

Teaching Business Ethics and Corporate Social Responsibility to Management and Engineering Students

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Abstract

The concept of the Common Good can be taught to engineers and business students following an Aristotelian-Thomistic approach. This paper presents curricular material, processes, and ideas that speak to the significance and practical wisdom of business and leadership thought on the common good.

Empirical data is drawn from two postgraduate programs with a focus on “Management for Engineers” and “Strategic Management” that include a core module on “Business Ethics and Social Responsibility” at the Universidad de La Sabana, Colombia.

The concept of the Common Good can be taught to engineers and business students following an Aristotelian-Thomistic approach based in the following relevant contents:

1. Aristotelian-Thomistic approach for virtues
2. Human Acts and their quality of good or evil
3. Circumstances of Human Acts
4. Happiness (Eudaimonia) as the highest human good.
5. Principles: solidarity, subsidiarity, responsibility, and participation.
6. Management by values.

The pedagogical methods used are:

1. Lectures and seminar work.
2. Reading of the specialized ethics literature, especially Spaemann (1987) “Ética: cuestiones fundamentales”.
3. Case studies facilitate a review of Corporate Social Responsibility with a focus on the common good.

Practical cases are developed by students. These are cases written and presented by the students that analyse the Colombian business and economic environment. Participation of invited experts such as the manager of the Compliance Department of Siemens corporation in Colombia, and the Colombian representative of United Nations Global Compact.

Finally, reviewing pedagogical spill-overs allows to realize the importance of the business ethics modules. First, at present, there have so far been seventy-eight engineers and seventy-five business students that have attended the lectures with sincere, unconditional and strong dedication. The impact that these persons would generate in their own life and in their office environment is indeed invaluable. Second, the creation of social networks between companies, NGOs, and the university, derived from the invitation of our guest speakers yields socially important benefits in terms of interactions between the university and the firms.