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FOLLOWING THE CODE: HOW ACADEMIC CODES OF CONDUCT HELP STUDENTS BECOME ETHICAL LEADERS IN BUSINESS

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The connection between academic ethics codes and professional codes in business ethics is a critical area of study, particularly in the context of ethical decision-making and socially responsible behaviour. Academic ethics codes are designed to guide behaviour within educational institutions, while professional codes of conduct provide standards for ethical behavior in the workplace. Both play a significant role in shaping the ethical mindset of individuals, from students to professionals. This paper provides a synthesis of existing literature on the interplay between these codes, their influence on ethical decision-making, and their role in fostering socially responsible behavior.

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Abstract

The connection between academic ethics codes and professional codes in business ethics is a critical area of study, particularly in the context of ethical decision-making and socially responsible behaviour. Academic ethics codes are designed to guide behaviour within educational institutions, while professional codes of conduct provide standards for ethical behavior in the workplace. Both play a significant role in shaping the ethical mindset of individuals, from students to professionals. This paper provides a synthesis of existing literature on the interplay between these codes, their influence on ethical decision-making, and their role in fostering socially responsible behavior.

Keywords

Academic ethics and integrity; business ethics; ethics code; business leaders; ethical conduct.

I. Introduction

Institutional culture is a critical determinant of academic ethics within European universities. Research indicates that the structural frameworks of universities, including funding, evaluation, and publication practices, can both support and undermine research integrity [1]. For instance, the pervasive competition in academic environments often leads to pressures that may compromise or put into question ethical standards. However, institutions can foster a culture of integrity by implementing supportive structures and promoting ethical practices.

A study examining the views of researchers, managers, and administrators in several European countries found that institutional systems, such as workload and research governance, significantly influence day-to-day work environments and, by

extension, research integrity [1]. This highlights the need for universities to create conditions that support ethical conduct, rather than simply relying on individual responsibility.

Moreover, developing a campus-wide ethos that encourages integrity is essential. This can be achieved through comprehensive academic integrity policies, campus-wide programs, and consistent communication of ethical standards [2]. Such efforts not only reduce academic dishonesty but also cultivate a moral culture that promotes ethical behavior among students and staff. The most important tool for implementing ethical behaviour is the code of ethics, which contains the desired ethical norms.

The academic literature reveals considerable variation in how ethical codes are defined and conceptualized. At the most basic level, codes of ethics are understood as formal documents that articulate professional values, standards, and behavioral expectations [3]. However, scholars have developed more nuanced definitional frameworks that capture the multifaceted nature of these instruments.

Codes of ethics are variously defined as "aspirational or prescriptive social contracts that organize professional values and practices" [4]. This definition highlights two critical dimensions that recur throughout the literature: the aspirational-prescriptive distinction and the social contract function of codes.

The present paper does not intend to comprise a quantitative study, only a theoretical synthesis of the topic. As such, we intend to point out the possible interconnection between the two types of ethics codes from the perspective of teaching academic ethics at a technical university to students who represent actual or future professionals in their fields.

II. The Impact of Teaching Practices on Academic Integrity

Teaching practices play a crucial role in promoting academic integrity. Ethical teaching involves more than just conveying knowledge; it requires educators to model integrity in their interactions with students and colleagues. From our more than five-year practice of teaching academic ethics and integrity, we have observed that effectively exemplifying ethical values and consistently promoting these norms and values is crucial. However, factors such as heavy workloads, lack of training, and the casualization of the academic workforce can hinder these efforts [5].

One effective approach to promoting academic integrity is through ethical teaching and assessment. Strategies such as authentic assessment, experiential learning, and program-level course design can encourage deep learning and reduce the likelihood of academic misconduct [6]. Additionally, ethical care and principles in teaching and assessment can foster a culture of integrity, benefiting both students and educators.

A. Academic Ethics Codes and Their Role in Ethical Development

Academic ethics codes are established by educational institutions to promote integrity, honesty, and responsible behavior among students and faculty. These codes often address issues such as academic integrity, respect for others, and the responsible use of resources. They serve as a foundation for ethical development, preparing students for the ethical challenges they will face in their professional lives.

Academic ethics codes typically include principles such as honesty, fairness, and accountability. For instance, many universities have honor codes that prohibit cheating, plagiarism, and other forms of academic dishonesty. These codes also often emphasize the importance of respecting diversity and promoting inclusivity within the academic community [7] [8].

B. The Impact of Academic Ethics Codes on Student Behavior

Ethics education is a vital component of academic integrity initiatives. Universities have increasingly incorporated ethics education into their curricula, particularly in response to high-profile ethical scandals in business and science [9]. This shift reflects a growing recognition of the importance of ethical training in preparing students for professional roles.

Research indicates that academic ethics codes can have a positive impact on student behavior. For example, studies have shown that students who attend institutions with strong honor codes are less likely to engage in unethical behavior, both in academic and professional settings [10] [11]. This suggests that academic ethics codes play a crucial role in shaping the ethical values of future professionals.

III. Professional Codes of Conduct and Their Role in Business Ethics

Professional codes of conduct are established by industries, organizations, or professional associations to guide ethical behavior in the workplace. These codes often address issues such as confidentiality, conflicts of interest, and the responsible use of resources. They are designed to promote ethical decision-making and ensure that professionals act in the best interests of their organizations and society.

Professional codes of conduct vary depending on the industry and organization, but they often include principles such as integrity, transparency, and accountability. For example, the accounting profession has a well-established code of ethics that emphasizes the importance of professional competence, due care, and confidentiality [12] [13].

Research has shown that professional codes of conduct can have a positive impact on employee behavior. For instance, studies have found that employees who work in organizations with strong ethics codes are less likely to engage in unethical

behavior, and they are more likely to make decisions that align with the organization's ethical standards [10] [14].

IV. The Connection Between Academic and Professional Codes

The connection between academic ethics codes and professional codes of conduct is lies in their shared goal of promoting ethical behavior in an organization. Academic ethics codes intend to lay the foundation for ethical decision-making during the formative years, while professional codes of conduct build on this foundation, providing guidance for professionals in the workplace.

Academic ethics codes intend to influence professional codes of conduct by shaping the ethical values and principles that students carry with them into their professional lives. For example, students who are exposed to strong academic ethics codes are more likely to understand the importance of ethical behavior in the workplace [15] [11]. However, further research into this topic is needed to confirm this thesis.

Professional codes of conduct also influence academic ethics codes by providing a framework for ethical education. Many academic institutions incorporate professional codes of conduct into their curriculum, ensuring that students are prepared to meet the ethical challenges they will face in their professional lives [16] [17]. In Romania, an example consists of the Education Law 199/2023, which codifies ethical norms pertaining to plagiarism and other forms of unethical conduct, such as harassment, sabotage and other forms also found in Romanian labour law.

A. The Role of Codes in Ethical Decision-Making

Ethical decision-making is a critical skill for both students and professionals. Academic ethics codes and professional codes of conduct play a crucial role in shaping this skill by providing a framework for ethical decision-making.

In an academic context, ethics codes provide students with the principles and values they need to make ethical decisions. For example, students who are guided by an academic honor code are more likely to make decisions that align with the principles of honesty and integrity [10] [11].

In professional settings, codes of conduct provide employees with the guidance they need to make ethical decisions. For instance, employees who are familiar with their organization's code of ethics are more likely to make decisions that align with the organization's ethical standards [14] [13].

B. The Role of Codes in Promoting Socially Responsible Behavior

Socially responsible behavior is a key component of both academic ethics codes and professional codes of conduct. These codes promote socially responsible behavior by encouraging individuals to consider the impact of their actions on society.

In academic settings, ethics codes promote socially responsible behavior by encouraging students to consider the impact of their actions on the academic community. For example, students who are guided by an academic honor code are more likely to engage in behaviors that promote social responsibility, such as volunteering and community service [15] [11].

In professional settings, codes of conduct promote socially responsible behavior by encouraging employees to consider the impact of their actions on society. For instance, employees who are familiar with their organization's code of ethics are more likely to engage in behaviors that promote social responsibility, such as environmental sustainability and community engagement [14] [13].

C. Challenges and Opportunities in Aligning Academic and Professional Codes

While there are many opportunities for aligning academic ethics codes and professional codes of conduct, there are also challenges. One of the key challenges is ensuring that academic ethics codes are aligned with the ethical standards of the professional world. This requires ongoing collaboration between academic institutions and professional organizations.

There are several opportunities for aligning academic ethics codes and professional codes of conduct. For example, academic institutions can incorporate professional codes of conduct into their curriculum, ensuring that students are prepared to meet the ethical challenges they will face in their professional lives. Additionally, professional organizations can work with academic institutions to develop ethics codes that align with the ethical standards of the professional world [16] [17].

One of the key challenges in aligning academic ethics codes and professional codes of conduct is ensuring that both codes are relevant and effective. This requires ongoing research and evaluation to ensure that the codes meet their intended goals. Additionally, differences between academic and professional ethical standards can create confusion for individuals transitioning from academic to professional settings [7] [8].

V. Discussion and outlook

As stated, this paper does not include an actual study to demonstrate, based on empirical data, the degree of influence and interconnection between academic and

professional codes of ethics. This is scope for further research, the methodology of which is still to be studied. The authors limit themselves to their experience of teaching academic ethics at a technical university. A future study will have to focus on all types of universities across more countries to demonstrate the assumed reciprocal influence of the two presented types of codes of ethics.

VI. Conclusion

The connection between academic ethics codes and professional codes of conduct is a critical area of study, particularly in the context of ethical decision-making and socially responsible behavior. Academic ethics codes lay the foundation for ethical decision-making, while professional codes of conduct build on this foundation, providing guidance for professionals in the workplace. Both codes play a crucial role in shaping the ethical mindset of individuals, from students to professionals.

By aligning academic ethics codes and professional codes of conduct, we can create a seamless transition from academic to professional settings, ensuring that individuals are prepared to meet the ethical challenges they will face in their professional lives. This alignment not only promotes ethical decision-making but also fosters socially responsible behavior, which is essential for creating a more ethical and responsible society.

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