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An Evaluation of Business Ethics Training

Through DIT and Content Analysis

Abstract

- Evaluation of business training to date has relied heavily on the following key components.
 - Measuring advances in **Cognitive Moral development** (CMD).
 - Through the use quantitative methods such as the **Defining Issues Test** (DIT)

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- These evaluations have tended to focus only on **Moral development** and not on changes in actual management **decision making**.
 - The proposed study that will be initiated in conjunction with **Ethical Business Solutions s.r.o.** (a consultancy company in Prague) will focus on the following.

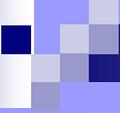
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- **Confirm** the usefulness of the **DIT measure** in a real organizational context by using it to **measure changes** after a CMD training initiative.
 - **Deliver** a structured CMD Training session to around 15-20 trainees.
 - Use **content analysis** of interviews responses to identify any **decision making** change as a result of such a CMD training initiative.



Introduction

- The amount of literature more specific to ethical training programs that attempts to increase the frequency of ethical behavior relating to management decision making is small.
- Crane (1999) has suggested that much of this literature lacks empirical support.

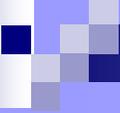
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- Researchers have not understood or described what managers actually do in practice.
 - Have not really recognize the fact that responses and dilemmas studied can mean different things to different people in different organizations.
 - Failed to incorporate the influence of inherent **“Ethical Climates”** that exist within organizations.
 - Not incorporated the role played by **“Individual-level attitudes and behavior patterns”** of employees/trainees.



Factors known to Affect Training Success

- Wells and Schminkle (2001) and Weber (2007) both suggest using CMD as a basis for training – Inductive learning and discussions based around scenarios.
- Trainee characteristics (prior experience and integrity) will have an impact on the outcome of the training.
- The basic assumption being that ethical training will not turn an immoral person into a moral person.
- Training will enable a generally moral person to behave consistently with their own perception of themselves (Izzo, Langford and Vitell, 2006)

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- The work of Victor and Cullen, 1988 has also shown that an ethical climate exists within organizations and this will have an impact on the decision-making process.
 - Victor and Cullen's Ethical Climate Questionnaire (ECQ) informs on the nature of ethical climates within organizations.
 - It does not appear that any of the research has used the ECQ to inform the construction of Ethical Training programmes.



Traditional Instruments to Measure CMD and Suggested Alternative Approaches

- Much of the literature relating to evaluation of CMD-type training has used the Defining Issues Test (DIT).
- Most research reviewed involving the DIT fails to recognize that trainees may merely be answering questions according to an increased ethical vocabulary.

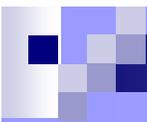
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- Weber (2007) advocates the “careful content-analysis of answers to post-initiative open-ended queries”
 - Perceptions of the behavior of others within the organization vary wildly and can influence responses.
 - Parker (2003) also emphasizes that business ethics and organizational politics cannot be viewed as mutually exclusive concepts.

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- With this in mind the proposed study remains essentially positivist and included content analysis that allows for an interpretative element.
 - To measure CMD, the existing DIT instrument will be used.
 - A sample DIT item is available on the Centre for the Study of Ethical Development website (see appendix in attachments)



Focus of the Proposed Study

- The study will attempt to focus on the effectiveness of a training initiative that is partly based on the work of Weber (2007).
- Will include elements of CMD and inductive learning and focused on individual cognitive moral development.
- The initiative will be delivered to several companies through Ethical Business Solutions after July 2007.



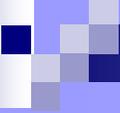
The primary focus will be on the following areas:

- Measurement of DIT scores before and after training.
- The content of any change in how decisions are made (not simply changes in what decisions are made).
- Any relationship between DIT scores and how decisions are made after training.

Conclusion

- The DIT has been successfully used as a measure to determine change in CMD after a business ethics training program.
- It fulfils the immediate need to supply a measurement instrument with face validity, but is unable to capture the entire picture particularly relating to ethical decision making.

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- The content analysis approach proposed by Weber (2007) comes close meeting Crane's call for more interpretative research in this area.
 - It is expected that the conclusions drawn from the proposed research will have three main contributions.

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- Assess the usefulness of the DIT in a genuine organizational context to measure CMD change.
 - Examine what exactly is changed by CMD training programs in a more concrete rather than abstract way that relates more closely to actual decision making than moral development.
 - Will assist trainers as to what the content of effective business ethics training should be, through identifying some reasons why change has or has not occurred.