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TITLE: *ANALYSING ETHICS AT THE UNIVERISITY LEVEL AND ITS EFFECTIVE CONTRIBUTION TO NATION-BUILDING*

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Table of Contents

INTRODUCTION

Education is a basic human need. Not only should it contribute to the growth of an individual's knowledge but also their character. Education unlocks peoples' potential and it is in this way that knowledge is power. Individuals especially in third world countries have a stereotypical view of the purpose, quality and quantity of education required as a basic foundation for life. Given the changes and developments in the world, man is coming to the realization that the basic educational system needs to be adjusted accordingly. [1]

An education system is inadequate if it teaches young people how to make a living but doesn't teach them integrity and values. The current education system in Kenya has produced a vast population knowledgeable but unable to efficiently apply that knowledge into relevant skill so as to contribute positively to nation-building. Likewise, when individuals are knowledgeable and skilled but lacking in or oblivious of the need for human dignity, education is incomplete. Therefore, various adjustments must be made to the system to increase its efficiency and this research tries to establish to what extent ethics is instilled at the University level of education.[2]

The research methods to be used will include primary methods such as one on one interviews with current and former university students and secondary techniques such as academic articles and journals. To guarantee authenticity of the data acquired a comparison will be carried out to check for consistency of the different individual opinions we receive. Also, the use of academic articles and journals as a reference will guarantee this paper's validity.

The weight of this research is basically finding out to what extent the education system at the university level promotes ethics in the society and how this plays a role of ethics in Nation Building. Based on the research, solutions and recommendations are being looked into for adjusting the university system and its curriculum in order for it to be more cogent and fulfill its purpose of turning scholars into complete beings with knowledge, wisdom, skill and dignity. The

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[1] Knight, S. (2009). Merlin: Knowledge and Power Through The Ages. New York: Cornell University Press

[2] Woolman, D. C. (2001). Educational Reconstruction and Post-colonial Curriculum Development. *A Comparative Study of Four African Countries*, 28-29.

research also involves implementing one of the recommendations and describing the outcomes (positive, neutral or negative) and giving reasons based on these outcomes. Based on this experience, relevant and innovative adjustments will be made to the previous recommendations. This study is to be a conclusive and helpful contribution to the current education system; relevant and applicable in relevant institutions.

CONTEXT/BACKGROUND OF THE RESEARCH

Higher education in Kenya has since independence produced adequate human resources for both the private and public sectors of the economy. However, in the recent past, questions have been raised by various parties and even media as to whether the individuals that graduate from the various institutions that offer higher education have been moulded into all-rounded beings that can actively and effectively participate in the process of nation building.

Looking back at its history, higher education has indeed come a long way. Since the elevation of the Royal College, Nairobi, to university college status in 1961, to the current 7 public universities and 19 private universities, higher education has obviously achieved tremendous growth. These institutions have gone ahead and graduated thousands and thousands of graduates despite some facing serious challenges such as decline of quality of education, weak management practices, enrolment beyond their capacity and fiscal challenges. This has in fact been one of the main reasons for the sprouting of private institutions of higher education that have provided an alternative route to many that seek it. [3]

Despite fostering an intellectual community around the country, the high unemployment rate of 40% as of 2008 to 2010, experienced especially amongst the youth has proved to be detrimental. With a lot of graduates finding it challenging to keep themselves actively engaged in constructive activities and gaining active employment, a significant proportion has 'given up' which raises the issue as to whether the education they received contributed to their wholeness as beings who have respect for their dignity. [4]

This paper hence seeks to find out the situation as it is on the ground in the educational institutions with primary focus on Strathmore University students and its alumni.

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[3] http://www.che.or.ke/history.html

[4] http://www.globalpressinstitute.org/global-news/africa/kenya/youth-unemployment-crisis-continues-millions-college-grads-flood-unemployme?page=2

CONTENT OF THE RESEARCH

In our research we chose to focus more on the aspect of curriculum in educational institutes, specifically at the university levels. Curriculum development may be generically conceived as an amalgamation of various processes employed in the pursuit of certain set goals in a school system. It covers the entire spectrum of curriculum construction. This ranges from initial conceptualization and planning to design and implementation to evaluation and revision.

 First, our societies urgently require new educational strategies that can help prevent further degradation of our planet, and that foster caring and responsible citizens genuinely concerned with and capable of contributing to a just and peaceful world. Second, these new educational strategies must be available to all not only a handful of people and take place in various settings, including families and communities. Third, they must begin in early childhood, as the values, attitudes, behaviors and skills acquired in this period may have a long-lasting impact in later life. Proverbs 22:6 says," Direct your children onto the right path, and when they are older, they will not depart[5]". Thus, early childhood education clearly has an important place in the efforts to bring about sustainable development. In the words of Plato, "if you ask what the good of education is, the answer is easy- that education makes good men, and that good men act nobly".[6] In our opinion, curriculum defines education; hence the need to incorporate ethics, or rather moral education into the curriculum is essential.

It is important to consider how different institutions incorporated ethics into their curriculum, but also how the students react to it. We looked at the education system in Kenya, the 8-4-4 system. In primary and secondary schools, the curriculums are rather rigid since the subjects are the same in all the schools across the country. We then asked the question, how are teachers able to teach moral standards in spite of their rigid outlines for their courses? In their training, were they trained accordingly on incorporating moral education into their teaching? Hence we chose to focus on university level. In universities, students are able to specialize into their desired professions. It is a proper platform to incorporate ethics into their professional knowledge. Reality is that it would be meaningless if students are taught ethics but they only apply it at an

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[5] The Holy Bible

[6] http://josephsoninstitute.org/quotes/quotations.php?q=Education

examinable level rather than a practical and realistic level as a way of life. There is the stereotypical idea that ethics is taught only in business-oriented programmes hence students majoring in other fields ignore it. For a country to develop, it takes each and every one of its citizens to adopt moral standards. Look at Kenya for example, many politicians are corrupt, those holding positions of power are morally incapacitated hence few role models for the young to follow. This just emphasizes the fact that we have a long way to go in developing as a country. The education system needs to be adjusted accordingly to mold the future generations, our tomorrow's leaders and citizens.

This paper looks at loopholes in the curriculums that may be causing students to come out half-baked morally while well-done intellectually. It also looks into how these loopholes can be filled or university institutions can make adjustments to the existing curriculums, or find remedies to the already existent problems. We found it better to fix the youth first for they are the next to take up the reigns of governance in the country. We looked mainly into university level of education. The main objectives of the research are to identify how the university curricula accommodate molding of students to ethical, moral, intellectual beings, identify the incapacities of the curricula, and suggest rational, testable and reasonable recommendations that could be adopted by schools and remedies for products of faulty school curricula.

RESEARCH METHODS

I.   *Sampling and use of questionnaires*

When looking for individuals to assist in our research, we saw it best to do general wide spread sampling. We considered people from a range of backgrounds in terms of ethnicity, religion and socio-economic status. We sampled students from different years of study, that is, 1st year, 2nd year, 3rd year, 4th year and other corresponding years of study. We also considered students in different degree programmes, both under graduate and postgraduate. We also considered those students doing diplomas and professional papers such as ACCA. We considered professionals in the actual work environments, employees and employers, alongside students who had also had experience in the fields. Besides Strathmore University, We also took into consideration students from other known universities such as three medicine students from the University of Nairobi, students from Catholic University, Kenyatta University, Jomo Kenyatta University of Agriculture and Technology as well as those from Daystar University.   Under all the students we considered, there were those who had undergone a unit or course on ethics.

A total of 213 questionnaires which were reasonably distributed were filled in and returned to us. However, we only considered 170 as they appeared to have been seriously answered and were appropriate or consistent.

II.   *Interviews*

After sampling individuals from different frames, we carried out face to face interviews. Generally we interviewed diploma, undergraduate, graduate and professional courses students. The data we collected was basically each of their personal opinions rather than facts. For others, the interviews were conducted through phone calls. The reasons for carrying out interviews were because they are important for collecting detailed information and the response rate was higher.

III.   *Studying journals and articles*

Many journals and scholastic journals have been written pinned to the issue of ethics in universities and community at large. With reference to this material, many ideas can be extracted to assist in the writing of this paper. The journals and documents used for the purpose of this paper have been clearly cited and referenced in this paper.

IV.   *Scenario construction*

This method of research proved the most efficient as peoples characters were clearly brought out. This method involved providing the individuals with a particular scenario and asking them to react to it given whatever stated circumstances. It has to be made clear that there is no wrong answer so that the individuals do not provide a biased or limited answer. The scenarios used differed in the way the issue-related factors were presented. This allowed us to identify what factors prompted moral or ethical awareness.

The main arguments and findings were really relevant to the study. The interview method of collecting data proved to be the most effective as it enabled collection of quality and quantity information. We interviewed 25 individuals and a higher portion of these seemed to have different views and opinions that were somehow linking each other.

Explaining findings

The first finding is that there are several units on ethics in all the researched universities, polytechnics and training institutes. For example, Strathmore University became the first university to offer a module on Ethics and made it mandatory for students pursuing their undergraduate degree. Other universities took up units corresponding in ethical values for example Catholic University of East Africa. Examples of these modules are Philosophical Anthropology, Critical Thinking, Christian Ethics, Professional Ethics and units on HIV/AIDS, Christian Ethics and Development studies.

Interviews we carried out proved to be quite effective in finding out that as much as there are several units on ethics at the university level, students in public institutions even fail to attend the classes since they believe they know all they need to know for them to pass their exam at the end of their semesters. For most students, the only time they turn up in class for these units is to do their exams. Even those in private institutions, where class attendance is taken seriously, may attend class but restrict their focus levels and get easily distracted doing other things in class. At the end of the day, very little education or information is passed along to the students. Hence, despite their graduation with an ethics certificate or a pass or good grade in the respective unit, they have learnt less than what's required of them.

Thirdly, in most cases, the university curriculum does not allow for any follow up of the ethics units done. That is, there are no indications of relation in later courses once the unit is complete. However, we found one exception, that is, the law degree; because once a student gets the law undergraduate degree from the university level, one has to proceed to Kenya School of Law

which highly regards ethics. Also, in other universities students are required to do more than one ethical unit and this discipline are somehow related. For example, some students do Philosophical Anthropology in their second year and Ethics II in their third year. In any career, ethics is of high interest. Without it, come many problems such as corruption that distorts nation-building.

The fourth finding is that there are very few units on ethics. A good example is in the University of Nairobi where medicine students only have one unit on ethics, HIV/AIDS, despite the importance of ethical values in their careers.

Another finding is that many individuals argue that ethics cannot be taught because character development has already occurred by that time an individual reaches the age of entering a higher education.

Analyzing findings

Universities introduced Ethics into their curricula in different forms as mentioned earlier. This is because ethics became a key factor that employers looked into as they employ individuals into their organizations. Moreover, students needed to realize the importance of Business Ethics as most organizations in their fields are governed by various codes of ethics

In most cases, students do the units because they are part of the programme and it is compulsory for them. They make no effort to recall what they read as they do not clearly understand the essence of it, that ethics should be part of their values. This indicates that there is no practicality and the system only teaches individuals to memorize for examination purposes. Students focus more on career oriented units as they believe they are the only relevant details they might encounter when they start working.

These problems may also be as a result of lack of proper ethics training for the educators. This results to ineffectiveness of ethics coverage within the curriculum as the knowledge taught is not conversant with the ones teaching the units.

Many students fail to understand that ethics is the motivation based on ideas of right and wrong. Knowing right from wrong is given to all of us at birth. They have already learned ethics; the secret is how to apply it in their lives as it is of great importance. The concept of human dignity is linked to all the key ethical principles.

A sense of ethics helps to create honesty in an individual. A non-ethical person has little apprehension about lying, stealing or otherwise being deceptive. There are certainly those in our society that view honesty as an irrelevant consideration in business or personal relationships. The result can be harmful to our general society. A good example is given of well known intelligent scholars who use their knowledge to fulfill their disordered self interest, thus engaging in activities such as fraud and corruption.

Comparing/Contrasting the findings

The first contrast is that as much as there are several units focusing on ethics being taught in these learning institutions, many students do not prioritize these units and do not take them seriously enough. This indicates that the problem is partly generated by both students and the facilitators. The facilitators may not stress the importance of ethics to the students whereas the students tend to be ignorant or have a bad attitude towards the units on ethics. This may be illustrated by the fifth finding, where several students argue that ethics cannot be taught at the university level.

Some of these findings indicate that there are failures of ethics. This may be because there is a large amount of technical detail that must be covered within the curriculum. A cited example in Strathmore University is in the School of Finance and Applied Economics where students have eight units to do in the course of each semester for four years.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Introduce more ethics units in universities and appropriate follow up

Previous studies have proven that it is possible to change behavior by using the concept of participative learning. Ethics concerns the values of people. They can be taught because values are communicated from one generation to another. Educators and professional bodies need to distinguish between teaching students about professional values, ethics and attitudes and developing a sense of ethical behavior in a business context. This may be done by merging the financial and social imperatives within business ethics education. Students should get into the habit of applying ethical decision-making strategies in a higher education setting so that they may more likely use them in business situations.

There is the option of providing one core course that solely focuses on ethics. This however has a limited effect on moral development of the students. Values education suffers most when it is separated from reality and taught as a dry, self-contained topic.

A better possibility is to integrate ethics content throughout multiple courses i.e. to apply concepts to specific contexts that the students may face in a work setting. The advantage of this is that the transfer of the material from school to work is increased.

Christine de Marcellus de Vollmer is the chairman of Alliance For the Family (AFF). She highly values character development and she was a co-author of the "Alive to The World" program. The program makes young people think about choices and consequences. At age appropriate levels, they have to consider family, friendship, peer pressure, romance, sex, love, marriage—and implications like loyalty, team work, personal responsibility, and respect for property, to name but a few. Recently, she has tried introducing the program in schools worldwide as she believes that an individual must be tutored on ethics from the basic levels to ensure that ethics grows with them. Without a doubt, this is a very good initiative.

2. Teachers and Lectures should have a better background on ethics to ensure that they are able to convey ethics information effectively to students

When teaching, most teachers take a conventional approach in teaching. The teacher asks questions, they teach the students, they think and they take responsibility. The students have passive involvement in the learning process hence do not learn much. Successful teaching of business ethics depends on the ease, frequency and quality of conversations among students and the lecturer or teacher. It allows collaborative learning among students with differing ethical backgrounds, experiences, worldviews, skills, areas of expertise, vocabularies and so on. Teachers could look at involving students in the learning process so that they are interested which therefore increases their possibility of being open to the lessons and retaining material longer. For example, keeping journals or role-playing or playing games. Students could be asked to develop a code of ethics for an organization. This allows them to think critically about ethics.

3. Awareness should be created in students and its importance.

When discussing the aim of teaching ethics, we must point out that it is not to teach the difference between right and wrong but to make people comfortable facing moral complexity. Students should be provided an opportunity to discuss ethical issues encountered by professionals. This would enable them to identify ethical predicaments more readily. After identifying the ethical dilemma, they must determine how to react to and resolve the situation. The resolution will be based on the individual's moral understanding. Perhaps this was the best recommendation that we found fit to implement.

4. Introduce extra curricula activities in the university that will promote ethics.

This would be through clubs and societies. For example Strathmore University has the Community Outreach Programme. In this club, students take part in activities that are geared towards helping the needy in the society. Generally they are able to promote the common good correspondingly developing the students' character and values. Considering all clubs and

14

societies should receive approval from the school's administration, the school should be able to encourage ethics in the clubs' mission and vision. This will be able to cement the ethical principles they acquire in class. In their ability to apply the ethics in their club activities, the ethical values will be enhanced more efficiently and retention made better due to their practicality.

IMPLEMENTATION OF ONE RECOMMENDATION

We chose to implement the recommendation on making learning of ethics more interesting by involving to the students and exposing them to different case studies.

We applied it to a group of students in Strathmore doing a Bachelor in Business Science degree. The group consisted of more than 70 students and we carried out the exercise on different school days often in the Strathmore School MSB rooms and the Student Centre. We extracted several case studies and proposed to them a project in form of a role-playing game. We took a few of them and gave them several scenarios based on the theme of ethics; where their ethical values were tested and challenged. One example is given in the appendices.

We presented the challenge to the students and encouraged them to act it out in their own character. It was a bit difficult to make them take the project seriously. They took it as a joke at first but the more scenarios we presented them with they were able to understand the essence of the whole activity. On asking them about their experience, we received the following feedback:

1. They enjoyed the activities proving that by making them more involved, they could learn more and expel the monotony of in-classroom education.

2. They were able to point out the main ethical values that they needed in each scenario. This enabled them to be their own teachers and student.

3. They agreed that they could apply the appropriate principles on ethics when faced with similar scenarios in future and in reality.

4. They were able to provide criticism on the scenarios and the approach in general. Hence we were able to modify our recommendation.

In light of the implemented recommendation, we found it a fit and valid measure to be applied in teaching methods. However, teachers should be careful to use real and up-to-date scenarios that may occur in the students' social and professional life "today". It is important that students enjoy what they learn as it increases the chance of them retaining and applying the knowledge in reality. It is also important to do follow ups that will allow the students to criticize and appraise the method. From the criticisms we obtained from the students, they suggested that the role-playing scenarios should also incorporate social aspects, as opposed to wholly professional. This will allow them to develop not only as professionals but also as individuals in character.

CONCLUSION

If introduced in the first two years of undergraduate programmes, designed to be as involving and practical as possible to students, and taught by lecturers who are both enthusiastic and passionate on the subject, ethics could contribute massively to the process of nation building. In a nation that aims to achieve middle income status by the year 2030, it is vital that the youth learn to be ethical as they will in the near future be the driver of both economic and social development.

Moreover, as much as it is important to have business ethics modules integrated into undergraduate curricula, it is equally essential to have lecturers and other administrative staff of a university act ethically as they conduct their duties. As human beings, we are to a large extent a product of the environments we associate ourselves with and hence tend to acquire similar attributes to those we interact with. This implies that apart from classroom learning that students are familiar with, the environment (in this case a university and its staff) they are subjected to tend to mould them as individuals. Therefore if members of staff act in a manner that is in conflict with standard ethical practices, especially those taught in the ethics modules, over time will have an erosive effect on the ethics that the same educational institutions teach. Also, in the long run as students and graduates interact with those who may not have had the privilege of attending university, they will have a positive peer influence which will eventually contribute to the process of nation building and national unity.

Making the learning process fun, interesting and involving to students also goes a long way. This ensures that they learn more and application of the values of ethics is clearly brought out to them. If these recommendations are implemented into the university system, the failures of ethics will be greatly curbed and a vast population will be knowledgeable and able to efficiently apply that knowledge into relevant skill so as to contribute positively to nation building fitting the definition of "an ideal education system".

Appendices

Scenario

A Hiring Decision Scenario[7]

Robin Doherty is a manager for Johnson Company, a large, diversified company. Pat has just returned from a meeting in which Taylor Compton, a Vice President and Robin's boss, announced that Johnson's competitors in electronic components are increasing their market share, while Johnson's market share and profitability are suffering. Robin and other managers were disheartened by this news because Johnson Company has always taken great pride in being the market leader in all of its businesses. Feeling somewhat exhausted after the meeting, Robin sank into a chair with the day's third cup of coffee, and started to sift through the large pile of paper work in an overfull in-tray. Toward the top of the pile, a memo that had been flagged with a post-it note by Robin's assistant immediately caught Robin's eye. The memo was from the financial controller's office, urging people to cut their overheads, especially salaries, telephone bills and travel expenses. Just as Robin began to concentrate on other pressing matters, Taylor Compton barged into Robin's office.

Taylor: Sorry for the interruption, this is important.

Robin: [frustrated] isn't everything?

Taylor: As you recall, late last month Brett Galloway resigned from the position of sales representative for District 5. Since that time, customers haven't got the service they deserve. That's why I'm anxious to fill the position immediately.

Robin: Ok, so what would you like me to do?

Taylor: Human Resources has narrowed the prospects down to two applicants and has outlined their qualifications. I'd like you to look at them. [Taylor hands the sheet of paper depicted below]

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[7] Lowry, D. (2003). An Investigation of Student Moral Awareness and Associated Factors. Implications for Business Ethics Curriculum Design, 17-18.

Richard Oakes
Age 32
<u>*Sales experience*</u>*:*
Men's Department Supervisor, 3 years (while at university);
travel agency sales, 4 years;
Electronic equipment sales, 5 years

<u>*Work experience*</u>*:*
Alder's Department Store, 3 years;
Thomas Cook's Travel, 4 years;
Monroe's Business Machine's , 5 years.

<u>*Education*</u>*: Bachelor of Business, marketing*
<u>*References*</u>*: Excellent – learns quickly, personable, good sales record*

Jeremy Dickson
Age: 30
<u>*Sales experience*</u>*:*
Automobile sales, 4 years;
Electronic equipment sales, 5 years.

<u>*Work experience*</u>*:*
Midlands Volvo, 4 years;
Techtronics Inc., 5 years.

<u>*Education*</u>*: Bachelor of Business, management*
<u>*References*</u>*: Very good – hard worker, ambitious, good sales record.*

Robin: [pausing to consider the two candidates] Well at first glance, they seem fairly equal. But sometimes I wonder why we bother spending so much time on these decisions. We haven't had much luck lately getting good people.

Taylor: It's our job to get good people. You should also know that both candidates did well in their interviews, and so I think either one could handle the job. But, there is one potentially important difference if although I'm hesitant to bring it up because it might call our integrity into questions. Jeremy Dickson has past sales experience in a similar position with Techtronics Inc.,

who, as you know, is a small company, but is one of our primary competitors in the electronic components market. In fact, the Research & Development (R&D) group is encouraging me to hire him. They say that he has valuable information about a new product being designed at Techtronics. It's similar to something our own R&D group has been working on. But our people have run into a problem they can't solve. Jeremy has told me he is willing to share the information he has if we hire him and promise not to divulge the source of the information.

Robin: Having that information would be nice. Is there anything else 1 should know?

Taylor: Maybe just one more thing. Some of our people have said they're certain that this information could give us an edge by allowing us to solve our technical problem, which would win over some of Techtronic's customers. I've run some numbers, and I think that, with this information, we could put Techtronics out of business. The only downside I can see is, if this gets out, a few people might think a bit less of us. In any case, I'd like your input as soon as possible so that we can fill this position by the end of the week. My only concern is the propriety of doing this — I'm just not sure this is right.

YOUR TASK:

-Act out the scenario in your own character.

-Think about the scenario from Robin's perspective.

-Write down a list of the issues that Robin could view as important in the scenario.

-If you were in Robin's shoes, what would your decision be and why?

QUSTIONNAIRE

This is not a "scientific survey." It is a poll of university students to determine to what extent the education system at the university level promotes ethics in the society and get opinions as to how efficiently ethics is integrated into the university curriculum.

Section 1: kindly fill in the following details about yourself

    a. Name (optional): _____

    b. University: _____

    c. Program:
- Graduate
- Undergraduate
- University diploma
- Professional Courses
- Others

   If others, specify which one(s).

_____

_____

    d. Which Degree/Diploma/Certificate?

_____

_____

    e. Year(/semester) of study: _____

Section 2: questions regarding ethics as a discipline

    a. As part of your course work, have you had any unit(s) on ethics?

_____

    b. If yes, specify which one(s) and at which level: For example, Introduction to Critical Thinking – 1st year, 2nd semester

_____

_____

_____

_____

c. How did you find each of the above mentioned units or was the mode teaching effectice? (give your brief personal remarks)

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

d. How was your performance on each of the units?
   (very poor, poor, average, good or excellent)

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

e. Has there been any follow up on these units once they are complete? If yes explain briefly (e.g. how it relates to further disciplines)

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

f. In general, do you find these units of any relevance in your near future or career? (explain)

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