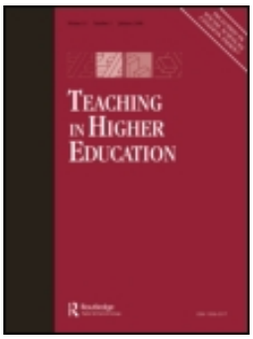

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Teaching business ethics in the global South: control, resistance, and phronesis

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We explore academic literature on business ethics education and critically compare the themes emerging from different contexts. Outlining guidelines for analysis based on Southern Theory, we conduct a content analysis on a selection of English, peer-reviewed articles and then critically compare emergent themes from across the 'Northern'–Southern' divide. The results suggest commonality but also substantive nuances. One key difference concerns a concerted effort from the South to decipher daily business experiences in relation to prevalent business ethics frameworks focused on the North. Furthermore, using notion of phronetic science, we critically discuss our findings to highlight inherent dynamics of control and resistance. The paper concludes by suggesting future directions for business ethics curriculum development that is more sensitive to these dynamics and by suggesting an adoption of notions related to practical wisdom.

Keywords: international business curriculum; business ethics education; business ethics; phronesis; international higher education

Introduction

Educators in higher education across cultures have often discussed the inherent challenges involved in teaching ethics to business students (see Zhou, Ou, and Enderle 2009). Scholars and educators alike have debated the utility of different teaching methods in these classrooms (e.g. Warren and Rosenthal 2006; Baker 2014; Gu and Neesham 2014). The debate continues and has been exacerbated by high-profile corporate scandals raising questions about the values imparted through business curriculum (e.g. Koehn 2005; Werner 2014), and by the increased internationalization of higher education in general (Vinther and Slethaug 2013). This has also been accompanied by questions about the role of business schools in fostering more ethically minded business professionals to lead commerce forward in this era of the global economy (Gioia 2002; Kelley and Nahser 2014). To build better models of business ethics education, researchers need to be attuned to relevant issues around the globe and to the ethical nuances tied to local context specificities.

Reflecting on cross-cultural business and management studies, Jackson (2014, 3) asks 'what a methodology would look like from the perspective of the cultural context under investigation'. He asserts that there is a need to nurture methods for knowledge generation from local cultural contexts in order to lay the foundations for better cross-cultural business

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and management studies. Jackson (2013, 2014) proposes that researchers and educators should develop ways of exploration that combine an understanding of the historical context of global dynamics and how these shape scholarship. In particular, Jackson (2014) highlights the importance of understanding global–local dynamics of control and resistance – *or indigenous studies* – in fostering more relevant culturally nuanced knowledge. Adopting such a perspective has been a central lens of analysis in some schools of cross-cultural examination (e.g. Smith 1999; Gale 2012). This type of analysis has been commonly applied by, for example, educators and researchers grounded in Southern theory (e.g. Connell 2007). Common here is the view that an important, implicit consideration when reflecting on knowledge is 'What it is for and whose end does it serve?' (Jackson 2013, 27; see also Özkazanç-Pan 2008). In this regard, the 'apolitical view' traditionally associated with scientific research is replaced with the idea that knowledge – whether passed through research or curriculum – has political connotations and implications (Bowser, Danaher, and Somasundaram 2007; Vinther and Slethaug 2013). Taking this as a general starting position, we review a selection of English-language research about business ethics and business ethics education.

In the sections that follow, we begin by borrowing from Southern theory to set the theoretical foundations for our units of analysis. To this end, we employ a dichotomous analytical lens to compare a selection of research articles emerging from the 'North' against those situated in and researching the 'South'. This juxtaposition allows us to critically compare the categories of knowledge emerging from both and further allows for the identification of any differences. In the final section, we build on Jackson's (2014) suggestion to combine an acknowledgment of the basic dynamics of control and resistance with Flyvbjerg's (2001) notion of phronetic science to reflect on the emergent differences and on the implication of this difference for meaningful learning in the South. We also suggest future directions for business ethics curriculum development that is more sensitive to notions of resistance and control and more focused on practical learning.

Building a theoretical frame on perspectives from the North versus South

Many scholars in cross-cultural management, critical cultural studies, education, and others have described the centrality of a dominant – largely Northern – tradition visible in various discourses emerging from higher education institutions (e.g. Bourdieu 1993; Enderle 1996; Jackson 2013, 2014). For example, Mir (2003) argues that the propagation of values aligned with a particular perspective is evident when one examines textbooks, journals, and institutions diffused throughout the world. Similarly, Chomsky (1999) notes the domination of the American perspective in Latin American education, thereby ensuring a position of control that renders academics and students from the Latin peripheral nations reliant on American ideas and institutions. Taken together, the dominance of a singular perspective poses a problem particularly on a practical level as students situated in contexts outside the North experience a significant disconnect between what is useful in day-to-day business operations and what is taught in the classroom (Kiggundu 1986).

Commenting on the European experience of teaching business ethics, Crane and Matten (2004) suggest that the texts used may benefit from a reformulation of the mainstream curriculum to include issues and concerns from beyond that which has been traditionally contextualized solely within an Anglo-American frame-of-reference. Furthermore, they submit that the inherent disconnect between core concepts in texts and actual work experiences detract from the effectiveness of the teaching materials and the overall teaching

experience. Likewise, Neal and Finlay (2008, 66) suggest that the existence of a dominant perspective, and the resultant disconnect in peripheral classrooms, has serious implications from a pedagogical point-of-view because it 'compromises meaningful learning – *if meaningful learning is defined as enhancing the ability of such students to analyze and understand themselves and their circumstances*'. Potential mechanisms for meaningful learning emerge when students are encouraged to question processes of knowledge creation and to examine how personal, interpersonal, and contextual factors influence what is said and done, or not said and not done through the research and educational texts (Smith 2011).

Meaningful learning as such has been of particular concern for scholars examining knowledge generation and dissemination in the context of power and power relations. For example, Marginson and Ordorika (2007), drawing from Gramsci (1971), assert that there has been a single, dominant, conception of teachable discourse diffused throughout society in all its institutional and private manifestations. This diffusion has resulted in an implicit permeation of an entire system of attitudes, beliefs and morality that has the effect of supporting the dominant groups at the expense of the less powerful (Giroux 1983). What therefore results is the subverting of everything else outside of this system as less meaningful and not worthy of inclusion in the curriculum (e.g. Bowser et al. 2007; Narismulu 2013).

Aligned with this view of control by the dominant perspective is the associated resistance by those outside of this perspective. Notions of dominance and resistance are foundational to Southern Theory, which, generally speaking, is a social science perspective that has been used to criticize the 'one-way transfer of ideas and knowledge from the North to the South' (Meekosha 2011, 66). In an attempt to give voice to the global South or other marginalized populations, Southern theorists attempt to expose the role of macrolevel institutions (e.g. educational, legal, religious, etc.) that perpetuate the global domination of the North (Connell 2007; Hickling-Hudson 2009). One of the main aims of Southern theory is, therefore, to offer an analytic framework that considers, reflects, and articulates perpetuation of this domination and the ideas, concepts, and experiences of the dominated societies (or groups). To do this, Southern theorists adopt an explicit juxtaposition of those that dominate and are in a position of *control* versus those that are less powerful and are in a position of *resistance* (Connell 2007; Meekosha 2011).

Scholars using this distinction, however, are cautious to point out the many examples of subpopulations in the North that are peripheral and, similarly, there are subpopulations in the South that are centrally powerful. However, despite these nuances, the North is often conceptualized as those powerful developed nations with imperial intentions that colonized populations and subpopulations in the developing world (Connell 2006, 2007). Many of these nations/groups continue to wield global political decision-making power through education, media, and technological and military superiority and continue to hold positions as the centers of the global economy. The South, on the other hand, is often conceptualized as the nations, populations, and subpopulations that were colonized at some point in history by the more powerful (Connell 2006, 2007). These, therefore, include many of the developing countries of today that have historically been conquered or controlled and that continue to face some of the detrimental dimensions of colonial legacies (see Connell 2007; Jack et al. 2011).

Extrapolating this broad commentary to business ethics classrooms, questions concerning whether the North–South dichotomy is manifested in the relevant research and related curriculum. If we review a sample of literature on business ethics and business ethics education, is there a thematic difference between research on/from the North vis-à-vis that on/from the South?

Research questions:

What themes emerge from the literature on business ethics education and business ethics? Is there a thematic difference between those that emerge from the South versus those that emerge from the North?

Methodology

Using Bernardi's (2006) list of 25 ethics journals, we did a journal-by-journal search for relevant articles published between 2000 and 2013. We proceeded in two separate stages. *Stage One* identified articles on business ethics education in *Southern* nations. Nations falling within this category included those that have been recognized by international intergovernmental organizations as 'Developing' (see Nielsen 2011 categorization according to the Trichotomous Development Taxonomy weighted by population). This stage returned 10 hits (Keywords: *teaching business ethics*, *business ethics education*, *business ethics students*, *business ethics curriculum*). We broadened this initial search to include other keywords (i.e. *business ethics*, *ethics in business*, *organizational ethics*, *and professional ethics*). This broader search returned 57 hits. *Stage Two* focused on business ethics education in *Northern* nations (i.e. developed nations of Western Europe and North America) and used the same keywords. This round returned over 262 hits.

The analysis began with a set of 20 randomly selected articles from Stage One. The *emergent coding approach* to content analysis (Stemler 2001) was used whereby two coders read 7 articles selected from these 20 articles. Each article was coded for themes independently. Then the two coders came together and discussed their respective themes and formed a template of consolidated themes. Once the consolidated template was formed it was used by a third coder to recode the same set of articles as well as the remainder of those identified in this stage. This approach was also used to code a randomly selected group of 20 articles from Stage Two. The 2 sets of 20 articles are presented in Tables 1 and 2.

Results

Overall, the content analyses of the two sets of literature indicate that there are both common and unique emergent themes. The rows of Table 3 list the three major emergent themes: Context, Ethics Education in Business Schools, and Ontology of Business Ethics. Of these, the last theme is unique to the literature on/from the South. However, the differences between the two sets of literature were also detected within the first two subthemes. The similarities and differences will be discussed next.

Theme 1: context

Both sets of literature discuss characteristics of the environment within which businesses function. *Context* is examined at varying levels of analysis. From the first analysis (i.e. the literature from the North) a theme emerged regarding the *Unethical business context as noted by the recent scandals.* Researchers here examined issues relating to the *contextual causes* and subsequent *consequences* of corporate scandals (Gioia 2002; Koehn 2005). The surge in corporate failures appears to have led such authors to reflect on stories of corporate misbehaviors to understand their causes, posing questions like What are the causes of such a lax business context? What were the reasons for the increase of dysfunctional organizational structures? What caused the failures of control mechanisms? To what can

Table 1. Articles about business ethics education in the North.

	Authors	Year	Title	Journal
1	Gioia	2002	Business education's role in the crisis of corporate confidence	*Academy of Management Executive*
2	Merritt	2003	What's an MBA Really Worth? The Class of '92 Gives the Degree High Marks in Our Exclusive Survey of B. School Alums	*Business Week*
3	Murphy	2004	Observations on Teaching Marketing Ethics	*Marketing Education Review*
4	Thomas	2004	An Inventory of Support Materials for Teaching Ethics in Post-Enron Era	*Issues in Accounting Education*
5	Boyle	2004	Walking Our Talk: Business Schools, Legitimacy, and Citizenship	*Business & Society*
6	Evans and Marcal	2005	Educating for Ethics: Business Deans' Perspectives	*Business and Society Review*
7	Koehn	2005	Transforming our Students: Teaching Business Ethics Post Enron	*Business Ethics Quarterly*
8	Felton and Sims	2005	Teaching Business Ethics: Targeted Outputs	*Journal of Business Ethics*
9	Dean and Beggs	2006	University Professors and Teaching Ethics: Conceptualizations and Expectations	*Journal of Management Education*
10	Giacalone and Thompson	2006	Business Ethics and Social Responsibility Education: Shifting the Worldview	*Academy of Management Learning & Education*
11	Hartman	2006	Can We Teach Character? An Aristotelian Answer	*Academy of Management Learning & Education*
12	Moberg	2006	Best Intentions, Worst Results: Grounding Ethics Students in the Realitites of Organizational Context	*Academy of Management Learning & Education*
13	Sims and Felton	2006	Designing and Delivering Business Ethics Teaching and Learning	*Journal of Business Ethics*
14	Warren and Rosenthal	2006	Teaching Business Ethics – Is It a Lost Cause?	*International Journal of Management*
15	Evans, Trevino, and Weaver	2006	Who's in the Ethics Driver's Seat? Factors Influencing Ethics in the MBA Curriculum	*Academy of Management Learning & Education*
16	Block and Cwik	2007	Teaching Business Ethics: A 'Classificationist' Approach	*Business Ethics: A European Review*

Table 1 (*Continued*)

	Authors	Year	Title	Journal
17	Christensen, Pierce, Hartman, Hoffman, and Carrier	2007	Ethics, CSR and Sustainability Education in the Financial Times Top 50 Global Business Schools: Baseline Data and Future Research Directions	*Journal of Business Ethics*
18	Ngueyn, Basuray, Smith, Kopka, and McCulloh	2008	Ethics Perception: Does Teaching Make a Difference?	*Journal of Education for Business*
19	Harris	2008	Promoting Ethical Reflection in the Teaching of Business Ethics	*Business Ethics: A European Review*
20	Neubaum, Pagell, Drexler, Mckee-Ryan, and Larson	2009	Business Education and Its Relationship to Student Personal Moral Philosophies and Attitudes Toward Profits: An Empirical Response to Critics	*Academy of Management Learning & Education*

we attribute irresponsible ethical behavior? Furthermore, many authors also discussed the remedial consequences of this context and considered the likely consequences of a stricter regulatory environment. Furthermore, within this theme was a discussion concerning the possibilities of controlling and precluding future scandals, and of gaining balance between increased regulations/stricter internal controls in promoting ethical environments and the decrease in operational efficiencies.

As noted earlier and as can be seen in Table 3, *Context* also emerged as a theme from the literature on the South but was significantly broader in scope encompassing a myriad of macrolevel factors. Indeed, this theme occupied a bulk of the discussion in this subset of literature. A commonly discussed issue here concerns the impact of the societal culture on ethical beliefs and behaviors. Several authors emphasized the role of sociocultural institutions such as organized religion, family, and institutions of formal education (e.g. Priem and Shaffer 2001; Zhou, Ou, and Enderle 2009). Similar to the impact of religion, discussions of ideologies that resemble in their influence the power of formal religion were also discussed. The role of Marxism, for example, and how it was applied in Russia preoccupy much of the discussion about business ethics in Russia (e.g. Sidorov, Alexeyeva, and Shklyarik 2000; Eweje 2006). The role of political and legal systems was also highlighted in these articles (e.g. Rossouw 2005; Eweje 2006).

Likewise, weak legal structures or discrepancies in regulatory frameworks were also a common issue discussed in this subset of articles from the South. While authors on/from the North tended to give more attention to corporate ethical failures, those focused on peripheral nations attended more frequently to issues relating to corruption, bribery, absence of laws or deficiencies in law-enforcement, exploitation, and the overall volatile context within which businesses operate (e.g. Tian, Hafsi, and Wu 2009). Furthermore, the socioeconomic transformations of Southern nations and how these transformations impact people's ethical behaviors and attitudes were also salient issues of discussion. Here, for example, individuals are found to struggle with the impact of new values that come with globalization and the pressing nature of local values simultaneously (e.g. Post, Sethi, and Williams 2002; Aurifeille and Quester 2003).

Table 2. Articles about business ethics education in the South.

	Authors	Year	Title	Journal
1	Gichure	2000	Fraud and the African Renaissance	*Business Ethics: A European Review*
2	Sidorov, Alexeyeva, and Shkdyarik	2000	The Ethical Environment of Russian Business	*Business Ethics Quarterly*
3	Priem and Shaffer	2001	Resolving Moral Dilemmas in Business: A Multicounty Study	*Business & Society*
4	Al-Khatib, Robertson, Stanton, and Vitel	2002	Business Ethics in the Arab Gulf States: A Three Country Study	*International Business Review*
5	Post	2002	The "Iron Law" of Business Responsibility Revisited: Lessons from South Africa	*Business Ethics Quarterly*
6	Aurifeille and Quester	2003	Predicting Business Ethical Tolerance in International Markets: A Concomitant Clusterwise Regression Analysis	*International Business Review*
7	Uddin	2003	Understanding the Framework of Business in Islam in an Era of Globalization: a Review	*Business Ethics: A European Review*
8	Branzei, Ursacki, Bryant, Vertinsky, and Zhang	2004	The Formation of Green Strategies in Chinese Firms: Matching Corporate Environmental Responses and Individual Principles	*Strategic Management Journal*
9	Napal	2005	Is Bribery a Culturally Acceptable Practice in Mauritius?	*Business Ethics: A European Review*
10	Rossouw	2005	Business Ethics and Corporate Governance in Africa	*Business & Society*
11	Zgheib	2005	Managerial Ethics: An Empirical Study of Business Students in the American University of Beirut	*Business & Society*
12	Zhuang, Thomas, and Miller	2005	Examining Culture's Effect on Whistle Blowing and Peer Reporting	*Journal of Ethics*
13	Dunfee	2006	Do Firms with Unique Competencies for Rescuing Victims of Human Catastrophes have Special Obligations? Corporate Responsibility and the AIDS Catastrophe in Sub-Saharan Africa	*Journal of Business Ethics Education*
14	Eweje	2006	The Role of MNEs in Community Development Initiatives in Developing Countries: Corporate Social Responsibility at Work in Nigeria and South Africa	*Business & Society*

Table 2 (*Continued*)

	Authors	Year	Title	Journal
15	Gichure	2006	Teaching Business Ethics in Africa: What Ethical Orientation? The Case of East and Central Africa	*Business & Society*
16	Zhou	2008	Business Ethics Education in China's MBA Curriculum	*Journal of Business Ethics Education*
17	Sims	2009	Collective Versus Individualist National Cultures:Comparing Taiwan and US Employee Attitudes Toward Unethical Business Practices	*Business & Society*
18	Tian, Hafsi, and Wu	2009	Institutional Determinism and Political Strategies	*Business & Society*
19	Zhou, Ou, and Enderle	2009	Business Ethics Education for MBA Students in China: Current Status and Future Prospects	*Journal of Business Ethics Education*
20	Gupta	2010	A Multidimensional Ethics Scale for Indian Managers' Moral Decision Making	*Electronic Journal of Business Ethics and Organizational studies*

Similarly, the rise of consumerism is also cited as being imported into Southern nations and as blame-worthy for the decay of personal and societal ethics (e.g. Gichure 2006). For example, in discussing business ethics in Africa, Gichure (2006) notes that Western imperialism has in some cases diffused into the African ethic; people are torn between (1) a commitment to a historic work ethic based on African customs, traditions, and rituals, and (2) an allegiance to newly formed identities because of decades of interaction with the West. But new allegiances seem to be futile as these ignore innate presuppositions, those stemming from people's history and historical beliefs and practices. Finally, the history of salient power dynamics was also an emergent issue in the literature focused on the periphery and closely aligns with questions of control and resistance. Examination of the impact of colonization, imperialism, and civil wars is a key issue of focus for many authors (e.g. Gichure 2006; Sidorov, Alexeyeva, and Shklyarik 2000; Post, Sethi, and Williams 2002).

Theme 2: ethics education in business schools

For researchers focused on the North, general concern with various components of ethics education in business schools was central and widely discussed. Four subthemes were clearly discussed in this literature: *the school itself, business ethics instructors, students*, as well as *curricular considerations*. For example, many authors discussed the failure of academia and especially schools of business, to develop the level of ethical behavior among business students and the implicit role of schools in the recent scandals (e.g. Moberg 2006). Other issues explored the role and qualifications of the instructor in the classroom (e.g. Evans and Marcal 2005) and the readiness, maturity, and experience level of students to interact with such material in the classroom (e.g. Moberg 2006).

Table 3. Comparative content analysis of literature from North versus South.

Theme	Subtheme	North	South
Context	Unethical business environment noted by recent scandals	*Causes*: personal or corporate deviance such as dysfunctional organizational fields, dysfunction-inducing structures, executive pay schemes, weak governance; irresponsible individuals, bad morals *Remedial consequences*: such as laws, government regulation, and controls	
	Macrolevel structure and factors		*Culture*: the shared system of values and beliefs that guide the perceptions and behaviors *Sociocultural institutions:* such as organized religion, family, and formal education *Ideology*: body of ideas reflecting the social needs and aspirations (e.g. Marxism) *Politico-legal system:* such as democracy and autocracy *Economic status*: such as GDP and unemployment *Operating environment*: such as absence law enforcement, corruption, low competition, sector privatization,exploitation, and volatility *Social transitions*: such as movement from one economic system to another, migration and demographic changes, impact of globalization, and adoption of consumerism *History of power dynamics*: such as depiction of civil war, colonization/imperialism, and its aftermath
Ethics Education in Business Schools	The school itself	The role of business schools in business ethics and related education. Critical reflection on the role of schools in the scandals. Importance of including business ethics for international education certification standards	

Table 3 (*Continued*)

Theme	Subtheme	North	South
	Instructors of business ethics	*Who*: philosopher, ethicist, OB expert, etc. *Role:* conduit of information, role model, transformative leader, agent of change, etc.	
	Students of business ethics	*Characteristics*: immature, inexperience, academic dishonesty	
	Business ethics in the curriculum	*Content coverage*: lessons to be taught, organizational contextualization, real world relevance, etc.	*Duplicate*
		Purpose: teach character, to be prescriptive or descriptive, encourage morality, to raise critical questions about presuppositions, to teach decision-making frameworks	*Pedagogical tools*: the difficulty in finding relevant textbooks and teaching tools due to a dependence on North American/Western European models, dependence on assumptions not relevant to the South.
		Place in the curriculum: core or elective, stand alone or integrated, senior or freshman	*Customization Suggestions*: experiential learning, developing cases, and other suggestions to improve business ethics education in this context, etc.
Ontology of Business Ethics	Comparative		**Commonalities across cultures:** *etic-oriented discussion and examples; and the search for universals* **Differences across cultures:** *emic-oriented examples and the search of cultural uniqueness, extreme forms of this suggest incompatibility between North and South*
	Indigenous		**Specific to a cultural context:** *exploring the specificities of a specific, usually national context* **Community obligation:** *a sense of duty toward different stakeholders in the community*

Of all the issues discussed under this theme and remain relevant to the North, curricular considerations were the only issues also emerging in the literature focused on the periphery. Curricular considerations specifically focus on the technicalities of business ethics education. At the most basic level there is a discussion concerning the positioning of the ethics course within business programs (e.g. Warren and Rosenthal 2006) and whether it should be part of the core business curriculum as a stand-alone course or be integrated in various subjects (e.g. Evans and Marcal 2005). Furthermore, such considerations also revolve around the general purpose of such courses. Discussions often question the utility of business ethics education in general with some authors reflecting the opinions of decision makers at business schools who question whether ethics education should have a place in the curriculum at all (e.g. Evans and Marcal 2005). Much of the discussion suggests that this skepticism does not derive from a disregard of the importance of ethics, but rather from the notion that it is useless to try to change people's ethical behaviors and attitudes through university education. For example, Dean and Beggs (2006) suggest that many believe that people's ethical or unethical behavioral inclinations will not be significantly impacted by an ethics course. Other authors disagree noting instructor conviction in the utility of business ethics education to change behavior (e.g. Hartman 2006; Neubaum et al. 2009).

The final issue under this theme concerns content coverage in general, including considerations of which lessons should be taught, how best to provide organizational contextualization of material, and how to ensure real-world relevance. These concerns about content also emerged as a subtheme in the research from the South but revolved around how to increase relevance to contextual specificities. For example, while students accept American models in accounting, finance, marketing, and operations management, decision-making models relating to ethics derived from an American perspective are not accepted out-right (e.g. Post, Sethi, and Williams 2002). In suggesting alternatives, Gichure (2006), for example, argues for the improvement of business ethics education in the specific context of Africa (e.g. Gichure 2006) – such explicit suggestions are rare.

Theme 3: ontological considerations of the South

The third and final theme from our content analysis emerged only from research on/from the South. These themes highlighted ontologically oriented considerations that concern the nature of reality (Hudson and Ozanne 1988). Our analysis revealed a number of articles exploring themes in a comparative manner attempting to benchmark against more mainstream concepts identified in the North. These authors tended to search for generalizable knowledge that could comfortably fit within a positivist ontological perspective (i.e. single, external, objective reality– see Guba and Lincoln 1994; Kilduff and Mehra 1997). There were also efforts to explore alternative realities or to engage in more endogenous explorations where alternative and multiple realities are possible (see Guba and Lincoln 1994; Jackson 2014).

With regard to the first subtheme – *Comparative* – there was a focus on the *generalizability of one reality* or the commonalities and/or differences between the Northern versus the Southern business ethics and business ethics education (e.g. Post, Sethi, and Williams 2002; Aurifeille and Quester 2003; Eweje 2006). In terms of commonalities, this research appears to implicitly centralize Northern realities and uses this core as benchmark or a point of comparison for what is occurring in the context under study. Grounded in a political, economic, and/or cultural context not reflective of

this Northern benchmark, researchers in these more peripheral contexts are spending considerable efforts deciphering their actual daily experiences of business vis-à-vis the dominant knowledge paradigms. Napal (2005), for example, explores global–local power dynamics and asks where can the lines be drawn between the culturally accepted and encouraged custom of gift-giving and the dominant notions of bribery? This type of research adds to the ongoing pursuit of universals and generalizable tenets of business ethics.

A second subtheme also emerged – *Indigenous* – whereby we see a search for p*ossible different realities* through a rich exploration of more local perspectives inherently rejecting the suggestion of the need to explore universals. Here, the specificities that imprint a society are central points of study. In this regard, there is more of a situating and localizing of knowledge within specific manifestations of business ethics practices. This research suggests the importance of understanding notions of ethicality in business in a specific cultural context cognizant of the values, interests, and power dynamics of those involved locally (e.g. Aurifeille and Quester 2003). Additionally, with a focus on the possibilities of different realities, researchers also explore the role of the organization and obligations toward different stakeholders – family, tribal leaders, religious in-group, etc. (e.g. Boyle 2004). In this literature, there is argument over the definition of a stakeholder, with variant categories and their importance differing from one culture to another (e.g. Rossouw 2005).

Discussion and conclusions

The results of our analysis suggest that beyond the documented similarities, there are important and substantive nuances. A particularly important finding concerns the third theme – ontological considerations of the South – where there is a concerted effort to decipher daily business experiences in relation to prevalent business ethics frameworks. This theme emerged only from examining the literature from the South and suggests a struggle to situate local realities within mainstream knowledge systems.

This focus may be a manifestation of the prevalent convergence–divergence debate increasingly discussed in research on higher education. For example, some scholars suggest resolutions that call for a blending of the North–South perspectives; that is, a blending of the international with the local whereby space is provided in the curriculum for 'internationalization with local characteristics or local higher education with international characteristics' (Vinther and Slethaug 2013, 807). This represents a push for what management scholars have called crossvergence whereby there is a respect and acknowledgment for variant ontological realities and the possibilities for variations in actual manifestations (see Ralston et al. 2008).

This suggestion is indeed useful; however, upon further reflection, this blending may be limited especially if the dynamics of control and resistance are ignored and one is brought to assume that the North and South are equal players. Indeed, with a critical lens such as one based on the Southern Theory, the acknowledgment of multiple perspectives in curriculum development is necessarily done in the context of omnipresent power dynamics where there is clearly evidence for domination and subjugation. Here, therefore, ontological considerations are necessarily intertwined with an inquiry of local contextualized phenomena within a dialog of global power relations as opposed to one based on generalized large-sample 'power-neutral' statistical trends (Guba and Lincoln 1994).

Aligned with an acknowledgment of such power relations, an important further consideration for the Southern teacher–learner situated is to critically reflect on the possibilities of meaningful learning. By 'critically reflect' we mean to question the very processes of knowledge creation in order to better understand how personal, interpersonal, and contextual factors influence what is said and done, or not said and not done through the research and educational texts (Smith 2011). This brings us back to Neal and Finlay's (2008) assertion that meaningful learning only occurs when we enhance student ability to decipher discursive politics between the dominant perspective and their own localized perspectives. Therefore, the exploration of contextualized business ethics phenomena in a manner that is cognizant of the power dynamics of control and resistance and that is aware of the local–global business reality is fundamental for students and researchers to be able to engage in meaningful learning.

However, is this enough for truly meaningful learning? In the section that follows we argue that learning solely situated in the realm of intellectual deliberation is not enough to support real meaningful learning because deliberation does not encourage the exploration of practical application. Indeed, drawing from the work of Flyvbjerg (2001), we argue that meaningful learning is possible only through application and exercises of practical utility.

Phronetic social science and meaningful learning in the South

Flyvbjerg's (2001) depiction of phronetic social science can be helpful here to stretch deliberation of control and resistance to include more practically oriented applications. Drawing from the work of Aristotle, Flyvbjerg's (2001) explains that social science research is different from the natural sciences in that the first is necessarily intuitive and contextual and not governed by predictable and universal rules. Flyvbjerg (2001) asserts further that in social science research what is imperative is knowledge dissemination that is reflective and that revolves around practicality, practical common sense, or what Aristotle termed *phronesis*. Flyvbjerg (2001) specifically defines the notion of phronesis as practical wisdom that involves reflective thought aimed at actions that are problem-oriented (Falk, Rocha, and Warnick 2009). From this perspective, meaningful learning only happens when individuals are given opportunities to be reflective and to balance instrumental rationality (reasoning about what is gained in the end) with a focus on value rationality (reasoning about things that are good or bad for humankind) (Flyvbjerg 2001, 57).

Meaningful learning as such, therefore, would be one guided by reflexivity, by the values, interests, and power dynamics of those involved, and further by consideration, choice, and experience within context. In this regard, meaningful learning in business ethics education occurs when the curriculum clarifies to students where their society is in relation to 'others', where the society wants to go, and what is 'desirable' or 'good' according to the diverse sets of values and interests acting in and on that society (Flyvbjerg 2001, 167). Put into action, this suggests that meaningful education should offer students experiences on which to reflect and should result in gaining 'knowledge of how to behave in particular situations which cannot be reduced to generalized rules … it involves the reflexive analysis of goals, values, and interests necessary for an enlightened society' (Falk, Rocha, and Warnick 2009, 6). In other words, the taught curriculum should centralize local perspectives. Such centralization can be seen as an act of resistance in itself – but more importantly as an act of practical utility in that its aim is to

suggest actions that can do something about concrete problems in society (Falk, Rocha, and Warnick 2009, 6).

Phronesis as a method to improve business ethics teaching

Potential phronetic mechanisms for meaningful learning emerge when students sharpen their skills relating to *critical reflection* and therefore are provided with opportunities for experiential learning, transformative learning, and culturally situated pedagogies widely applicable to different groups of learners (Bowser et al. 2007). Through such mechanisms students are encouraged to focus on balancing instrumental rationality with value rationality, thereby placing an emphasis on 'practical knowledge and practical ethics' (Flyvbjerg 2001, 56). More specifically, students should be able to walk away with practical recommendations that incorporate considerations of contextual factors and power dynamics with business operations. This involves opportunities for critical reflection beyond simplistic models of cross-cultural categorical differences to allow for intellectual deliberations of the complexities and ambiguities of difference as well as entrenched experiential exercises.

This is only possible through building opportunities for practices and practical application. Business simulations and related games are one tool potentially useful here as long as they are designed to capture, at least in part, the complexities of sociocultural institutions, politico-legal systems, social transitions, and the related histories of power dynamics. Perhaps most difficult, but likely to hold the greatest worth in terms of capturing the nuances of value rationality, is the use of experiential and transformative exercises that capture aspects of the students' own cultures and engages the specificities of their own realities (Bowser et al. 2007). Business ethics instructors may want to contemplate the use of practicum, apprenticeships, and internships that expose students to real dilemmas and provide content to bring back to the classroom for critical deconstruction in the safety of the classroom deliberations. Phronetic science presupposes a combination of reflexivity with realism (Billsberry and Birnik 2010), and therefore provides opportunities for in-depth debriefing and opportunities to discuss and exchange perspectives on the complexities and ambiguities involved in business ethics grounded on practice.

Ultimately, we have attempted to argue that effective business ethics education is that which is practical and that (1) does not assume that business ethics knowledge generated in one context is readily generalizable elsewhere, (2) acknowledges the need for local frameworks, theories, and curriculum that allow for critical analysis and reflection on the power dynamics and on the factors that allow for meaningful learning as business decision makers in their own contextual realities, (3) acknowledges the importance of learning to navigate ethical challenges salient in local realities while simultaneously being aware of the concepts and factors necessary to engage in the global business arena.

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