Ethical Climate In Vocational Program Administrative Sciences Department: Student Perception

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Abstract

The existence of ethics course in the designed curriculum given, expected to shape morale and develop ethic awareness between student in their study environment. This thing will be a primary asset for graduate candidates in the future. This research is an effort to make an image about study environment climate, that occur in Vocational Program generally, and in Administration Science particularly. The aim of this study is to describe students' perceptions of their institution's ethical environment. The Ethical Climate Questionnaires were completed by fifty two final-year vocational program students. The result showed that the type of consensual morality is the most dominant factor that forms ethical environment in campus.

Key Words: *ethics, ethical climate, vocational program*

Introduction

Vocational Program is an applied educational program with purposes such as, to create middle competent experts in their field. Therefore, the curriculum design of this Program always refers to the competencies required by industries and related associations. Curriculum development programs are undertaken by involving a variety of stakeholders. Various cooperation programs are conducted with industries, professional associations, government, alumni associations and relevant educational institutions. The periodic curriculum development programs are very beneficial to the interests of the business world in order that competencies of the prospective graduates produced have linkages to the needs of the employment world. One of many important inputs from the stakeholders, is the importance of ethic awareness from their alumni, especially, related to implementation of their jobs in the future. As for, to grow these ethic awareness between these graduates, then one of the most important input in curriculum design is to include ethics course in the current curriculum given.

Cordel (1999) stated that the concept of ethics represents a set of fundamental assumptions that underlie all the relationships and transactions within society. These are assumptions about the way we treat people, what our right and the right of others are, where our individual right ends and rights of others begin, how individual and community property ought to be treated and what constitute fair and equitable treatment of all people.

In general, ethics is divided into general ethics and special ethics. General ethics talks about norms and moral values, the basic conditions for human beings to act ethically. While special ethics is the application of principles or norms in the fields of life. Special ethics provides rules as a practical guidance, guideline and orientation for every person in the life and specific activities undertaken. Special ethics is divided into individual ethics, social ethics and environmental ethics (Berten, 2000). Individual ethics involves the obligations and attitudes of human beings towards themselves. The principle relevant to this case is personal integrity that is a certain individual behavior to maintain his/her reputation as a moral person. Good deeds are actions which produce as many as possible of good realities (Suseno, 2000). When discussing social ethics, this will include the obligations and rights, attitudes and behavioral patterns of human beings as social beings in interacting with others. While the last is the environmental ethics that is on how human beings both as individuals and groups interact with their environment (Keraf, 1998).

Ethics as part of daily life is the main concern when there is an increasing linkage between the industries and business players, even business values (Resnik, 1998). Therefore, realizing the importance of ethics in the daily life practices, a wide range of universities have included ethics courses in their curriculum. Ethical education is recognized to have a significant role in the development of profession in accordance with the field of science, (Wibowo, 2002). Prospective graduates from various universities are expected to become professionals who have to uphold the righteousness values.

Any person who will enter a particular profession must comply with the ethical obligations agreed by his/her professional group. People believe that certain professional groups provide services in the corridor of a certain quality standard. Profession is a job undertaken to make a living by relying on high skills and involving strong personal commitment (Keraf, 1998). Professionals are people who carry out a full time job and live from the job by relying on their high expertise and skills and strong commitment.

Resnik (1998) mentioned the criteria used to describe the general characteristics of profession. First, professions generally enable people to obtain socially valued goal (or good or service) and professionals have obligations to insure that these goals are obtained. Second, professions have implicit or explicit standards of competence and conduct that govern professionalism activism. Third, profession usually go through a long period of formal and informal education and training before being admitted into the profession. Forth, professions have governing bodies for insuring that professional standard are upheld. Fifth, professions are careers. Sixth, professionals are granted certain privileges in order to provide their goods and services. Last, professionals are often

recognized as an intellectual authorities within their domain expertise.

Furthermore, some previous studies that discuss the ethical climate perceptions of professions ranging from comparisons based on gender, nationality   until the member status of the organization. A study conducted by Mahdavi (2009) showed that there are significant differences in terms of perception of the Modality of instruction between the male and female respondents who attending the same ethics courses. The differences between Filipino and Taiwanese on the perveived work climate value performed by Chuang and Galano (2008). The result showed that there is significant difference between the Filipino and Taiwanese accountant on the perceived work climate value. Other research linking further between the ethical climate of the institution with the organizational culture. This research examined the critical organizational cultural factors found in public organizations that account for differences in ethical climates. (Erakovich et al., 2002).

Based on Kohlberg's theory of Cognitive Moral Reasoning, Victor and Cullen (1988) used a different approach to measure reasoning by examining the organization's ethical climate. *Ethical Climate* is "*the shared perception of what is ethically correct behavior and how ethical issues should be handled*" (Erakovich et al., 2002). Meanwhile, ultimately, the behavior of individuals produces an organization's ethical climates (Victor and Cullen, 1987). In an organization, member of the organization learn through formal and informal socialization processes what is correct to contribute to this organizational ethical climate.

Measurement of organizational ethical climate which was pioneered by Victor and Cullen (1987) can be used for academic setting if the "the company" relates to an individual school or college. The questionnaire is based on the assumptions that (1) each company or subgroup has its own moral character; (2) group members know what character is; and (3) group members can tell an outsider about their organization's moral character in an objective way. To conduct the audit, the questionnaire is administered to all members of the group. Individuals are asked to rate each statement on the survey on a scale of least to most descriptive. The statement in the survey that is most descriptive of the organization's ethical climate receives seven points, and the least descriptive statement receives one point. Item points are then totaled, and ethical work values are matched with three new ethical work cultures: *universal morality, consensual morality, and self-centered morality*. Each question is designed to be grouped into one of these three ethical work culture types. Once the questions are grouped, the total and percentage of points for each work culture type are calculated and the ethical work culture determined.

According to Weber, Universal Morality is the preferred ethical work culture (Acharya, 2005). This type of culture allows one to be unconstrained by the organizational pressures to conform to standard operating procedures, limiting norms, or laws. In contrast, a Self-Centered Morality culture predominantly involves consideration of each individual's self-interest and represents an unstable and underdeveloped set of values. In Consensual Morality, the most common type of ethical work culture, em-

ployees turn to leaders.

Statements concerning Self-Centered Morality in the ECQ talk about the self-centered approach to daily decision making, the tendency to put the institution's interests before that of its employees, and the overemphasis placed on financial goals at the cost of human development. An ethical firm thus resembles the Self-Centered Morality culture type. Statements on Consensual Morality talk about the strict adherence to established laws, codes, and standard procedures in the institution. A compliance firm thus resembles the Consensual Morality type. Statements concerning Universal Morality talk about the freedom given to employees to decide for themselves what is right and wrong and about the increased focus on human development. The emerging ethical firms are a cross between ethical values found in a Universal Morality type and Consensual Morality type; the integrity firm illustrates the Universal Morality ethical work culture.

Research Method

The method used in this research is a quantitative approach to measure student perceptions of ethical climate existing in campus. Populations in this research are all of the Administration Science, Vocational Program students. The research instrument used for this research study is the *adjusted* Ethical Climate Questionnaire (ECQ) developed by Victor and Cullen (1987, 1988), and Cullen et al., (1993). The questionnaire is composed of a 22-item like scale representing the three dimensional values of ethical climate. The twenty-two items of Ethical Climate Questionnaire (ECQ) are answerable in interval scale ranging from the scales of 1 (completely false) to 5 (completely true). Personal information was also asked from the respondents about the suggestion to the Ethics Course that they had taken before.

Prior permission was obtained from the Coordinator of Administrative science Program for conducting this study, which is the standard procedure for approval of research protocols in this institution. The instrument was distributed after the class is over to the student with printed instructions for completion. Samples were taken from 52 students. The period of collecting data was June and July 2010.

Results and Discussion

Data of the research results taken from the questionnaire are presented below. Table 1 shows the scores of each answer item which is a multiplication between the frequency and its weight.

Table 1. Score Calculation for Respondent Answer

	1	2	3	4	5	
Item	Extremely Not Reflected	Slightly Not Reflected	Reflected	Slightly Reflected	Extremely Reflected	Score
1	0	38 (19x2)	69(23x3)	20(5x4)	25(5x5)	152
2	2	44	42	32	30	150
3	5	8	54	64	45	176
4	0	18	54	60	50	182
5	2	4	36	56	110	208
6	0	12	42	90	10	154
7	1	42	66	16	20	145
8	0	2	39	72	100	213
9	0	4	42	64	90	200
10	9	16	21	72	50	168
11	0	4	39	80	85	208
12	0	0	90	30	60	180
13	6	34	45	36	10	131
14	0	0	45	92	70	207
15	1	28	45	76	15	165
16	0	0	72	48	80	200
17	0	0	78	48	70	196
18	0	0	63	88	45	196
19	0	28	39	72	35	174
20	0	0	114	32	30	176
21	0	12	63	60	50	185
22	0	40	54	48	10	152
						3918

For example, the score for the statement number 1 (each student protects individual interests above everything) of 152 (19x2) + (23x3) + (5x4) + (5x5) was obtained from: 19 respondents who answered "not represented" multiplied by the weight of 2, added 23 respondents who answered "fairly represented" multiplied by the weight of 3, added five respondents who answered "represented" multiplied by the weight of 4 and added again five respondents who answered "very represented" multiplied by the weight of 5. This calculation is made sequentially towards 21 other statements.

The calculation of score for each statement item is subsequently classified based on the three dimensions proposed by Kohlberg. In reference to Kohlberg's moral stages of awareness, the student's perception on ethical climate in the campus setting is sourced from 3 (three) dimensions: *self-centered morality, consensual morality and universal morality*. The first dimension is formed by the construct of the statement item number 1, 3, 6, 8, 12, 17, 19 and 20. The second dimension is formed by the construct of the statement item number 2, 5, 9, 11, 14, 16, 21 and 22. The last dimension is formed by the construct of statement item number 4, 7, 10, 13, 15 and 18. The next step is to

group and to add up the scores which form the above three dimensions. The calculation results are presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Grouping Based on the Types of Morality

No.	Statement	Self Centered Morality	Consensual Morality	Universal Morality
1	Every student protects their individual interest above everything.	86	1	
2	Every Student does not put first their individual interest.	75	3	
3	Every student expected to do anything for the sake of institution without knowing the consequences.	77	6	
4	Every student put first their institution importance above other institution.	86	8	
5	Student's main responsibility is to control any expense that appear in class.	88	17	
6	In this institution, every person have to be consistent in everything they done.	95	19	
7	Efficiency in every field are what's best for the institution.	91	20	
8	What bests for every person in the institution is the main goal for everyone.		93	2
9	Every student put first benefit for other student.		105	5
10	Its very important to follow the rules and procedures that this institution have.		94	9
11	Every successful student are the one that follows rules and procedures.		93	11
12	Every student follow the regulation strictly.		92	14
13	Enforcement of penalty and ethics in class become a concern in this institution.		89	16
14	Every person should follow the law and applied standard.		95	21
15	In this instituion, is highly prohibited to violate the regulations.		104	22
16	Every student follows their each morale grounds and personality.		4	100
17	Every student decides what best from their own perspective.		7	98
18	The most important thing for this institution is the faith of good and bad according to each morale grounds.		10	93
19	Morale consideration will be done, only if there a clash between class and institution matters.		12	90
20	In this institution, every person have their own ethic guidance.		13	95
21	In this institution, homage to other peoples right is an important thing.		15	97
22	Every person is expected to always put first fairness and similarity in every decision making.		18	89
	Total score is 2,025	598	765	662
	Percentage for each dimension	0.30	0.38	0.33

The result indicates that students perceive that the school ethical culture has nearly equal influence on all three types of morality. Each score at the end of every column (Table 2) reflects the dimension of ethical awareness that grow in student circle. As for dimension of ethical climate that happens on this field, consist of: self-centered morality, consensual morality, and lastly universal morality. This can be meant that the ethical climate in the campus setting is a combination of the three existing dimensions said. This supports the results of the previous research that every institution is supposed to show a mix of all the three types of ethical culture (Archarya, 2005).

However, if further assessment is undertaken, the data of the above table show that the type of consensual morality is the most dominant factor that forms ethical environment in campus. This is indicated by calculating the score of 38% which is 5% higher than that of the type of universal morality and 8% higher than that of self-centered morality. On an average, students find that the best for everyone in the institution is the thing prioritized here.

Every student feels the need to put first benefit for other student. Generally, students believe that obedience to regulation is a must, moreover Vocational Program have these academic regulation that is strictly enforced. Every student that successful, are the one who follow rules and procedures. Even a minor mistake in executing the applied procedure will cause a pretty pinalty, for example, a fine for every late payment of tuition fees. Meanwhile there are many more students who find that meaning of the best for everyone in the institution is the thing prioritized here is that the institution is perceived to always prioritize "the interests of students providing that they comply with the existing provisions. Students generally believe that complying with the existing regulations and procedures (statement no. 9) will bring about goodness for the continuity of their teaching and learning processes. This is shown by the high number of opinions which support that the student success is gauged by the compliance with all provisions in the lecture processes (statement No.11).

Educational institutions are responsible for producing competent and disciplined graduates who take strong hold of their professional ethical values in the future. Therefore, commitment of the institutions to applying strict regulations is also apparently understood by the students. This is indicated by their answers to the questions number 21 and 22. The students find that the institutions strictly ensure that the stipulated laws and standards are complied. This can be seen from the existence of provisions on the assessment, attendance rate and various evaluation methods that will determine the graduation standards in the future. In addition, the institutions will not tolerate any violations of all existing regulations. In general, students realize that whatever has been agreed as a contract must be performed while being students of the Vocational Program.

A frequent topic in the literature on ethical climate is whether unethical behavior is more a function of personal or organizational characteristics. There is general consensus among scholars that both factors impact unethical acts. However, an implicit assumption of research on ethical climate is that the way an organization is structured

can influence the display of ethical behavior among organizational members. In other words, it is not just a "few bad apples" that cause ethical problems in organizations. However, there have not been investigations into the relative impact of personal characteristics on ethical climate perceptions.

This research show that students in vocational program perceived the school's ethical culture to have a nearly equal influence of all the three types of morality (Self Centered, Consensual, and Universal Morality) based on the percentage of overall points. Since there was no one particular type of morality that exerted a dominant influence on the institution's daily decision-making process, an additional review of the school's ethics policy, enforcement mechanisms, and ethics training was performed. This review revealed that the vocational school had well established ethics policies and training programs.

A formal code of ethics as well as a code of conduct that described expected behavior and spelled out the consequences of non compliance already existed in the study institution. The ethics policy was communicated throughout the institution through university circulars, wall news to all the faculty members, etc. on a regular basis.

Enforcement of the ethics policy was delegated to the dean and the senior faculty. Sanctions for unethical behavior ranged from "hot news" on publication to drop out act. These were characteristics of Compliance firms. Learning program was held every year in which, among other things, the institution's ethics policy was explained to students during orientation sessions, seminars, workshop, internship briefing, graduation ceremony and public lecture series.

These findings indicate that, on an institutional ethics continuum, vocational program studied had the characteristics as a compliance firms. The results of this study showed that students varied in their moral and ethical perception of their institution despite the existence of definite ethics policies and training programs. The overall process of distribution and communication of ethical policies may have to be enhanced or altered substantially to enable the faculty and the students to recognize their institution's commitment to ethics.

Conclusion

The conclusions may be drawn from this study is students perceived that the school's ethical culture was equally influenced by Self-Centered, Consensual, and Universal Morality. The result showed that the type of consensual morality is the most dominant factor that forms ethical environment in campus. Behavior that appoint or indicate to consensual morality is more dominant than to other. This is evidenced by consensual morality score is higher than the universal morality and self-centered morality. On an average, students find that the best for everyone in the institution is the thing prioritized here.

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