disconnect between the course description and the topics that were actually included in a course syllabus. For example, when comparing Topaz University's Organizational Development course description with its corresponding course syllabus there appeared to be a clear dissonance between content included in both documents. The course

description stated that ethics would be addressed in the Organizational Development course while the course syllabus made no substantive reference to nor included instructional activities having to do with ethics or ethics-related content except for requiring that students read *Managing Your Career* written by Linda Hill which had more to do with managing one's career and less to do with ethics. As a matter of fact, the article discussed in less than a page the ethical dimension of leadership (Hill, 1998).

A similar disconnect was observed in Amethyst University's Leadership Development course description and 2009 Leadership Development course syllabus. In this case, the course description made no reference to ethics or ethics-related topics except including the word ethics in the course description title while the course syllabus did include references to ethics and ethics-related topics and instructional activities.

A closer review of course titles and content contained within course syllabi revealed that there were no "stand-alone" ethics core courses offered by the seven Executive MBA programs included in this study. Although Pearl University's Ethics course contained the word ethics in its title, the course design and content such as learning objectives and instructional activities included in the course description and corresponding syllabus suggested that the course was not an ethics course but rather a quasi Leadership Development course which merely contained ethics-related instructional units.

Thus, examining all 113 course descriptions and 90 course syllabi revealed that there was not one "stand-alone" ethics course designed specifically with the objective to teach students about ethics or ethics-related subjects. The analysis conclusively revealed

that the three Leadership Development courses that integrated ethics-related instructional units were Amethyst University's 2009 and 2011 Leadership Development courses and Pearl University's 2009 Ethics/Leadership Development course. Once again, the findings thus far strongly suggest that business schools used quasi Leadership Development courses containing ethics-related instructional units as proxies for ethics courses.

Conventional wisdom would suggest that at the classroom level, the selection of particular instructional activities involves difficult choices on what learning objectives and outcomes to address, what teaching methods to use, which course assignments and assessments to administer, and which course readings to assign. Insofar as it can be ascertained given the depth and breadth of content collected in this study, the following section will delve into decisions made on instructional activities in the two Executive MBA programs that have been identified as persistently and consistently integrating ethics or ethics-related content into their Leadership Development course syllabi.

Henceforth, the following sections discuss the integration of ethics or ethics-related instructional units in Pearl University's Ethics/Leadership Development course and Amethyst University's 2009 and 2011 Leadership Development courses. The focus will turn primarily to the ethics-related themes emerging in learning objectives and learning outcomes, teaching methods, course assignments and assessments, and course readings.

Learning Objectives and Learning Outcomes

Unlike most syllabi reviewed in this study, the professor who taught Pearl University's course on Ethics/Leadership Development did not list course objectives or

learning outcomes in his course syllabus. However, he did frame the course around specific questions. In the course syllabus the professor wrote:

As this class comes near the end of your program, our focus will shift from being an excellent leader to being an excellent CEO. Within this framework, we will explore issues that top corporate leaders must keep front-of-mind. In particular, this will include their ethical responsibilities. What are the challenges they face? What are their responsibilities? What options are available if corporate goals conflict with personal goals or social standards? How can leaders create effective moral corporations? What are the inevitable risks and obstacles leaders will confront and how can these risks and obstacles be mitigated and managed? (*Ethics/Leadership Development syllabus*, 2009, p. 1)

As gleaned from the faculty member's introductory quote situated at the beginning of the course syllabus, both ethics and the moral development themes were to be addressed throughout the course. Noting the placement of the quote at the beginning of the syllabus demonstrates the importance of ethics and moral development to this faculty member.

According to Amethyst University's 2009 and 2011 Leadership Development course syllabus, both courses consisted of a residency and distance learning component and appeared to be a smorgasbord of leadership development topics with no particular focus. The course syllabi did not succinctly list learning objectives or learning outcomes. Rather the course syllabi included a section titled, "Course Overview" where the faculty described topics that would be examined throughout the course. However none of the topics included ethics.

Similarities in the Leadership Development 2009 and 2011 syllabi structure and content could be attributed to the fact that one professor taught both Leadership Development courses at Amethyst University's Executive MBA program. Although the 2009 and 2011 Leadership Development course syllabi do not list ethics or ethics-related

learning objectives or related learning outcomes, as later discussed, the faculty uses instructional activities (i.e., reading assignments) as a way to incorporate ethics into each course. The faculty does so by devoting an entire class session during each academic quarter to teach about ethics.

Teaching Methods

Many of the faculty teaching in the seven Executive MBA programs included in this study used similar instructional activities whether they addressed the entire class or formed small study groups. Coding of course syllabi revealed that the most common trends pertaining to instructional activities were lecture and discussion, case studies, and problem sets.

According to Amethyst University's 2009 Leadership Development course syllabus, the course combined the following instructional activities, lecture and discussion, reading articles, and case studies. Reflection journals were also an important part of the faculty's pedagogical repertoire (*Leadership development syllabus, 2009*). According to the course syllabus, the reflection journal assignment served several purposes. For example, it gave students an opportunity to reflect on their own leadership styles and assisted them with determining ways in which they could continue to fortify their self-identified leadership strengths while mitigating their leadership weaknesses.

The 2009 Leadership Development course also consisted of a residency and a distance learning component. Course design and teaching methods were not modified for the distance learning component as both residency and distance learning components followed the same format including the use of similar instructional activities.

According Amethyst University's 2011 Leadership Development course syllabus, the course also consisted of a residency and distance learning component. Similar to the 2009 Leadership Development course, the 2011 Leadership Development course design and teaching methods were not modified to accommodate for the two different instructional formats. However, the faculty used various teaching methods throughout the academic quarter. For example, the professor stated in his course syllabus, "We will use readings, case analysis, experiential exercises, and intensive discussions (in class and on the class bulletin boards and chat rooms) to build your understanding and skill in managing people" (*Leadership development Syllabus*, 2011, p. 1).

According to the Amethyst 2011 Leadership Development course syllabus, the course introduced a vast amount of content in a very short period of time. The course appeared to be oversaturated with content that perhaps did not allow for much flexibility to introduce topics that may have been raised by students throughout the quarter.

According to Pearl University's 2009 Ethics/Leadership Development course syllabus, the teaching methods used by the faculty member who taught the course were varied. However, based on the course outline there appeared to be a predilection for the lecture and case study analysis teaching methods. For example, the course syllabus included a precise and regimented course outline listing the class topics and case studies to be discussed during each class session.

Unlike Amethyst University's 2009 and 2011 Leadership Development course syllabi, Pearl University 2009 Ethics/Leadership Development course syllabus suggests that the professor who taught the course introduced various ethical frameworks. The

faculty systematically introduced ethical frameworks at the beginning of the academic quarter and continued to teach about various ethical frameworks throughout the quarter by requiring students to read several ethics-related articles and to work through specific ethics-related exercises. The exercises gave students an opportunity to “play” with ethical frameworks in a safe and secure educational setting.

According to Pearl’s 2009 Leadership Development course syllabus, the faculty labeled sessions one, two, and three, Introduction to Executive Leadership, Frameworks, and Ethics giving these three topics great importance given that they were the first topics covered during the academic quarter. The professor also assigned an article by Kenneth Goodpaster (2008) which addressed the Moral Point of View (*Ethics/Leadership Development syllabus, 2009*). The faculty concluded the academic quarter by covering various topics as evidenced by the title of the last three sessions of the quarter, Optimizing Decision Making; Stellar Leader; and Morals, Values, and Greed.

Based on the analysis of 90 course syllabi it was determined that only Pearl University’s Executive MBA Ethics/Leadership Development faculty member strategically integrated ethics-related frameworks during specific periods throughout the course to repeatedly reinforce the importance of ethics to students.

Course Assignments and Assessments

Coding of course syllabi revealed that several faculty members used uncommon yet innovative instructional assignments and evaluations for both summative and formative reasons. For analysis and discussion purposes, the assignments and evaluations were combined and collectively referred to as assessments in the remainder of this

section. Across all three Leadership Development courses that integrated ethics-related instructional units, three common themes emerged as related to course assignments and assessments. They were the use of reflection papers, surveys, or self-assessments by faculty members to teach about ethics-related topics.

By and large, this study revealed that Executive MBA faculty members have expanded their repertoire of teaching strategies as pedagogical decisions were consciously made in the pursuit of teaching students about ethics or ethics-related topics and assessing comprehension.

Pearl University's Executive MBA Ethics/Leadership Development course included a self-reflection paper. Students were required to reflect on an ethical challenge that they had experienced and had to manage while in a managerial position. According to the course syllabus the faculty member stated, "Make sure that the issues are clear and that you describe your strategy for dealing with the problem. If you had it to do over again, would you do the same thing? Why or why not?" (*Ethics/Leadership Development syllabus*, 2009, p. 1). The faculty member who taught the course assigned the ethical challenge paper before the start of the academic quarter. And during the quarter, students shared and discussed their papers with their study groups. The faculty also selected a few student papers to discuss with the entire class at different times throughout the quarter. The quarter culminated with each study group choosing one ethical challenge and presenting an analysis to the class using Goodpaster's Moral Point of View framework consisting of four avenues of ethical analysis.

The faculty who taught the Ethics/Leadership Development course also assigned an *Excellent Leadership* paper which required students to write about a “truly noteworthy example of excellent leadership.” According to the professor’s syllabus the instructions for the written assignment were as follows:

The person you choose can be a business person, a political leader, a religious person, etc. The person can be contemporary or a historical figure. The person should not be a relative unless your relative is well known by the general public, and it should be an actual person (not from fiction). Choose someone who interests you deeply. You can use any of the many books about contemporary leaders like Muhammad Yunus or Nelson Mandela or John F. Kennedy, etc. You should not use Wikipedia as a reference – it might help you get going, but it is not sufficient background for this paper. In other words, you must dig deeper than this. You should also use recent references, i.e., material that is less than 20 years old. You should use at least three sources, each being a long essay or a book. Your main task [emphasis added] in your paper is to use one or more of the frameworks from this class as the assessment tool to show how and why this person is truly a noteworthy, excellent leader. This assignment asks you to subject your intuition about a person whose leadership you admire to the discipline of analysis from one or more points of view. You are free to choose the framework from among the several we will discuss, but you must make the framework explicit [emphasis added] - you need to identify which framework(s) you will be using. Then, using that framework, make a convincing case that this person is truly an excellent leader. This entails providing relevant background information about the person and the context in which their leadership played out. Try to enrich your story and your analysis with both big issues and small but important events and decisions. It also helps to round out your picture if you include a person’s positives and [emphasis added] negatives. (*Ethics/Leadership Development syllabus*, 2009, p. 2)

The Excellent Leadership assignment as explained by the faculty in the course syllabus appeared to employ a pedagogical approach that cemented in students various decision-making frameworks to better assist them in understanding and appreciating how issues small and large can be resolved. This approach had the potential to enhance a student’s ethical development by subjecting a student’s intuition about a person whose leadership they admired to multiple assumptions, concepts, values, and practices. The

Ethics/Leadership Development professor gave students enough detail that even the most inattentive student would not be misguided to approach most if not all of the professor's assignments through a non-validated framework.

The faculty member also required that students complete an online Implicit Association Test (IAT) authored by researchers at Project Implicit®. Project Implicit® is a collaborative research effort between researchers at Harvard University, University of Virginia, and University of Washington. According to Project Implicit's website, "Project Implicit blends basic research and educational outreach in a virtual laboratory at which visitors can examine their own hidden biases. Project Implicit is the product of research by three scientists whose work produced a new approach to understanding of attitudes, biases, and stereotypes" (Nosek, Mahzarin, & Greenwald, 2008, p. 1). The faculty used IATs as a way to teach students about their own attitudes, biases, and stereotypes and how these partial perspectives can oftentimes weaken their leadership abilities (i.e., ethical decision-making).

Additional instructional activities introduced into the Ethics/Leadership Development course by the faculty included a Values Survey, Leadership Survey, and an analysis of the Harvard Ethics Code. Students were asked by the professor to read the Harvard Ethics Code and to decide whether or not they would sign the Ethics Code had they matriculated at Harvard University.

Based on the Ethics/Leadership Development course syllabus, the professor did not administer a midterm or a final examination to assess mid-term and end-of-term learning outcomes. In lieu of examinations, the professor used the Ethical Challenge

paper and presentation and the Excellent Leadership assignments to evaluate learning outcomes. The final course grade consisted of the following assignments: Ethical Challenge paper, 30%; Ethical Challenge presentation (the entire study group received the same grade), 20%; and the Excellent Leadership paper, 40%. The faculty required a third paper which amounted to 10% of a student's grade.

Beyond the use of the case study method which was widely used by business school faculty teaching courses included in this study, the professor who taught the 2009 Leadership Development course at Amethyst University's Executive MBA program used several interesting pedagogical tools and techniques. The Leadership Development course was the first part of a two-term course designed to improve a student's understanding and skills in various areas. According to the 2009 Leadership Development course syllabus:

Grades will be computed based on ongoing preparation for and contribution to individual class sessions – as evidenced by participation in residency and distance (10%) -- and on timely submission of reflection summary assignments (5%), and team case assignments (5%). There will also be two major assignments -- a management/leadership project design (35%) and an individual leadership action plan (45%). (*Leadership development syllabus*, 2009, p. 1)

The Reflection Summary assignment gave the student an opportunity to assess his or her leadership strengths and weaknesses. According to the Leadership Development course syllabus, during the first few weeks of the distance portion of the course, each student would be required to turn in a reflection summary discussing how each leadership theme related to his or her own strengths and weaknesses. The assignment also required students to develop an action plan to address identified personal character weaknesses. The overall course design was to allow students the opportunity to take each piece of the

leadership “puzzle” and to put each piece together to form frameworks that could be used by students to learn more about their strengths and weaknesses. More importantly, students had to identify areas of personal improvement while gaining personal insight into how the leadership model functioned in practical terms (*Leadership development syllabus*, 2009). The assignment required that students use data from their 360 degree survey, a multi-rater evaluation tool.

The first major assignment of the 2009 Leadership Development course was titled, Management/Leadership Project Design. According to the course syllabus the assignment description was as follows:

Each student will be asked to select a real or hypothetical problem in his or her home setting. Using concepts from the classes, from recorded lectures that will provide information on management topics, and from outside sources, you will begin to design a project that will have substantive impact on those around you. (*Leadership development syllabus*, 2009, p. 2)

Given that the assignment appeared to offer a high degree of flexibility, a student could have chosen an ethical problem giving a student the opportunity to learn about ethics-related topics.

The second major assignment was called the Individual Leadership Action Plan (ILAP). According to the course syllabus, the ILAP involved the application of what students had learned throughout the course and gave them an opportunity to assess whether or not there was a change in their leadership ideology. The paper required that students make use of their 360 degree feedback data. Students could supplement their 360 feedback data with data from other sources as long as they were able to develop an action plan. To drive this point, the faculty included in the syllabus the following statement:

However, ideally it [the Individual Leadership Action Plan] would involve an analysis of the situation, the leadership requirements of your situation, your strengths and weaknesses, and what you plan to do (this last part could include draft documents, speeches, notes for action, a memo to your boss, etc.). (*Leadership development syllabus*, 2009, p. 3)

According to the 2009 Leadership Development course syllabus, the Leadership Development course required that students complete a 360 degree survey which was used to assess each student's leadership skills and to collate the feedback obtained from multiple sources (i.e., supervisors, peers, and direct reports). Oftentimes ethics-related questions are included in 360 surveys giving a student the opportunity to learn more about his or her moral compass. The data in turn was to be used for other instructional activities such as the Reflection Summary assignment and ILAP paper discussed above. Students used the results of their 360 degree survey to identify their own leadership strengths and weaknesses, to develop a leadership action plan, and to apply the insights gained to specific issues of interest to them.

In several sections of the course syllabus, the professor highlighted the importance of the 360 degree survey. He did so as it appeared that the professor designed his entire course around the 360 survey as most if not all assignments required data obtained from the survey. According to the 2009 Leadership Development course syllabus, the professors stated:

The 360 instrument has been used very successfully with both seasoned senior executives and younger middle managers. Its success for you depends on how much you are willing to be reflective and to push yourself. The 360 instrument can be a key part of this process, so I hope you will utilize it fully. (*Leadership development syllabus*, 2009, p. 3)

The professor required that students complete a 360 survey in an effort to give students a contextual framework to learn more about themselves from various perspectives while providing a baseline for ethical learning components that may have arisen during classroom discussions at various points in time throughout the quarter. If done appropriately, the 360 degree survey assignment can serve to influence attitudinal changes such as a student's existing ethical dispositions.

According to Amethyst University's 2011 Leadership Development course syllabus, only the first class session revolved around ethics as opposed to the 2009 Leadership Development course syllabus which suggests that ethics is only discussed in the second to last class session of the course. According to the Amethyst 2011 Leadership Development course syllabus, the first class session was labeled, *Day 1 Ethics and the Effective Manager; Leading and Managing Change*. According to the course syllabus, the professor wrote the following introductory statement for the first class session:

We want to take an inside look at Enron to examine their [*sic*] day-to-day management practices. A great deal of the damage done at Enron was by the most senior management when they created questionable partnerships, not just to hide losses from analysts and investors, but to line their own pockets. These articles suggest that damage was also being done at middle management levels in the firm. (*Leadership development Syllabus*, 2011, p. 2)

During the first class session which addressed ethics, the faculty member required that students read several articles. Three articles discussed Enron and the ethical issues surrounding the events leading to the collapse of this company. Students were also asked to answer the following questions relating to the Enron articles:

How do you think the work environment affected the types of employees that Enron attracted? What changes would you have made in the work environment? What led to Enron's decisions to pursue such diverse projects? And, what are the

pros and cons of pursuing such a diverse set of projects? (*Leadership development Syllabus*, 2011, p. 5)

The course assignment as described in the course syllabus did not provide enough information to determine what ethics-related topics were discussed during the first day of class.

According to the 2011 Leadership Development course syllabus, the faculty member used the following assessments to evaluate students: class participation, 20%; team or clinical analysis of a corporate practice or policy, 35%; and Individual Leadership Action Plan (ILAP), 45%.

An analysis of course assignments and assessments in three Leadership Development course syllabi that integrated ethics-related instructional units revealed that the faculty who drafted the three Leadership Development course syllabi methodically and carefully introduced specific assignments and assessments throughout the academic quarter. Whether the inclusion of ethics occurred during one specific class session or over several class sessions, it was clear that it was done so in an attempt to teach students about ethics.

Course Readings

Across the three Leadership Development courses that integrated ethics-related instructional units no common themes emerged stemming from the types of articles that were assigned to students. There was no seminal article or case study that was common to all three courses. Rather, assigned reading materials were from various publications and varied substantially in orientation.

The course on Ethics/Leadership Development offered at Pearl University's Executive MBA program did not require a textbook. However, all assigned readings were articles or case studies provided by the instructor in a case packet but readily accessible on the World Wide Web. The faculty member also introduced various video case studies throughout the quarter. Before the start of the first class, the professor assigned three readings, *Lincoln's Letter to Horace Greely*, *The Social Responsibility of Business is to Increase its Profits*, and *Some Avenues for Ethical Analysis in General Management*.

In summary fashion, the three assigned readings are discussed below in an effort to determine the professor's pedagogical reasons for assigning the readings. *Lincoln's Letter to Horace Greely* was written during the height of the Civil War and is a response to an open letter published in *The New York Tribune*. Lincoln's letter prepared the public to accept the Emancipation Proclamation which at the time of his reply to Greely was not yet issued (A. Lincoln, 1862).

Milton Friedman (1970) in *The Social Responsibility of Business is to Increase Profits* argues that the corporation is an artificial person and can, therefore, only have artificial responsibilities. Friedman takes the position that corporations cannot be socially responsible, only people who manage corporations have responsibilities. In this same vein Friedman argues that social responsibility is directed not toward the corporation but at the corporate executive of a business—not the business as a whole. The corporate executive has the responsibility to his employers to conduct business as they see fit and to manage the business to create the most profit while following the basic rules of society (Friedman, 1970).

The 1982 Harvard Business Case, *Some Avenues for Ethical Analysis in General Management*, by Kenneth Goodpaster provides a framework for the analysis of ethics-related case studies in business policy, drawing upon categories from the discipline of moral philosophy. Goodpaster argues that the Moral Point of View exists with four avenues of ethical analysis. And each avenue represents a normative outlook from which specific ethical challenges and cases might be addressed, if not resolved. The author continues to argue that, “Moral reasoning, despite the aspirations of some of the great thinkers of the past, is no more reducible to a mechanical decision procedure than is economic or administrative reasoning. Ethics, though not unscientific, is not a science” (Goodpaster, 1982, p. 3). Moreover, Goodpaster (1982) posits that:

The history of philosophical as well as theological thought about ethics reveals, amidst much disagreement, a shared conviction that moral judgment can and should be rooted in what some have called the moral point of view and that this point of view governs all disciplines what are taken to be good and bad reasons, sound and unsound arguments, principles and intuitions. (p. 4)

The course on Ethics/Leadership Development was replete with articles on ethics and ethical decision-making frameworks giving students a rich learning experience. It also gave students the wherewithal to pick and choose from various ethical decision-making frameworks when confronted with an ethical issue. Moreover, the content of the assigned readings was suggestive that the faculty member went to great lengths to encourage students to question their conceptions or misconceptions about ethics.

The analysis of the ethics-related instructional units within the Ethics/Leadership Development course also revealed that the professor’s pedagogical reasons for assigning specific readings appeared to be his philosophical belief that learned and functioning

societies when presented with a moral or ethical issue must rely on agreed-upon truths rather than absolute truths. And even while various theories and views of truth continue to be debated among scholars and philosophers, students when confronted with an ethical dilemma must look to the facts, to the extent that they are available, and grasp at a framework to guide them in making the best possible ethical decision.

The 2009 Leadership Development course offered at Amethyst University's Executive MBA program consisted of assigned readings having to do more with character development within the broader context of leadership development and had little to do with ethics-related topics. Nonetheless, one of the few reading assignments which had any relevance to ethics was published in 2008 in the *Harvard Business Review*. The case was written by Goo and Van Den Berg and titled, *Ethics Management at a Cross-Border Enterprise (A&B)*.

The *Ethics Management at a Cross-Border Enterprise* case study concerned Choi & Leng Paper Ltd ("C&L"), a small and medium sized Hong Kong-based company. The company consisted of a paper recycling business in Hong Kong and a paper mill in Huizhou, China. Part B of the case looked at the sale of paper through an open-tender bid. The sale was being investigated by the Independent Commission Against Corruption ("ICAC"), which suspected a company staff member of being corrupt (Goo & Van Den Berg, 2008a, 2008b).

According to the 2009 Leadership Development course syllabus, the professor required that students answer the following questions after reading the case study:

What are the leadership responsibilities of Gaylord Choi and Winifred Leng with respect to the actions that occur in the case? What did they do that was right and

what was wrong? What steps should Choi and Leng have taken after they learned of Eddie and Quiling's resignation? What do you think of the ethics of the deal with the university, acquired through Christopher Wong? How would you analyze the ethical considerations there? (*Leadership development syllabus*, 2009, p. 6)

The syllabus did not specify if ethical decision-making frameworks would be addressed suggesting that the professor stretched students' ethical decision-making capabilities perhaps by requiring them to use their own ethical decision-making frameworks to answer the case study questions.

Across the seven Executive MBA programs included in this study, the most relevant business ethics readings were referenced in the Amethyst University Executive MBA 2011 Leadership Development course syllabus. The faculty who taught the Leadership Development course pre-assigned three articles relating to Enron's collapse before the first day of class. Given that the three articles were pre-readings should have given students and the professor ample time during class to dissect and discuss ethics within a larger yet specific business context by using Enron as a key example.

In the order in which they were assigned, the first article was titled, *The Talent Myth: Are smart people overrated?* by Malcolm Gladwell (2002). The content in the article addressed the findings of a large scale study conducted by McKinsey & Company, one of America's largest and most prestigious management consulting firms (Gladwell, 2002). The study looked at how several top-performing companies in America differed in their hiring and promotion practices. Of 18 companies studied, McKinsey consultants honed in on Enron.

According to Gladwell (2002):

McKinsey found that when Skilling started the corporate division known as Enron Capital and Trade, in 1990, he “decided to bring in a steady stream of the very best college and M.B.A. graduates he could find to stock the company with talent,” Michaels, Handfield-Jones, and Axelrod tell us. During the nineties, Enron was bringing in two hundred and fifty newly minted M.B.A.s a year. “We had these things called Super Saturdays,” one former Enron manager recalls. “I’d interview some of these guys who were fresh out of Harvard, and these kids could blow me out of the water. They knew things I’d never heard of.” Once at Enron, the top performers were rewarded inordinately, and promoted without regard for seniority or experience. Enron was a star system. “The only thing that differentiates Enron from our competitors is our people, our talent,” Lay, Enron’s former chairman and C.E.O., told the McKinsey consultants when they came to the company’s headquarters, in Houston. Or, as another senior Enron executive put it to Richard Foster, a McKinsey partner who celebrated Enron in his 2001 book, “Creative Destruction,” “We hire very smart people and we pay them more than they think they are worth. (p. 1)

Management at Enron purportedly was following best-practices in the area of talent management. Enron was hiring and rewarding top-talent however interestingly, the company no longer exists (Gladwell, 2002). The reasons for Enron’s collapse were complex but how could Enron have failed if it had hired the very brightest and talented people? The article suggests that because employees were quickly promoted from one position to the next, an opportunity to evaluate true performance was almost none existent.

Gladwell (2002) also discusses at great lengths an essay titled, *The Dark Side of Charisma* authored by Robert Hogan, Robert Raskin, and Dan Fazzini who argue that managers fall into three types of categories. Gladwell (2002) uses Hogan, Raskin, and Fazzini’s theory to establish the reason why Enron collapsed even when hiring and rewarding top-talent. The articles states:

Enron was the Narcissistic Corporation—a company that took more credit for success than was legitimate, that did not acknowledge responsibility for its failures, that shrewdly sold the rest of us on its genius, and that substituted self-nomination for disciplined management. (Gladwell, 2002, p. 1)

The article concludes by suggesting that the talent myth assumes people hired by organizations make organizations smart but more often than not, it is the other way around.

The second article assigned to students in the 2011 Leadership Development course was titled, *What if You'd Worked at Enron?* by Charles Fishman (2002). The article chronicles the trials and tribulations of five former Enron employees. According to Fishman, “During Enron's unraveling, the largest corporate bankruptcy in U.S. history, most attention has been focused on two places: the deception, greed, and malfeasance at the top and the financial victims at the bottom” (2002, p. 1). Fishman (2002) continues to write:

But life at Enron, as at most companies, was lived in the middle. Not too far from the top, not too far from the bottom, a battalion of familiar white-collar employees worked every day, their lives consumed, brightened, then betrayed by Enron. (p. 1)

To this end, the former white-collar workers interviewed by Fisher shed light on the unethical practices and behaviors that they had witnessed while employed at Enron. For example, a saleswoman acknowledged that “Much of Enron's cachet was built on its ability to attract the polished graduates of the nation's leading business schools” (Fishman, 2002, p. 2). However many of the graduates who were hired brought with them behaviors and dispositions which left much to be desired. The saleswomen stated, “the arrogance of the leadership always offended me,” she says. “I always had a great boss at

EES. But I always said, 'I like the people I work with. I hate the people I work for' "

(Fishman, 2002, p. 2).

The article is replete with additional examples of unethical business practices that ran rampant at Enron. An executive administrative assistant shared that she was uncomfortable with Enron's free-spending ways, even when she benefited from them.

According to Fishman (2002):

In April 2001, EES sent its top 75 performers and their spouses to the Four Seasons Resort Nevis, in the West Indies, for four all-expenses-paid days. "The last day we were there," says Anzalone, "they flew in the Fabulous Thunderbirds for two hours of dancing. They flew the band to Nevis." The trip cost \$1.2 million -- \$16,000 a couple. (p. 2)

A second employee, a former Enron accountant who handled expenses for the entire company, from front-line workers to high-level executives shared that processing expense reports was quite revealing. What she saw was a cascade of extravagances.

According to the accountant, "They'd [management] take hundreds of people to a concert. We always thought, That's a lot more money than should be spent on company business" (Fishman, 2002, p. 2).

And yet according to another employee, "They [executives] lied to the shareholders, they lied to the employees, and they lied to the people at Enron who were making things happen" (Fishman, 2002, p. 2). Overwhelmingly, this was the consensus of the five former Enron employees who were interviewed.

The third article referenced in the 2011 Leadership Development course was titled, *The myth of Enron* by Laura Goldberg and Tom Fowler (2002). Content from the article addressed many of the early warning signs which appeared to be indicators of

what many insiders said were unique to Enron's culture - relentless pressure to close deals quickly, even if poorly structured. And, when business deals were closed by employees hefty bonuses were awarded based on their projected value, not the real revenues brought to the company (Goldberg & Fowler, 2002).

Many of the business practices of Enron employees although not illegal were seen by many as deceitful and unethical because the practices misrepresented the company's financials. For example:

The entire trading industry uses a method called mark-to-market accounting, which essentially requires companies to report upfront the entire value of a long-term deal. That means a company would report the full value of a 10-year deal for electricity as revenue in the quarter the contract was signed. But the books are supposed to be adjusted as the value of electricity changes over time. If Enron pays more for power than projected when the deal was signed, the change has to be recorded as a loss. (Goldberg & Fowler, 2002, p. 1)

The various readings assigned in the three Leadership Development courses that integrated ethical-related instructional units establish fundamental maxims relating to ethics and business. The maxims range from prevalent business practices which are legal can oftentimes become deceitful and unethical if not carried out as they were originally intended; ill-drafted hiring and retention policies and practices at organizations have the potential to adversely impact an organization if organizational systems and procedures are not carefully designed and managed; and insurmountable damages can be brought upon individuals inside and outside of an organization by deceitful and unethical decision-making.

Elective Courses

Given that Executive MBA courses are compressed within a tight timeline, the inclusion of elective courses was oftentimes not part of the degree requirement. The inclusion of an elective component in the Executive MBA curriculum varied from program to program. According to the seven Executive MBA program websites analyzed for this study, elective course offerings varied in course content and more often than not were not offered year after year.

Three of the seven Executive MBA programs did not have an elective course requirement. Amethyst University's EMBA program did not require that students enroll in elective courses but allowed students to enroll in an optional sixth term to enroll in elective courses. Agate University, Pearl University, Sapphire University, and Topaz University EMBA programs did require an elective component. Agate University, Sapphire University, and Topaz University EMBA programs required that students enroll in no more than two courses while Pearl University required that students enroll in a total of four elective courses. The analysis of the seven Executive MBA programs also revealed that the four EMBA programs which required an elective course component, relegated the elective course requirement to the end of the EMBA program. The analysis also revealed that the depth and breadth of elective course offerings were narrow and confined to the "traditional" business disciplines.

According to Amethyst University's Executive MBA program website, for additional tuition, students can enroll in a shared electives term. Also, according to the EMBA program website, elective courses give a student the opportunity to specialize in

one function or industry so that he or she can sharpen and broaden his or her business knowledge in various areas (Amethyst University, 2011c).

Pearl University's Executive MBA program website distinguishes between core, advanced, and elective courses. Core and advanced courses give a student a firm grasp of general management tools and they provide the tools required for solving managerial problems. The EMBA program website indicated that the curriculum is flexible enough to allow students the opportunity to pursue special interests by choosing "elective" courses (Pearl University, 2011c).

Topaz University's Executive MBA program website indicated that the EMBA program includes two non-core courses. According to the website, if a student's schedule allows, students can enroll in additional electives beyond the two which are required (Topaz University, 2011c). Students have an opportunity to enroll in elective courses offered in various areas of study except ethics or an ethics-related course such as philosophy as ethics or ethics-related courses did not appear to be part of the elective course offering.

As revealed in the three examples provided above, the elective component of the Executive MBA curriculum varied from program to program.

Course Descriptions

According to the websites of the seven Executive MBA programs included in this study, elective course offerings varied widely. Those programs that do integrate an elective course component in the curriculum offer courses that augment specific-management knowledge such as accounting, strategy, finance, information systems, and

marketing rather than giving students an opportunity to learn about general knowledge such as ethics, philosophy, or theology.

An analysis of elective course descriptions published on Executive MBA program websites revealed that none of the EMBA programs offered ethics or ethics-related elective courses. Realizing that elective course offerings may vary year after year, limits the findings to only elective course descriptions published in 2011.

Ethical Knowledge, Competencies, and Dispositions

Sustained engagement with curricular content such as program mission, vision, and value statements, honor codes, codes of conduct, course descriptions, and course syllabi revealed that Executive MBA programs did indirectly attempt to integrate ethics at different junctures in the curriculum. The study also revealed that Executive MBA program administrators and faculty used particular and oftentimes conventional pedagogies throughout the EMBA curriculum in an attempt to teach students about ethics without necessarily introducing ethical frameworks within a structured and formalized context.

This section is organized around this study's third research sub-question: what ethical knowledge, competencies, and dispositions are addressed in the ethics-related courses (or units within courses)? To this end, this section is an in-depth review of the various themes that emerged relating to ethical knowledge, competencies, and dispositions across two Executive MBA programs.

Ethical Knowledge

The analysis of two Executive MBA programs that integrated ethics-related instructional units into their courses revealed the inclusion of ethical knowledge as observed by the following emergent themes in course syllabi: ethical frameworks and ethical leadership. According to Merriam-Webster's Dictionary and for the purpose of this study, knowledge is defined as "(1): the fact or condition of knowing something with familiarity gained through experience or association, and (2): acquaintance with or understanding of a science, art, or technique" (2011, p. 1).

According to Boylan (2000), "ethics is the science concerning the 'right' and 'wrong' of human action. This means that ethics is first a science. By science, I mean an activity that is studied rationally and systematically and whose conclusions seek to be exact. Second, ethics concerns 'right' and 'wrong'" (p. 2). Consonant with this view, faculty members who taught the Leadership Development courses that integrated ethics-related units by means of readings and assignments attempted to supply students with various ethical frameworks and introduced students to the ethical leadership theme from a rational and systematic perspective.

Confining the analysis to ethical decision-making frameworks revealed that Pearl University's Ethics/Leadership Development professor introduced Kenneth Goodpaster's Moral Point of View framework to lead and guide several instructional activities (*Ethics/Leadership Development syllabus*, 2009). The faculty, by way of required readings, assignments, and even perhaps classroom discussions, additionally introduced ethical frameworks such as Utilitarianism, Contractarianism, and Pluralism as a means to

teach students that there are various ethical frameworks that could be used to reach a plausible ethical business decision at a particular point in time.

Pearl University's Executive MBA 2009 Ethics/Leadership Development faculty was deliberate in the integration and use of specific ethical frameworks throughout the academic quarter. Sections of the course syllabus revealed interesting questions asked by the faculty which appeared to illicit student reactions and pique their curiosity in how to reconcile two juxtaposed yet complementary frameworks. That is students learned about leadership within the context of a corporate executive position of power while learning how to apply ethical frameworks to make decisions about specific business problems.

Further analysis of the course syllabus revealed that the faculty member highlighted the importance of ethical frameworks not only by collectively titling class sessions one, two, and three, *Introduction to Executive Leadership, Frameworks, and Ethics* but also by using three class sessions to cover these topics. During the three sessions the faculty member introduced several themes (i.e., leaders, CEOs, and ethical frameworks) relating to the three topics. Sessions four and five illuminated *Value-Laden Decisions* while sessions six, seven, and eight were specifically titled as *Optimizing Decision Making; Stellar Leaders; and Morals, Values, and Greed (Ethics/Leadership Development syllabus, 2009)* in an effort to bring attention to the importance of each topic.

According to Amethyst University's Executive MBA 2009 Leadership Development course syllabus, the faculty who taught the course introduced a 2008 *Harvard Business Review* case titled, *Ethics Management at a Cross-Border Enterprise*

as a pedagogical tool to integrate ethical frameworks into his Leadership Development course. The case study concerned Choi & Leng Paper Ltd ("C&L"), a paper recycling business in Hong Kong and a paper mill in Huizhou, China. The case explored the challenges faced by small and medium-sized businesses conducting cross-border business in Asia.

The aim of the case study was to teach students the importance of strong internal control procedures and how top management should endeavor to make sure their businesses are run ethically. The learning objectives of the case were to show students that cross-border business involves legal and cultural differences requiring challenging ethical decisions in maintaining standards of ethical behavior and attitudes among staff; to alert students to the importance of personal and system integrity; and to make students aware of the importance of implementing internal controls and setting strong ethical standards (Goo & Van Den Berg, 2008a, 2008b) .

The faculty also asked various questions relating to ethical decision-making which students were required to reflect on and answer after reading the *Ethics Management at a Cross-Border Enterprise* case study. For example, the faculty asked the following, "What do you think of the ethics of the deal with the university, acquired through Christopher Wong? How would you analyze the ethical considerations there?" (*Leadership development syllabus*, 2009, p. 6)

As to the theme ethical leadership, Pearl University's Executive MBA 2009 Ethics/Leadership course syllabus revealed that the faculty's intention was to encourage students to make a paradigm shift from being an excellent leader to becoming an ethical

leader from a position of power (i.e., CEO) with all the duties and responsibilities that the title bestows. For example, the professor stated:

As this class comes near the end of your program, our focus will shift from being an excellent leader to being an excellent CEO. Within this framework, we will explore issues that top corporate leaders must keep front-of-mind. In particular, this will include their ethical responsibilities. What are the challenges they face? What are their responsibilities? What options are available if corporate goals conflict with personal goals or social standards? How can leaders create effective moral corporations? What are the inevitable risks and obstacles leaders will confront and how can these risks and obstacles be mitigated and managed? (*Ethics/Leadership Development syllabus*, 2009, p. 1)

According to the Amethyst University 2009 Leadership Development course syllabus, ethical leadership was incorporated by the faculty who taught the course by requiring students to watch a video case study titled, *South Pole Explorers*. In the syllabus, the faculty asked students to reflect and answer the following questions after watching the video: “What makes a person a leader? What are the fundamental characteristics of leadership? Do the requirements of leadership differ depending on the situation? For each of the explorers (Scott, Shackleton, and Amundsen), what were his strengths and weaknesses?” (*Leadership development syllabus*, 2009, p. 5) During this instructional activity the professor appeared to require students to reflect on their own ethical leadership traits as a point of reference to assess the qualities of the three characters in the video.

The Amethyst University 2011 Leadership professor also introduced the theme ethical leadership by assigning three Enron articles before the first day of class. By way of the articles the professor wanted students to learn about the consequences that corporate executives face when they make unethical decisions in an effort to maximize

profits and lead lavish and extraordinary lifestyles. The articles also provided various examples of employee behaviors and attitudes that led to the collapse of Enron. For example, in an article by Charles Fishman (2002), five former Enron employees shed light on the unethical practices and behaviors that they observed while working at Enron. Fishman confirms and summarizes the employees' accounts by suggesting that the collapse of Enron was mainly due to the deception, greed, and malfeasance of corporate executives.

By and large, the two Executive MBA faculty who integrated ethics-related instructional units into their courses did so by emphasizing ethical knowledge through the use of instructional activities (i.e., readings and assignments) to cement in students an understanding of ethical frameworks and ethical leadership within the realm of business.

Competencies

According to Merriam-Webster's Dictionary, competencies are defined as "to have competence" as in the quality of being adequately or well qualified either physically or intellectually (2011). For the purposes of this study ethical competencies refer to the quality of being ethically adequate or well qualified intellectually. Although extremely difficult to discern because of the inability to measure the extent of a student's mastery of a subject such as ethics via a documentary study such as this one, various instructional activities (i.e., readings and assignments) suggest that ethical competencies were addressed in Executive MBA courses. Across the two EMBA programs that integrated ethics-related instructional units into their courses, the following competencies emerged: ethical judgment such as the ability to discern right from wrong and ethical clarification,

such as the ability to examine and align personal beliefs and values as they relate to morality and ethics.

According to course syllabi, reading assignments and class discussions served the purpose of assisting students with examining their ethical judgments. For example, Pearl University's 2009 Ethics/Leadership faculty held discussions covering topics such as Making Great Executive Decisions; Martin Luther King; Shackleton, Jackson, Kelley, and Abrashoff; Harvard Ethics Code; Moral Issues; The Values Survey; and Greed (*Ethics/Leadership Development syllabus*, 2009).

One of the four readings that was discussed in sessions six, seven, and eight of Pearl University's 2009 Ethics/Leadership course was an article written in 2008 by Steven Pinker and published in *The New York Times*. In summary fashion, Pinker, a professor at Harvard University, asks the reader to determine whether or not Mother Teresa, Bill Gates, or Norman Borlaug are admirable. The professor uses the reading assignment as a metacognitive learning approach. His technique is to ask students to think about their ethical judgment capabilities and then to determine whether or not their personal moral and ethical views can guide them to determine how they come to the decision of whether or not Mother Teresa, Bill Gates, or Norman Borlaug are admirable. Students also learned about *The Moralization Switch* in Pinker's (2008) article, *The Moral Instinct*. In his article, Pinker (2008) claims the following:

The starting point for appreciating that there *is* a distinctive part of our psychology for morality is seeing how moral judgments differ from other kinds of opinions we have on how people ought to behave. Moralization is a psychological state that can be turned on and off like a switch, and when it is on, a distinctive mind-set commandeers our thinking. This is the mind-set that makes us deem actions immoral ("killing is wrong"), rather than merely disagreeable ("I hate

brussel sprouts”), unfashionable (“bell-bottoms are out”) or imprudent (“don’t scratch mosquito bites”). (p. 1)

Course assignments were also used to address ethical competencies in the classroom. The ethical challenge paper assigned in Pearl University’s 2009 Ethics/Leadership course was a “pre-class” assignment. According to the syllabus the assignment required that students write a two to three page description of an ethical challenge that they had to manage in their career and the strategies that they used to manage the ethical challenge (*Ethics/Leadership Development syllabus*, 2009). The faculty member also asked students the following questions: “If you had it to do over again, would you do the same? Why or why not?” (*Ethics/Leadership Development syllabus*, 2009, p. 1) Students were required to turn their papers in and share them with their classmates. Throughout the academic quarter the professor would choose a few of the ethical challenge papers to discuss during class. The ethical challenge assignment gave a student the opportunity to write down a past ethical challenge while receiving multiple streams of feedback on how he or she had addressed the challenge. The assignment accomplished two things. One, it allowed students to further examine their ethical judgment capabilities and two, it allowed students to examine their ethical orientation including their values, beliefs, and attitudes about ethical and moral issues more generally.

As to ethical clarification, Amethyst University’s 2009 Leadership course lists an assignment that required that students complete an Individual Leadership Action Plan (ILAP). The ILAP assignment gave each student the opportunity to apply what he or she

had learned about leadership by re-examining his or her personal attitudes, beliefs, and values on topics such as ethics, morality, and justice, just to name a few.

The 360 degree survey assigned in Amethyst University's 2009 Leadership course required that students self-assess themselves and to invite others to assess them such as a boss, peer, subordinate, or friend in an effort to determine how they and others perceive their behaviors and attitudes at various levels. According to the course syllabus, "The survey assesses your leadership style across six core themes and can be used to gain invaluable information about how you lead" (*Leadership development syllabus*, 2009, p. 3). And accordingly, the 360 evaluation gave students an opportunity to assess their leadership style in ways that became more integral to the course making the course more relevant and actionable (*Leadership development syllabus*, 2009). An assessment from multiple perspectives allows a student to identify and clarify his or her behaviors, values, and belief system so that he or she has a clearer view of his or her ethical orientation.

Reflection summaries were also a pedagogical tool used to assist students with clarifying their ethical inclinations. A reflection summary was used in the Amethyst University 2009 Leadership course. The assignment required that students reflect on their leadership style and determine in which ways their style could continue to evolve. The faculty member suggested that students use the data from their 360 degree assessment to develop well thought out reflection summaries. This assignment had the potential of assisting students with examining and further developing their ability to assess their own morality and ethics.

The inclusion of various instructional activities such as the ones discussed above provides students different perspectives and ways of thinking that students may have not previously entertained. The two professors introduced students to exercises that served as broader analytical frameworks that could be recycled by a student to examine the veracity of his or her ethical competencies such as ethical judgment and ethical clarification and in turn be better prepared to make ethical decisions without compromising, in the case of a corporation, profits.

Dispositions

According to Merriam-Webster's Dictionary and for the purpose of this study, dispositions are defined as, "a: prevailing tendency, mood, or inclination; b: temperamental makeup; and c: the tendency of something to act in a certain manner under given circumstances" (2011, p. 1). Insofar as it can be determined from course syllabi collected for this study, the key dispositions or habits that emerged were valuing honor, humility, and collaboration.

Honor was addressed in the three Leadership courses which integrated ethics-related instructional activities via the inclusion of sections of school honor codes in course syllabi. All three syllabi made explicit references to honor codes. Both Amethyst University's Executive MBA courses on Leadership referenced the school's honor code especially as it related to assignments. According to the 2011 Leadership course syllabus the faculty positions sections of the honor code at the beginning of his course syllabus and chooses to include the following statement:

With respect to the Honor Code, note that all assignments must be completed by yourself (if the assignment is an individual assignment) or by the individuals on

your team (if the assignment is a team assignment), without the aid of other individuals. You can conduct additional research beyond the course materials in service of any given assignment, and you can draw on conversations you have with your leadership coach, but responsibility for the assignment is yours and yours alone. In general, you are expected to do your own work on all individual projects and to do your share of the work on all team projects. If you have questions about exam questions, ask the instructor, not a fellow student. If you are in doubt about the ethicality or the Honor Code status of any action or situation, you should consult the course instructor at once. (*Leadership development Syllabus*, 2011, p. 3)

The Amethyst 2009 Leadership course syllabus also contained a very similar statement referring to the school's honor code.

Pearl University's 2009 Ethics/Leadership course syllabus contained a statement which referred to citing original works. In the syllabus, the professor warned students that failure to identify sources constitutes plagiarism, which is a "hanging" offense at [Pearl University] (*Ethics/Leadership Development syllabus*, 2009). In these examples, honor was enforced and reinforced by using an institutional policy which in turn confined and molded a student's attitude to the limits of the policy.

Humility was also a recurring theme throughout all three Leadership courses. Faculty used assignments such as 360 degree feedback surveys and the ethical challenge paper to reinforce in students the virtue of humility. These three assignments required that students seek out feedback on personal and sensitive topics such as values, beliefs, and ethical inclinations from various groups of people. If the 360 degree assignment was carried out successfully, students would have identified people who would have provided constructive feedback even at the risk of giving feedback that the student may have not been prepared to receive. Candid feedback such as the feedback collected in the 360 degree survey has the potential to make even the hard at heart feel humility.

The ethical challenge paper assigned in Pearl University's Ethics/Leadership course also addressed humility. The assignment required that students be open and candid about an ethical challenge that they had managed in the past. It also required that students describe the strategies that they had used to address the ethical challenge. When completed, the assignment had to be shared with the faculty member and classmates. This exposed a student's ethical decision-making, whether poor, good, or indifferent, to criticism. Once again, feedback received by students had the potential to be harsh and direct, perhaps beyond what a student was prepared to hear giving him or her an opportunity to learn about humility.

Collaboration was repeated in the instructional methods used by faculty teaching the Leadership courses. Many of the assigned exercises required that students work as a team whether they worked on a case study or a presentation. For example, Pearl University's Ethics/Leadership faculty required that students form groups and to decide who wrote the most interesting paper. Once the decision was made the study group had to conduct a presentation discussing the ethical challenge paper. To a certain extent, the faculty "forced" students to consider the value of collaboration by giving a group grade for the presentation which required that all students collaborate. The group grade consisted of 20% of each student's course grade.

The faculty who taught the 2009 and 2011 Leadership courses at Amethyst also used grades to reinforce the value of student collaboration. During the 2011 Leadership course the professor's grading rubric included three major components. Two portions of a student's grade required group collaboration. The first grade component consisted of a

class and team collaboration project which consisted of 20% of a student's grade.

Overall, the faculty showed a commitment to student collaboration as evidenced by the following statement:

You are also expected to be a good, cooperative, and productive member of your team. If you come to class, are active on the boards, and pull your weight in team work, you have nothing to worry about with respect to this part of your grade. (*Leadership development Syllabus*, 2011, p. 3)

The second component of a student's grade consisted of another team assignment. The assignment was a team-generated clinical analysis of a team or a clinical analysis of a corporate practice or policy. This assignment comprised 35% of each student's individual course grade (*Leadership development Syllabus*, 2011). The Amethyst University professor who taught the 2009 Leadership course was more lenient in his grading of team collaboration as the second team assignment was only 5% of a student's grade.

The analysis of course syllabi revealed that there were three key dispositions that emerged. The dispositions reinforced were valuing honor, humility, and collaboration. Valuing honor, humility, and collaboration were introduced to students via various instructional elements such as school honor codes which were referenced in course syllabi and assignments which carried a hefty grade component. Overall, it appears that these three dispositions were addressed by mechanisms such as negative reinforcement loops that worked toward engraining in students the consequences of avoidance.

The coding and analysis of 90 Executive MBA core course syllabi from the seven EMBA programs included in this study revealed that seven additional professors made attempts at integrating ethics-related content or instructional activities into their courses.

However, given the weak or sporadic references made to ethics-related content in the course syllabi, the decision was made to minimize their inclusion as the syllabi made no substantial contribution to this study's main research question and three sub-questions.

The analysis of the seven course syllabi from different Executive MBA programs revealed that some course syllabi scarcely referenced the word ethics and included minimal or no instructional activities to suggest that the course integrated ethics-related units. The seven course syllabi that were identified were: one Financial Accounting syllabus, one Human Resources Management syllabus, one International Business syllabus, three Marketing syllabi, and one Negotiations syllabus.

Chapter Summary and Limitations

The analysis of Executive MBA curricular content in this chapter has led to the revelation that only two Executive MBA programs included in this study offered ethics or ethics-related courses (or units within courses) in varied and truncated ways. The findings also suggest that Executive MBA programs oftentimes used leadership development courses as proxies for ethics courses given that not one of the seven Executive MBA programs included in this study offered a "stand-alone" ethics course. Moreover, the analysis of 113 course descriptions and 90 core course syllabi revealed that leadership development courses overwhelmingly integrated ethics-related instructional units via readings and course assignments.

To the extent possible, the findings which emerged throughout the analysis of sets of curricular documents did address this study's main research question and three research sub-questions. The first sub-question asked what ethics-related courses (or units

within courses) do Executive MBA programs offer to students? Methodical coding of documents (i.e., mission, vision, value statements, student handbooks, honor codes, codes of conduct, course descriptions, course syllabi, assignments, co-curricular activities, and program website pages) revealed that only two Executive MBA programs offered leadership development courses which contained ethics-related units within courses. The second sub-question asked whether these ethics-related courses (or units within courses) are required or elective in the curriculum? By and large the leadership development courses formed part of the core course component of the Executive MBA curriculum. The elective course component is primarily structured to augment students' management-specific knowledge acquired through core courses. A thorough examination of elective course offerings published on the seven Executive MBA program websites revealed that programs do not offer ethics-related elective courses. Lastly, the third sub-question asked what ethical knowledge, competencies, and dispositions are addressed in the ethics-related courses (or units within courses)? Findings point to the inclusion of key ethical knowledge, competencies, and dispositions. The two themes that emerged within ethical knowledge involved ethical frameworks and ethical leadership. The themes that emerged around competencies were ethical judgment and ethical clarification. The themes that emerged related to dispositions were valuing honor, humility, and collaboration.

In general, this study revealed interesting trends especially in the realm of shared educational experiences of Executive MBA students and curriculum design. The inclusion of certain topics (e.g., ethics) by faculty in course content would suggest that their decision to include or exclude the topic was intentional. The analysis of curricular

documents also appears to show a vast disconnect between program-wide documents (i.e., institutional mission, vision, and value statements, codes of conduct, and codes of ethics) and course specific documents (i.e., course descriptions and course syllabi). On the surface, it appears that a commitment to the curricular integration of ethics in Executive MBA programs may exist as evidenced by program policies and procedures. However, digging deeper into course offerings revealed that the commitment to the inclusion of ethics across the curriculum is weak at best.

Downloading Executive MBA program content such as student handbooks, course descriptions, and syllabi from program websites allowed for sustained engagement with website content. As the researcher, I believe that the sustained and prolonged engagement with websites revealed that the use of word play is commonly used within curricular documents such as student handbooks and institutional websites to suggest that there is a true commitment to the curricular integration of ethics in Executive MBA programs when in fact the data collected for this study suggest that this is generally not the case. By and large institutional websites functioned as a student recruitment tool to entice a prospective student to learn more about the institution and its various degree offerings.

The seven Executive MBA programs included in this study were housed within top-tiered schools of business which I believe are oftentimes viewed as bellwethers of U.S. graduate management education. The findings revealed in this study suggest that a scarcity of ethics and ethics-related course offerings exists in these EMBA programs.

These findings should be concerning to all stakeholders involved in the education of Executive MBA students.

If American businesses have learned anything from corporate scandals such as Enron and the global ramifications and devastation of its collapse, then when students and graduates are confronted with an ethical decision they must be prepared with an extensive repertoire of ethical knowledge, skills, and competencies so that they can make the best possible decisions at any given point in time without severely compromising people, profits, and planet.

Similar to most studies, this study has several inherent limitations that need to be considered before generalizations are made about Executive MBA programs or findings are extrapolated. For example, the data collected for this study will only provide a snapshot of a particular point in time of the seven Executive MBA programs included in this study. Although attempts were made to monitor institutional websites for changes in content, the ability to ascertain whether or not online content was modified proved challenging. The inability to fully determine when content was published on institutional websites was primarily due to poor version control measures practiced by educational institutions.

Furthermore, although a course syllabus may be viewed as a quasi-contract between a faculty member and a student, the revelation that ethics-related topics were rarely documented or mentioned in Executive MBA syllabi does not suggest that ethics-related topics were not integrated throughout the Executive MBA curriculum of the seven programs included in this study.

Another inherent limitation of this study is that findings are only based on curricular documents by design. Executive MBA program administrators, faculty, and students were not interviewed nor were classroom activities observed to fully determine the extent of the curricular integration of ethics in Executive MBA programs. Spontaneous conversations about ethics could have taken place inside and outside of the classroom.

The inherent limitations discussed above should not be used to minimize the value of this study or to cast doubt on the contributions that this study has made to expand the scientific body of knowledge that exists today in higher education. Conversely, the limitations should be used as guide posts to chart a new direction for Executive MBA programs.

CHAPTER FIVE

DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

"I cannot offer you an excuse for my behavior," Mr. Madoff said. "How do you excuse betraying thousands of investors who entrusted me with their life savings? How do you excuse deceiving 200 employees who spent most of their working life with me? How do you excuse lying to a brother and two sons who spent their entire lives helping to build a successful business? How do you excuse lying to a wife who stood by you for 50 years?" (Frank & Efrati, 2009, p. A1)

Introduction

In broad strokes, this chapter addresses the fundamental perspectives of Executive MBA program administrators and faculty concerning ethics. More narrowly, this chapter focuses on the deep perspectives concerning the curricular integration of ethics in Executive MBA programs. To that end, this chapter is organized by first providing an overall summary of this study. Second, conclusions and a discussion are brought forth to further clarify the ethics-related themes revealed from this study. Third, recommendations for policy and practice are provided for three stakeholder groups: graduate management education accrediting bodies, Executive MBA program administrators, and Executive MBA faculty. Fourth, recommendations and future research are discussed for the curricular integration of ethics in Executive MBA programs. This chapter concludes by drawing upon key findings that have influenced this researcher's understanding of the curricular integration of ethics in Executive MBA programs.

Summary of Study

Corporate scandals are ubiquitous especially those scandals involving inappropriate or inadequate ethical decision-making by American corporate executives. For example, former Enron chief financial officer and Northwestern University MBA graduate, Andrew Fastow, “defrauded Enron's shareholders and enriched himself and others by, among other things, entering into undisclosed side deals, manufacturing earnings for Enron through sham transactions, and inflating the value of Enron's investments” (Thomsen, 2004, p. 6).

Yet another example of corporate malfeasance is Timothy Rigas who joined Adelphia Communications Corporation, his family business, after graduating from the University of Pennsylvania's Wharton School of Business. Timothy Rigas became Adelphia's executive vice president, chief financial officer, chief accounting officer, and treasurer. Timothy Rigas and father John Rigas were responsible for the collapse of the fifth largest cable provider in the United States (Hemingway, 2007). In 2002, the Securities and Exchange Commission filed charges against Adelphia in one of the most extensive financial frauds ever to take place at a public company (Cutler, 2002).

In an attempt to legislate ethical behavior, President George W. Bush signed into law one of the toughest corporate governance statutes ever passed in American history (Wagner & Dittmar, 2006). The Public Company Accounting Reform and Investor Protection Act, also known as the "Sarbanes-Oxley Act," was passed in 2002 following a series of corporate bankruptcies and allegations of executive management malfeasance, most notably at Enron and WorldCom (Keating, 2006).

More recently, Bernie Madoff's 20 year Ponzi scheme gave way to the biggest financial swindle in history. In 2009, Madoff was sentenced to 150 years in prison and an appeal was not likely to ever be awarded because the sentence was based on Federal Sentencing Guidelines (Frank & Efrati, 2009).

Historical accounts to date suggest that legislative attempts to impose ethical behavior in corporate financial management and reporting have failed (Rockness & Rockness, 2005). Because legislating ethical behavior has done very little to mitigate executive management malfeasance as evidenced by recent corporate scandals, I turned to higher education to determine what was being done in academia to address the pervasive and deeply rooted problems facing corporate America. This study focused on Executive MBA programs because they are aimed at mid-career professionals. Executive MBA admission criteria typically mandate that matriculants have years of managerial experience requiring additional heightened fiduciary responsibilities. For all these reasons, this study sought to address the curricular integration of ethics in Executive MBA programs.

The purpose of this study was to investigate to what extent and in what ways Executive MBA programs are designed to address ethical decision-making for business executives who matriculate in these programs. To that end, I sought to identify ethics-related knowledge, skills, and dispositions associated with Executive MBA programs such that graduates acquire the tools needed to ensure—to the extent possible—appropriate ethical decision-making.

To address this study's purpose, I framed my examination around one central research question: To what extent and in what ways do U.S. Executive MBA programs offer ethics-related courses (or units within courses) which are designed to enhance the ethical decision-making of graduates? To better understand my overarching research question and to build a stronger foundation, I addressed three sub-questions. One, what ethics-related courses (or units within courses) do Executive MBA programs offer to students? Two, are these ethics-related courses (or units within courses) required or elective in the curriculum? And three, what ethical knowledge, competencies, and dispositions are addressed in the ethics-related courses (or units within courses)?

This exploratory qualitative research study consisted of a methodical analysis of sets of curricular components such as mission, vision, and value statements; oaths of honor; codes of conduct; student handbooks; co-curricular activities; course descriptions; and course syllabi from seven accredited U.S. Executive MBA programs which I believe are bellwethers for graduate management education and are representative of various trends. Curricular content for this study was primarily collected from institutional websites. However, if curricular content was not readily available on institutional websites, alternative sources of documentary information were obtained from EMBA program administrators and faculty.

Beyond program-wide documents, particular attention was paid to the core course component of the Executive MBA program as the core curriculum provides a vivid understanding of the shared learning experiences and knowledge acquired by students (Datar, et al., 2010). In total, 113 course descriptions and 90 core course syllabi were

carefully coded and analyzed to determine emergent ethics-related themes. The coding and analysis revealed that overwhelmingly, Executive MBA programs included in this study were largely prescriptive, cohorted, lock-step programs that lacked flexibility. The analysis also revealed that there were no “stand-alone” ethics courses; however, ethics-related instructional units were integrated into three leadership courses which formed part of the core curriculum component of two Executive MBA programs. These two Executive MBA programs offered leadership courses which appeared to be used as proxies for ethics courses. Further analysis of the elective course component of Executive MBA programs also revealed that no ethics courses were offered. While four of seven Executive MBA programs offered an elective course component, they viewed the elective component as an opportunity for students to augment their comprehension of “traditional” business topics.

Examining the three leadership courses that integrated ethics-related instructional units revealed the inclusion of key ethical knowledge, competencies, and dispositions. More specifically, themes did emerge within ethical knowledge, competencies, and dispositions. The overall themes within ethical knowledge were ethical frameworks and ethical leadership. The themes that emerged within competencies were ethical judgment and ethical clarification; while the themes that emerged in dispositions were valuing honor, valuing humility, and valuing collaboration.

Conclusions and Discussion

The vast amount of data collected and analyzed for this study served to further expand on the body of knowledge that exists on the curricular integration of ethics in graduate management education and in particular Executive MBA programs. This section presents three important conclusions grounded in the key findings from this study and affirmed by scholarly literature. First, ethics is imperceptibly integrated into the Executive MBA curriculum given belief systems of administrators and faculty. Second, a continued predilection for the integration of management specific knowledge versus general knowledge in the Executive MBA curriculum is pervasive. And third, accreditation standards may have the effect of uncoupling the integration of ethics in the business curriculum.

Belief Systems

My first significant conclusion is that issues surrounding ethics and its inclusion into the executive business curriculum are oftentimes met with resistance from administrators and faculty because they view ethics as a “soft” subject, which does not warrant serious attention. Giacalone, Jurkiewicz, and Knouse (2003) believe that “core areas, such as accounting, finance, and marketing, are seen as *hard* skills-based courses, whereas the ethical issues in these professions and human resources are viewed, often with disdain, as *soft* and conceptual” (p. 591). Key findings from this study suggest that teaching about ethics-related topics is not an integral or essential component of the Executive MBA curriculum. Although program-wide documents such as mission, vision, and value statements and oaths of honor integrate ethics-related themes, a closer look at

course-specific documents such as course descriptions and course syllabi suggest that the integration of ethics-related topics is truncated and not pervasive nor sustained across the EMBA curriculum. This study appears to confirm what other researchers have found, that “soft” subjects such as ethics are not yet viewed as fundamental underpinnings of an EMBA curriculum. Sets of curricular documents from the seven EMBA programs included in this study revealed that there were no “stand-alone” ethics courses nor were ethics-related instructional units such as reading assignments or exercises incorporated throughout the vast majority of EMBA courses.

On one end of the spectrum, the inclusion or exclusion of specific content in curricula has often been attributed to faculty background, scholarly preparation, teaching experience, faculty belief system, or comfort with a subject matter (Stark & Lattuca, 1997). This study also suggests that the inclusion of ethics-related content such as ethical decision-making frameworks is governed by administrator and faculty belief systems and comfort levels with the subject matter.

An email communication to a professor of Managerial Finance requesting additional course content returned the following response, “I don’t see much value [in sharing course content for research] to you or me” (Anonymous, personal communication, March 4, 2011). After explaining this study’s research design, a professor of Managerial Decision Making declined to share additional course content. The professor stated, “I am sorry but I don’t feel comfortable sharing my syllabus” (Anonymous, personal communication, February 9, 2011). And yet another professor of

Strategic Management with hesitation shared his course content and provided the following caveat:

Given the description of the project, I am willing to provide a copy of the syllabus from the most recent class. As a side observation, I think it will be challenging for you to capture the ethical component of a curriculum through just looking at the syllabi. Although I had only one session devoted to an “ethics” type topic (the session on corporate social responsibility), ethical issues could often come up as parts of other class sessions. (Anonymous, personal communication, February 9, 2011)

Pundits such as the faculty mentioned above may argue that an ethics-related “learning moment” may in fact unexpectedly occur in the classroom without the learning objective or outcome being documented in a course syllabus. However, the notion of leaving a teaching moment to chance should not preclude a faculty from explaining in his or her course syllabus, the ethical frameworks which he or she may integrate into a course for framing ethics-related discussions.

Setting ethics aside, Parkes and Harris (2002) suggest that the main purpose of a syllabus is to drive course content. The authors suggest that there are three very important roles a syllabus serves in learning. The syllabus: (1) serves as a contract, (2) serves as a permanent record, and (3) serves as an aid to student learning. Like any contract, the syllabus serves to establish what is expected during the term of the contract (i.e., a quarter) and serves to guide the behaviors of faculty and students. More specifically, the syllabus should delineate the roles and responsibilities of students and of faculty for matters such as attendance, assignments, examinations, and other requirements (Parkes & Harris, 2002). In this study, Executive MBA course syllabi may have been used as a contract, a permanent record, or a student learning aid. But, overwhelmingly, given the

lack of documentation (i.e., course syllabi) showing the integration of ethics led me to question a faculty member's true commitment to the integration of ethics in the courses that were taught.

On the other end of the spectrum, many faculty members express a desire and need to integrate ethical issues into their courses. However, many faculty are reluctant to do so because of concerns about diluting the curriculum and the vulnerability to student complaints about teaching values (Lisman, 1996). Alternatively, as gleaned from this study, faculty may not know how to integrate ethics into their courses. In this study only seven faculty members attempted to integrate ethics into their course syllabus. They did so haphazardly by introducing an article or a question which oftentimes appeared to have nothing to do with ethics. Nonetheless, changes in the business curricula have been based on extrinsic (i.e., market demands, donors, and accrediting agencies) and intrinsic forces (i.e., faculty belief systems or comfort levels).

Datar, Garvin, and Cullen (2010) suggest that faculty teaching functional courses are less comfortable dealing with ethical issues because ethics training was not part of their doctoral training. These three researchers also found that, "As a result, tough ethical questions are at times given limited attention. In response, a number of schools have begun offering courses whose principal focus is to build student knowledge in leadership issues involving ethics, values, and corporate accountability" (Datar, et al., 2010, p. 120).

Management-specific Knowledge

A second conclusion drawn from this study and grounded in the data collected is that a continued predilection for the integration of management-specific knowledge versus general knowledge such as ethics education in the Executive MBA curriculum was pervasive. Without much debate, graduate management education has seen its share of ebbs and flows over the years. According to Conger and Xin (2000), “The content focus also shifted from functional knowledge to subjects such as leadership and organizational change; programs changed from teacher-centered to learner-centered and from general case studies to real-life problems the company faced” (p. 76). Courses that address globalization, employee diversity, organizational learning, and e-commerce are standard today but were largely absent in 1990 (Conger & Xin, 2000).

Master of Business Administration programs have undergone many changes over the years due in large part to market demands. For example, the 1960s were marked by a demand for professionalization in the MBA program and the 1990s were marked by a demand for globalization (Latham, et al., 2004). Latham, Latham, and Whyte (2004) further argue that a third wave of change is required for university-based MBA programs that wish to survive and prosper. They believe that, “This change should be aimed at fostering the capacity of MBA students to integrate various functional perspectives to meet the complex business challenges of the 21st century” (p. 4). They are referring to integrative thinking and define it as “the capacity to take a cross-functional, multidisciplinary approach to the solution of unstructured business problems” (Latham, et al., 2004, p. 3).

In 1991, Ghorpade conducted a study to assess the state of ethics education in MBA programs located in the U.S. Based on his extensive research, Ghorpade argues that “Inquiries into the ethics content of the MBA curriculum are sparse” (Ghorpade, 1991, p. 892). While Datar, Garvin, and Cullen (2010) argue that schools need to seriously reconsider their missions, capabilities, and goals, these researchers also “believe that, all schools must move on two fronts: improving their teaching of thinking, reasoning, and creative problem-solving skills; and focusing more attention on issues of accountability, ethics, and social responsibility” (p. 323). My study reveals similar results especially given that the seven schools included in this study placed great emphasis on the integration of management-specific knowledge as evidenced by curriculum designs which placed an extraordinary amount of attention on ensuring that the EMBA curriculum did not get “diluted” by course offerings that fall outside traditional business disciplines such as finance and accounting.

Similar to what Datar, Garvin, and Cullen (2010) found, my study revealed that Executive MBA programs also offer courses that build student knowledge in leadership issues surrounding ethics, values, and corporate accountability. Across the seven Executive MBA programs included in my study no evidence of “stand-alone” ethics courses was found. There were, however, three leadership courses that may have served as proxies for ethics courses. The curricular integration of management-specific knowledge versus general management knowledge, such as ethics, was pervasive in most programs.

Accreditation Standards

The third important conclusion reached from this study was that accreditation standards may have the effect of uncoupling the integration of ethics in the business curriculum. Without extensive debate, conventional wisdom suggests that, “Every student who enters the classrooms of our colleges and universities already has a set of values, moral outlooks, and ethical standards that shape his or her behavior and moral decisions” (Boylan & Donahue, 2003, p. 37) . And as such, the objective of incorporating ethics competencies into the curriculum should be carried out in many different and unique ways in order to alter preconceived convictions about ethics-related topics. Past and present researchers argue that most colleges do not have required ethics courses and since many professional studies programs already have an extensive curriculum, faculty and administration are reluctant to add yet another course to degree requirements (Datar, et al., 2010; Lisman, 1996).

The question of whether a particular subject such as ethics can be taught and how it should be integrated into the curriculum given overstretched and oversaturated curriculum has fueled controversial debate. The Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business (AACSB) accredits institutions offering business and accounting programs at the bachelor, master, and doctoral levels such as the seven institutions that house the Executive MBA programs included in this study. However, some management educators have questioned the Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business’s (AACSB) approach to achieving quality in ethics pedagogy because the AACSB

International does not require an ethics course for all business programs. The AACSB

International mandates that:

Schools are expected to determine how ethics and topics occur in the learning experiences of students, but accreditation does not mandate any particular set of courses, nor is a prescribed pattern or order intended. The school must justify how curricular contents and structure meet the needs of the mission of the school and the learning goals for each degree program. (2007a, p. 1)

Notwithstanding the lack of an accreditation standard specifically prescribing how and to what extent the curricular integration of ethics should occur in undergraduate and graduate business curricula, the Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business (AACSB) promotes the belief that while ethical decisions transcend traditional functional areas, ethics theory is best taught in a dedicated course (The Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business, 2007c). Therefore, the AACSB International suggests that the optimal curriculum combines at least one dedicated course in business ethics with an integrated approach where ethics principles are applied in traditional courses. Based on interviews conducted by the Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business International (2007c), this was not yet being done at most schools. My study also revealed that Executive MBA programs still do not have one dedicated business ethics course and appear not to formally integrate ethics across the curriculum. As a result, the data from my study suggest that accreditation standards that do not prescribe ethics teaching standards have led to the weak and haphazard integration of ethics in the Executive MBA curriculum.

Without much debate, most pundits would argue that a content analysis study such as this one misses out on capturing the rich learning experiences that so often occur

at unexpected times in a classroom setting. However, the intent of this study was to address the extent and the ways in which U.S. Executive MBA programs offer ethics-related courses (or units within courses) which are designed to enhance the ethical decision-making of graduates while indirectly shedding light on the commitment to the curricular integration of ethics by both administrators and faculty alike.

The data from my study revealed that a loose coupling and perhaps a disconnect exist between the curricular vision of stakeholder groups (e.g., graduate management education accrediting institutions, Executive MBA program administrators, and Executive MBA faculty) and how the vision was being executed in the classroom. Due to this disconnect, Executive MBA programs appear to integrate ethics into the curriculum in a truncated and disjointed fashion leading me to conclude that there may not be a true commitment to the integration of ethics across the EMBA curriculum.

Recommendations for Policy and Practice

More than ever before business school curricula and in particular Executive MBA curricula require renewal. Realizing that no one best way to proceed exists, guardians of graduate management education should look to re-shape the EMBA curriculum to make room for the full integration of ethics. I believe that in today's global and interconnected world where borders coalesce given advances in technology, legislating ethical behavior from a business perspective is very costly and from a philosophical perspective does very little to address ethical issues that cross borders and cultures.

Common today are business schools that have invested substantially in establishing a presence in foreign markets either by erecting physical or virtual campuses

all over the world. Given the expansive reach of higher education, business schools are better positioned to effectuate positive changes in and outside of the U.S. More importantly, I believe that business schools should be moving toward the common goal of taking the lead in redefining the future of Corporate America. I view this future as an epoch where corporate leaders are well equipped with the tools necessary to make ethical decisions especially when insidious desires such as greed and pressures for profit maximization at any and all costs disequilibrate a decision-maker's moral compass.

Bringing the moral compass back into kilter requires an organic renewal guided by purposeful actions rather than a renewal requiring massive educational reforms. My recommendations are not a panacea for all ethics-related ills afflicting Executive MBA programs nor are my proposed recommendations an attempt to patronize or minimize what has been accomplished since the inception of the first Executive MBA program founded decades ago through thoughtful and purposeful planning. However, my recommendations are intended as a platform for constructive discourse about the curricular integration of ethics in Executive MBA programs. This section presents recommendations for the following three stakeholder groups: (a) graduate management education accrediting organizations, (b) Executive MBA program administrators, and (c) Executive MBA faculty.

Given limited resources, especially funding streams, approaches to the curricular integration of ethics will require a phased approach starting first with a change in accreditation standards. I believe that accreditation standards must change by responding to present day trends which include a diminishing capacity by corporate executives to

make ethical decisions, a blatant disregard for ethics at the expense of profit maximization and personal gains, and Executive MBA programs attracting a greater number of mid-career professionals who will face many difficult ethical decisions throughout their careers.

Accreditation Organizations

Graduate management education accreditation organizations must add accreditation standards that explicitly mandate that business schools integrate at least one stand-alone ethics course as a condition of accreditation. Accreditation standards must also require that ethics be integrated across the business curriculum. The current approach that allows business schools to decide what disciplines to include in the business curriculum leads to a curriculum that minimally, if at all, addresses ethics.

Accrediting agencies should also look to develop a national registry of business faculty who conduct research on ethics-related topics. The national registry can be used by program administrators or faculty as a trusted resource to obtain guidance on the integration of ethics within the curriculum. Accreditation agencies should consider developing a database of sanctioned ethics-related learning objectives, syllabi, and examples of cutting-edge pedagogical approaches which can be accessed by business school program administrators and faculty to encourage the free-flow of best practices and pedagogical innovation.

Executive MBA Program Administrators

Executive MBA program administrators need to continue to be more creative by doing more with less given persistent financial pressures. Before substantive program changes are made, program administrators must first clearly examine their mission, vision, and value statements to ensure ethics is prominently included in all key documents. More importantly, program administrators need to reassess their value propositions and determine how ethics should be threaded throughout the curriculum given competing demands such as limited resources, educational philosophies, and societal pressures. Next, EMBA program administrators should examine codes of ethics and codes of conduct to ascertain whether or not dispositions that the business school seeks to foment in students are emphasized rather than de-emphasized. Instead of emphasizing those dispositions that a business school deems unbecoming of a student, codes of ethics and codes of conduct should list specific behaviors that a business school seeks to promote and instill in students via their academic experience.

Executive MBA program administrators should also ensure that ethics becomes part of the admission process. By and large, business schools require that students submit a personal essay as part of admission requirements. Entrance essays can serve a broader purpose beyond using them as writing samples in making admission decisions. Adding an ethics-related question to an entrance essay can serve to identify a prospective student's ethical and moral inclinations and send a clear institutional or program message about the value of ethical behavior. More specifically, EMBA programs can use information

gathered from essays to infuse into the curriculum ethical knowledge, competencies, and dispositions that incoming students may be lacking.

Executive MBA program administrators can require that students sign an oath of honor during critical milestones such as during the admission process, at the beginning of each academic quarter or semester, and upon graduation. The continued and persistent use of an honor code throughout a student's educational experience can send a strong message to students about the importance of ethics and perhaps a message that a student will take with him or her well after graduation.

Business program administrators can also require that all students enroll in an ethics proseminar at the beginning of the Executive MBA program. The ethics proseminar can be taught by faculty across several disciplines giving students the opportunity to learn how different disciplines address ethical issues. The proseminar would also give students the opportunity to apply ethical frameworks in a protected and safe environment while preparing them to use ethical frameworks in subsequent course work.

Throughout the Executive MBA program students could be required to keep an ethics clarification journal to document in summary fashion the various types of ethical issues that emerged throughout the course of their study. The journal can also assist students with learning which ethical frameworks worked best in arriving at ethical decisions. Prior to graduation, student cohorts can be given an opportunity to discuss openly whether or not their ethical inclinations changed or whether they approach decisions from multiple perspectives. Program administrators and faculty can also use the

information in student journals to assess if ethics is being integrated across the curriculum. If not, they can use the journals to pinpoint where the curriculum requires modification.

Business program administrators have many responsibilities. Among many things, they are tasked with ensuring that their curricula meet accreditation standards, ensuring that their curricula maintain a level of academic rigor, ensuring that their institutional reputations are strong, and ensuring that adaptive and innovative learning experiences exist for attracting and retaining quality students and faculty. Administrators can create learning opportunities for faculty by hosting ethics colloquia at the beginning of each academic year. During a colloquium, faculty from multiple disciplines, such as philosophy and theology, can gather to discuss various ethical frameworks that business faculty could address throughout the year. This can be useful to faculty so that they are better prepared to frame ethical discussions that may arise within a classroom.

Executive MBA Faculty

Without question, business faculty are in a unique position to introduce students to new ways of thinking about a particular topic. Moreover, realizing that faculty are oftentimes pressured to cover a vast amount of content within a short period of time requires that learning objectives be concise and used to guide course design and classroom instruction. Not only should learning objectives drive course content and delivery but they should be clearly listed in the course syllabus so that students understand what will be covered during the course. Including one or more ethics-related

learning objectives, whether the course is a marketing, accounting, or human resources course, will send a strong message about a faculty's commitment to ethics.

Describing in the course syllabus the ethical frameworks that will be used throughout the course to guide ethical conversations has the potential to create a learning environment where students can be open to discuss ethical issues without fear that conversations won't be contained within a framework and left to subjective feedback and criticism. Faculty can also use their syllabus as a medium to communicate to students the importance of a school's oath of honor, if there is one. This practice also has the potential of sending a message to students about the values and beliefs held by a faculty member and the educational institution writ large.

By design, faculty can select to introduce ethics during their first class session. During the session, faculty can review various ethical frameworks that can be used by students as a means to provide another way of looking at and understanding classroom discussions and assignments.

Case studies which are extensively used throughout graduate management education are rather limiting as an instructional tool when used to develop nothing more than a student's rhetorical skills. But when used correctly, case studies have the potential of getting students to think about complex arguments from various perspectives. And, the introduction of an ethical framework to guide the analysis of a case study can serve the purpose of allowing students to think about "real world" issues from various ethical perspectives.

Recommendations for Future Research

In an effort to expand on the existing body of knowledge in graduate management education, future research should be conducted on several components of the Executive MBA curriculum. The ability to ascertain with exactness whether ethics-related content such as ethical decision-making frameworks are integrated and pervasive throughout each Executive MBA course would be impossible without several hours of classroom observation and interviews with students, faculty, and program administrators. Future research of Executive MBA programs might build on my research by using a case study approach including one to two programs to further ascertain whether ethics-related content are integrated and pervasive. For now, my exploratory study has uncovered additional research questions which may facilitate future research on the curricular integration of ethics in Executive MBA programs.

Sets of curricular documents collected for this documentary study revealed that ethics-related courses (or units within courses) were rarely integrated into the Executive MBA curriculum. If ethics is truly integrated into the EMBA curriculum but just not evident in program-wide nor course-specific documents, then three questions warrant further research. First, what ethical frameworks are faculty using to guide ethical discussions in the classroom? Second, how are Executive MBA programs measuring ethics comprehension among students? Third, to what extent is a student's moral compass altered through enrollment in an EMBA program?

Addressing these questions requires a research design perhaps drastically different from the research design adopted for this study. The research design would require

substantial classroom observations, interviews with various stakeholder groups, and surveys of students and graduates to fully understand the extent of the impact of the curricular integration of ethics on a student's belief system.

Further research of Executive MBA programs might also include a larger number and variety of EMBA programs housed within a business school. For example, it would be valuable to learn whether important curriculum design differences and approaches exist between global EMBA programs versus U.S.-based EMBA programs. Further research should also include field work to gather data on an EMBA graduate's change in ethical knowledge, competencies, and dispositions acquired through education and how these changes are perceived by others in the graduate's workplace.

The opportunities to expand the body of knowledge of graduate management education are endless. In particular, additional research relating to the curricular integration of ethics in graduate management education will give stakeholders the information required to make sound curriculum decisions.

Conclusion

Corporate scandals have involved unethical decisions leading to global consequences of seismic proportions. The scholarly literature offers mixed reviews on whether or not legislative acts such as the Sarbanes-Oxley Act have served their purpose well as a growing number of corporate scandals continue to be reported in the media. Business schools are in a prominent position to effectuate massive change by the sheer number of mid-level professionals that they enroll. My study finds that although the integration of ethics in Executive MBA programs is sparse, I believe the willingness of

many program administrators and faculty to do the right thing is vibrant and strong. For all these reasons, now is the time for higher education to take a purposeful and prominent lead to redress societal wrongs of the past and pave the way for a future where everyone benefits from ethical profit maximization.

APPENDIX A:
LETTER TO EXECUTIVE MBA PROGRAM ADMINISTRATOR

Date

My inside mailing address

Name and address of recipient

Dear Professor (or Dr.)...

My name is Jaime Franco and I am a doctoral candidate in the Higher Education Program at Loyola University Chicago. I am conducting documentary research that explores the curricular integration of ethics in the content of selected Executive MBA programs across the United States. My examination seeks to address one overarching research question: To what extent and in what ways do U.S. Executive MBA programs offer ethics-related courses (or units within courses) which are designed to enhance the ethical decision making skills of MBA students? More specifically, I will explore what ethics-related courses are offered; whether or not these courses are required or elective; and what ethical knowledge, competencies, and dispositions are addressed in the ethics-related courses.

The majority of the documents that I will examine from each of seven Executive MBA programs will be accessed via the World Wide Web using documents found on each program's website. Using the sampling criteria I have developed for my study, I am happy to report that your program is one of the seven that I am including in the study. I also realize that some key documents may not be available on your website and thus I am writing to seek your assistance and to ask if you would support my study by providing me with selected documents? In my study, the name of each Executive MBA program and other identifying information that may identify a program will be masked so as to preserve the anonymity of the program. No specific results from my study will be linked directly to any one program using the actual name of that program.

The specific documents that I have determined I can not retrieve on your website include the following: (a)..., (b)..., (c)..., etc. These documents and any other documents which you may deem as valuable to inform my study can be e-mailed directly to me as either a PDF or Word files or if it is easier, you can mail them to me at my address above.

If you need further information about my study, please do not hesitate to contact me at (954) 683-2384 or at jaime_m_franco@yahoo.com.

Sincerely,

Jaime Franco
Ph.D. Candidate
Higher Education Program
Loyola University Chicago

APPENDIX B:
CODIFICATION RULES

1. Executive MBA core course syllabi will be evaluated.
2. If an ethics-related term appears in an objective, it will be coded.
3. Core course syllabi, course assignments, and course required textbooks will be analyzed to determine pedagogical methods used in ethics education. Pedagogical methods examples are: case study, seminars, guest lectures, and Socratic Method.
4. Core course syllabi, course assignments, and course required textbooks will be analyzed to determine the utilization of specific ethical theories. Ethical theories can be coded as teleological (Consequentialist, Utilitarianism), deontological (Non-consequentialist, Kant), or cost-benefit analysis. If content specifies a type of ethical theory other than teleological, deontological, or cost-benefit analysis then code the ethical theory as specified.
5. Student handbooks, mission statements, value statements, student honor codes/ethics codes, oaths of honor, codes of conduct, co-curricular activities, course requirements, and course descriptions. If an ethics-related term appears in the aforementioned curricular components, the term will be coded.

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