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RESEARCH ARTICLE

Ethical Compliance matters in Higher Education Institutions (HEIs): A Study in a selected HEI of Assam, India

Dadul Rajkonwar

Department of Commercial Law, Lakhimpur Commerce College

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Abstract: Ethical compliance of students of HEIs is a burning issue in the modern days. Because the present unethical behaviors of the students of HEIs are doubling the risks of creating future unethical professions like doctor, engineer, lawyer etc. The present study on ethical compliance of students is an empirical study conducted in a higher education institution of Assam. The study explores the nature and extent of ethical compliance of students by using Likert type scale data. Data are collected randomly from 63 sample students by using questionnaire method. The study found that ethics education is very essential for the students' community to make ethical decision and responsible citizen. The study also observed that the students with ethics education can acquire skill and ability to exhibit their logical decision-making power. The study highlights ways and means for making obligation and respect towards ethical issues by the students of HEIs.

Keywords: *Ethical Compliance, Education, Community, Obligation, Logical*

INTRODUCTION

Ethical issues are addressed in every sphere of activities and all type of organizations whether it is business or non-business organization. Most of the organizations encounter ethical complications in their day-to-day activities. The organizations like college, universities etc.

should be abided by code of ethics or some standardized form of behavior which is generally accepted by the employees and students of the organization. The Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) are integral part of human resource development of any nation. They have not been only responsible for teaching and learning but to development true human beings through inculcating values education among the learners. The roles of teachers in this regard cannot be denied. Teachers of HEIs are the guide for ethical development of the students. Robert D. Brown & LuAnn Krager (1985)¹ examined different roles of a faculty like advisor, researcher, planner, mentor etc. They suggested that faculty members should not be shown negligence about ethical consideration in their daily interaction with their students. The Government of India has already introduced many aspects of values system in Indian Educational Institutions through implementation of National Education Policy-2020 (NEP-2020) and it has made many changes in education system of India including integration of skills and values to convert materialist to values-based education in India. The teachers are the best persons to make changes in the mindset of students to transform from materialist to values-based education in the Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) of India.

It is very difficult to give a standard definition of ethics as the term ethics used differently in different organizations and set ethical principles as per requirements of the organizations. The term ethics come from Latin word 'Ethos' which means character. Ethics are generally concerned with desirable and undesirable attitudes of human beings. Ethics are moral principles which are usually accepted voluntarily by every individual in the organization. These ethical or moral principles are necessary to attain professional excellence and self-satisfaction by the individuals. The members of different professions like Medicine, Law, and Engineering etc. are required to adhere standards set out by such organizations. It can be observed that the members lost their membership for non-adherence of the ethical standards of organizations.

In higher education institutions many students are familiar with ethical issues. However, most of the students consciously or unconsciously ignore the code of conducts of the institution in Assam particularly in the study area. They recognize the ethics as common rules of behavior, though the applications of such ethics are limited for them. Because the application of ethics is based on students' attitudes, perceptions, honesty, respects, values, expectation etc. The present study is a humble attempt to find out the nature and extent of compliance and the ways and means for making obligation towards ethical issues based on field survey and literature review.

OBJECTIVES

1. To find out the nature and extent of ethical compliance of the students.
2. To examine the ways and means for making obligation towards ethical issues of the students.
3. To make suggestions based on the findings of the present study.

¹ Robert D. Brown & LuAnn Krager (1985) Ethical Issues in Graduate Education, *The Journal of Higher Education*, 56:4, 403-418,

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Gill, K. (2012)² in his research article entitled “College Students Attitudes towards Ethical Consumerism - an Indian Perspective” conducted study to explore and track attitudes of Indian College students towards ethical consumerism in Indian Perspective and he observed that “seventy five percent students described themselves to be ethical consumer to a 'fair amount'” and called for Governmental action to change behaviour of students by removing the barriers between intentions and actions.

Krishna, M. K. (2017)³ observed in his Research Paper entitled “Professional Ethics in Teacher Education” that 'increased awareness of the ethical principles governing teaching profession is essential to ensure 'professionalism' among teachers'. He also examined that “Teacher's work should be guided by love and not by any selfish motive, such as money or name and fame.”

Kumar, S. and Kauri, S. (2014)⁴ reported that there is positive but negligible correlation between teaching experience and professional ethics of woman teachers. They concluded that professional ethics grow positively with teaching experience to a negligible extent.

Lodhi, M. S. and Siddiqui J. A. (2014)⁵ in their research article entitled “Attitude of Students towards Ethical and Moral Values in Karachi, Pakistan”, examined that most of the students have uncaring attitude and engaged in some unethical activities. They concluded that “moral education must be imparted to all the school going children to develop ethical practices.”

Ozcan, K., Balyer, A. Servi, T. (2013)⁶ conducted study on students' perceptions about faculty behaviours concerning their professional responsibilities, dating/sexual harassment, behaviours inside and behaviours outside the classroom and relationship based on self-

² Gill, K. (2012), Professional Ethics in Teacher Education, IOSR Journal of Business and Management (IOSR-JBM), Volume 4, Issue 5, PP01-13

³ Kesana, K. M., (2017), Professional Ethics in Teacher Education, *International Journal of Multidisciplinary Educational Research*, Vol-6, Issue-5(6), pp. 36-39

⁴ Kumar, S. and Kauri, S. (2014), Professional Ethics Grow with Teaching Experience: A Study of Women Teachers in Higher Education Institutions of Punjab, *European Academic Research* Vol. II, Issue 4, pp. 5904-5922

⁵ Lodhi, M. S. and Siddiqui, J. A. (2014), Attitude of Students towards Ethical and Moral Values in Karachi, Pakistan, *IOSR Journal of Research & Method in Education (IOSR-JRME)*, Volume 4, Issue 2, PP. 07-11

⁶ Ozcan, K., Balyer, A. Servi, T. (2013), Faculty Members' Ethical Behaviours: A Survey Based on Students' Perceptions at Universities in Turkey, *International Education Studies*, Vol. 6, No. 3, pp. 129-142

interest. The study found that students' considerations are negative in terms of faculty behaviours inside the classroom and faculty professional behaviours.

Whyte, W. H., Jr. (2005)⁷, in his research paper entitled 'Ethics in Business: Answering the Call' observed the different concepts of ethics and how they are related each other. The paper also emphasises on the creation of ethical organisation.

METHODOLOGY

The present study is an empirical study conducted on BCOM students of Lakhimpur Commerce College of Assam. The population of the present study is 300 BCOM students of odd semester. The sample size is 63 BCOM students comprised of 21 percent of total population. Data are collected through questionnaire based on Likert type scale and a simple random sampling method is used for conducting the study. Data are collected from November to December, 2023 and analyzed by using SPSS. Secondary data are collected from different research articles, published books, journals, magazines etc. for the present study. Simple statistical tools and techniques such as percentage, diagram, mean, standard deviation etc. have been used for the purpose of data analysis.

PROFILE OF SAMPLE STUDENT

The background study of the sample students indicates the insight of the students which help to know their attitudes and perceptions towards ethical issues.

Table: I: Profile of Sample Respondent

Background	Variable	Frequency	Percentage
Sex	Male	39	62 %
	Female	24	38 %
Religion	Hindu	57	90 %
	Muslim	6	10 %
Caste	General	23	37 %
	OBC	20	32%
	ST	17	26 %
	SC	3	05 %
Semesters	Semester-I	31	49 %
	Semester-II	22	35 %
	Semester-III	10	16 %

Source: Primary Data

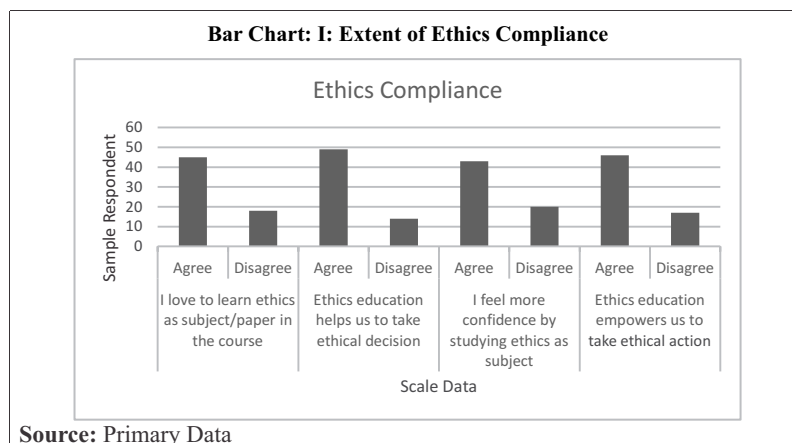
⁷ Whyte, W. H., Jr. (2005), Ethics in Business: Answering the Call, Ethics Journal of Business Vol.- p p. 345 – 357, retrieved on 21-05-2024 from <https://sci-hub.se/https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s10551-004-5715-z>

Interpretation: Table: I highlight that the sample male respondent (62 %) is higher as compared to sample female respondent (38 %). Majority of the respondents are coming from Hindu religion (90 %) followed by Muslim. The highest number of respondents comprised of General Category (37 %) followed by OBC (32 %), ST (26%) and SC (5%). Table: I also indicates that majority (49 %) of the sample students from semester-I. The sample students from semester-II and III comprised of 35 per cent and 16 per cent respectively.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Objective: 1: To find out the nature and extent of ethical compliance of the students:

The ethics are the 'rules' which is clearly identified the acceptable or unacceptable behavior of the students of institutions. The students of HEIs should think as 'do the right thing' and 'not harm anyone' so that ethics can be observed in the institute. Ethical norms are also very important for the trust of public in every organization because of public involvement in such organizations. The present study reveals that most of the sample students are agreed about ethical compliances. The sample respondents are asked various questions to know the ethical compliance. In the following section the study examines the compliance of ethics based on sample respondent.



Interpretation: The nature and extent of ethical compliance of sample respondents is highlighted through the above bar chart: I. The respondents are asked various questions to test the nature and extent of ethical compliances. Bar Chart: I reveal that majority of respondents agreed with compliance of ethics in the study area.

Table: II: Extent of Ethics Compliance

Statistics	I love to learn ethics as subject/paper in the course	Ethics education helps us to take ethical decision	I feel more confidence by studying ethics as subject	Ethics education empowers us to take ethical action
N Valid	62	63	63	63
Missing	1	0	0	0
Mean	1.27	1.22	1.32	1.27
Std. Deviation	.450	.419	.469	.447

Source: Primary Data

Interpretation:

Table: II indicates a very low deviation from mean in all cases. This implies that there is agreement of sample respondents with the compliance of ethics. The respondents are asked various questions related to ethical compliances and they show the full or near compliances of ethical issues in HEIs.

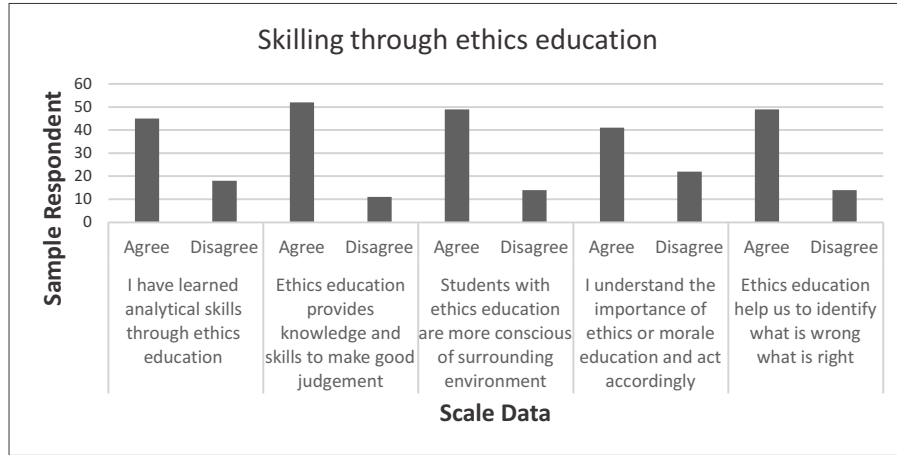
Objective-2: To examine the ways and means for making obligation towards ethical issues of the students

The management and controlling of ethical issues have been growing importance in HEIs of India. It can be observed that students of HEIs are becoming more and more materialist ignoring values. In this situation, the ethical education is essential for the students to make them good citizen. The following section explores the ways and means for making obligations towards ethics.

a. Skilling and Obligation

Ethics education helps to acquire skills and ability of students for ethical decision making in a puzzling situation. The study found that students with ethics education are more conscious about code of conducts of the institution. Most of the respondents reveals that they able analysis and thereby making good judgement through ethics education. The study also found that the students with ethics education can know clearly what is good or what bad decision. The present study observes that students with ethics education are more conscious about the environment.

Bar Chart: II: Skilling through ethics education



Source: Primary Data

Interpretation:

The study reveals that skilling is very important to make them responsible students and good citizen in the society. The sample students are asked different questions related to skilling in ethics and majority of students are agreed that they gain knowledge and skills to take ethical decisions-making.

Table: III: Skilling through ethics education

Statistics	I have learned analytical skills through ethics education	Ethics education provides knowledge and skills to make good judgment	Students with ethics education are more conscious of surrounding environment	I understand the importance of ethics or morale education and act accordingly	Ethics education help us to identify what is wrong what is right
N	63	63	63	63	63
Missing Value	0	0	0	0	0
mean	1.29	1.17	1.22	1.34	1.22
Std. Deviation	.455	.382	.419	.480	.419

Source: Primary Data

Interpretation:

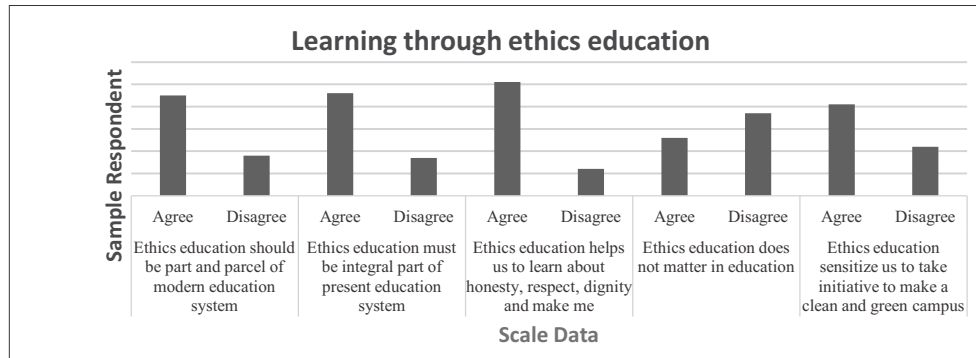
Table: III highlights the means and their corresponding standard deviations. The standard

deviations from means are very low which means that the data are representing and the ethics education helps to skill of sample respondent for taking ethical decisions.

b. Learning and Obligation

The obligation of ethical issues or code of conduct is required the responsibility on the part of the individual. People who are responsible for the society, they are more obedient to the rules of ethics and act as per codes framed by the organization. Learning is very important to make human being responsible for the society. Students taking ethics as one of the courses of their curriculum are more obliged and given value and respect to the society. The sample students are asked different questions to support the present objective and observed that most of the sample students are agreed with the learning as one of the ways to make good citizen.

Bar Chart: III: Learning through ethics education



Source: Primary Data

Interpretation:

The respondents are asked different questions to examine the extent of learning from ethics education as they undertaken as one of the courses in their program. Majority of respondents are agreed that they have learned from ethics course and only a few respondents are disagreed with learning. It is interesting that the respondents who agreed with learning are shown more responsible towards the society as compared to students without ethics courses.

CONCLUSION

The present study is undertaken to know the ethical compliance of students who have ethics as one of the courses in their programme. The study reveals that most of the respondent compliance with ethics as they acquire knowledge and information from their ethics course. Many students are able learned skills from ethics course to make reasonable decision and this

make them responsible for the society. The study also found that ethics education makes a student more conscious to their surrounding environment.

The study on ethical compliance reveals that ethics education is necessary for all students in higher education institutions of India. Ethics education should be given to students from primary to higher education. The initiative of NEP-2020 is a milestone for transforming the present education system to morale and valued based education in India. The student's community should acknowledge the initiative of the Government of India. The HEIs must be responsible for creating ethical environment for the students of the organisations.

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