

Applying Philosophic and Sustainability Models: A Challenge for Business Educators in Teaching Ethics

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Abstract

There is a wealth of research in philosophy that provides different philosophical theories of ethics. Within these theories are debates, such as the importance of collective good vs. individual rights and whether happiness, autonomy or justice should be most important values in decision making. Studying these philosophic debates helps students to view ethics from different perspectives and thus promote critical thinking. And, it is within these philosophic debates that there is significant overlap with the business sustainability model. The sustainability model in its business application considers three P's (profit, people, and planet) and challenges business leaders to consider all three areas in strategic planning and ethical decision making. This paper makes a valuable contribution to business educators by providing a framework that organizes and integrates the key philosophic debates and the three P's of sustainability in teaching business ethics. This framework promotes critical thinking and ethical decision-making along all three P's of sustainability, allowing for more robust critical thinking about ethics in a business setting. With this approach, students are made aware of their blind spots, and begin to think more carefully, critically, and creatively about achieving long-term sustainability goals. A review of pertinent published research will be presented, along with primary data (results and observations made in applying this framework to teaching ethics in an undergraduate business classroom setting). The literature review, framework, and classroom results will be presented to help business educators overcome some of the challenges in teaching business ethics.

Key Words: Sustainability, (Business) Education, Philosophy