

EMBODIED PHRONETIC PEDAGOGY: CULTIVATING ETHICAL AND MORAL CAPABILITIES IN POSTGRADUATE BUSINESS STUDENTS

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Scholars have debated the issue of how to improve business ethics education so that it impacts managerial practice. We contribute to this discussion by proposing a pedagogy that we denominate “embodied phronesis.” We developed the pedagogy and applied it for over five years at an Australian business school. Embodied phronesis is based on experiential learning and cultivates students’ ethical-moral capabilities by integrating normative aspects (a reflection on ethical principles informing decisions), behavioral factors (the role of emotions and preconscious reactions in shaping ethical behavior), and social determinants (a consideration of power relations enabling and constraining ethical practice in organizations). To understand the impact of this pedagogy, we analyze reflective diaries written by postgraduate business students who completed a course designed according to these principles. We find that embodied phronesis enables students to shift from a technical, values-free conception of managerial action to a view of management as ethical and moral practice. Our pedagogy allows students to deal with the complexities inherent in business ethics while simultaneously illustrating that there are not simple answers to the problem of how to be ethical in a business context.

Being ethical in business contexts is not just a matter of avoiding dishonest behavior; it involves ethical reasoning, moral sentiments, and practical coping capabilities (Park, 1998), and requires dealing with psychic struggles, moral dilemmas, and collective action issues (Moberg, 2006). It has been argued that to address this challenge, business ethics education (BEE) must integrate normative approaches that support the purposeful evaluation of alternative courses of action, and behavioral approaches that help to understand the influences shaping ethical choices (de los Reyes, Kim, & Weaver, 2017). Several authors have supported the

use of experiential learning in BEE (Baden, 2013; Park, 1998; Sims, 2004), and this approach seems particularly suited to integrate normative and behavioral ethics. Experiential learning (Godfrey, Illes, & Berry, 2005; Kolb & Kolb, 2005) involves producing and transferring knowledge through the transformation of experience in relation to a context (Kolb & Kolb, 2017).

Regardless of the pedagogy employed to teach business ethics, the challenge of translating classroom learning into practice should not be underestimated (Fenwick, 2005). A factor that limits the impact of BEE on the workplace is considering ethical behavior as the exclusive outcome of an individual pursuit, driven by awareness, decision, intent, and courage (Rest, 1986). This view is based on some problematic assumptions: the idea that managers are able to objectively assess situations, that they have full agency in making decisions, and that ethical problems have optimal solutions. By contrast, ambiguities, unforeseen consequences, paradoxes, and contrasting interests complicate managerial practice. Hence, it is necessary to enrich both educators’ and students’ understanding of ethical challenges in management, including the

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consideration of power relations, dominant discourses and ideologies, and organizational contexts. In addition, considering ethical behavior as a collective rather than individual accomplishment draws attention to the importance of relationality—a “moral notion of emotional kinship” (Fotaki & Prasad, 2015: 567) that connects us to other actors.

This paper contributes to the discussion on the use of integrated and experiential approaches in BEE (de los Reyes et al., 2017) by conceptualizing business ethics learning as a practical process, which implies character, judgment, and the capacity to engage with power relations through critical questioning, strategic thinking and collective action. We build a case for the necessity of integrated approaches and experiential learning in BEE, and we then describe a pedagogic approach (which we define as “embodied phronesis”) that integrates normative, behavioral, and social components of BEE in a context of experiential learning. Phronesis (Aristotle, 350 B.C.E./2002) refers to the application of practical wisdom in the pursuit of an ideal of virtue but also, in its contemporary interpretation, to the analysis of management and organizations focusing on issues of power, as well as problematizing current orders and trends and questioning their desirability (Flyvbjerg, 2001). To exploit the potential of a phronetic approach in BEE, we propose to *embody* it; this means that the capabilities of practical judgment we cultivate in our students are not based on a detached, cerebral calculation, but incorporate emotions and tacit knowledge. Adding feeling to analysis enables decision-makers to embrace an ethics of care (Noddings, 1984) that we consider essential for authentic stewardship—a concern for a sustainable management of the interests of all stakeholders (including those caring for others) (Hawk, 2011). Our final goal is to understand the processes by which integrated experiential learning can support the development of reflective judgment, a self-oriented (i.e., not determined by external rules) endeavor to “do the right thing” in a specific practical context (Arendt, 1992; Kant, 1781/2000; Makkreel, 2008).

Our focus on reflective judgment is rooted in a logic-of-practice frame (Sandberg & Tsoukas, 2011), which refutes the separability between observer and observed, considering instead the intertwinement between individuals and their environment. Actors are therefore always situated in a specific time and place, and knowing becomes an embodied act that has performative consequences, transforming the world it describes (Tsoukas, 2017). Consequently, we consider truth as a function of the social practices

in which people engage that shifts attention to value judgments aimed at guiding actions and solving problems (Dewey 1938/1953). This also implies that power relationships are pervasive and have multiple manifestations: as oppressive and constraining “power-over,” but also as generative and transforming power to do things with others (Arendt, 1972; Clegg, Courpasson, & Phillips, 2006); as both visible and invisible practice (Fleming & Spicer, 2014); and as both emergent and embedded in various forms of political capital (Ocasio, Pozner, & Milner, 2020). In line with this emphasis on power, we do not embrace a deductive approach to moral reasoning (i.e., deriving a decision from universal principles applied to the situation); rather, in line with the principles of practical argumentation proposed by Toulmin (1958/2003), we stress the importance of assessing the warrants that “authorize,” in moral reasoning, the movement from data to claim, thus paying attention to the importance of context.

Considering at the same time normative principles, behavioral factors, and social conditions means exposing students to complexity, in the form of ambiguity, uncertainty, and recursivity (Tsoukas, 2017). While this reduces the distance between classroom and business practice, it comes at the risk of confusing, rather than enlightening, learners. Hence, the second purpose of this paper is to empirically investigate a specific research question: Are students capable of making sense of this complexity, and if so, how? To answer this question, we examine the reactions of a large cohort of postgraduate students who completed a course designed according to our pedagogy. In particular, we analyze reflective portfolios (diaries) written by students, which record their impressions of, reactions to, and considerations on the learning experience. Our findings lead us to develop a dynamic model of ethical learning as reflective practice. We stress the processual and relational characters of ethical actions, acknowledging that—rather than being treated as the “algorithmic” application of sets of universal rules—they are part of a situated learning process, the outcomes of which are mediated by human virtues, but also by embodied habits, collective arrangements, and material influences.

Our purpose is to argue for the integration of normative, behavioral, and social approaches to BEE, which would overcome some limitations of the mainstream models of experiential learning, namely the insufficient attention to: (a) the role of power relations and emotions (Vince, 1998), and (b) the

tensions between personal and social knowledge (Holman, Pavlica, & Thorpe, 1997). Our inquiry reveals effective ways to cope with the additional complexity that comes from integrating ethical principles, moral emotions, and political awareness produces and that could paralyze learners, rather than empower them.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Integrating Normative and Behavioral Approaches in BEE:

Why and How

Despite its ever-increasing success and influence (Iñiguez de Onzoño, 2011), business education has been the object of multiple critiques. First, there is misalignment between the content of management education programs and the competencies needed for practical managing and organizing (Mintzberg, 2004). Second, the teaching methodologies in business schools, which are often based on the segmentation of knowledge in discrete packages that can be easily marketed (Parker, 2014; Sturdy & Gabriel, 2000), are out of sync with the need to professionalize management (Khurana, 2007; Trank & Rynes, 2003). Consequently, there is insufficient coverage of the practical ethical dilemmas that aspiring managers will encounter in their roles (Ghoshal, 2005).

Multiple pedagogical strategies have been developed to teach business ethics (Giacalone & Promislo, 2013), but their impact on the ethical perceptions, behavior, or awareness of participants is often unsatisfactory (Waples, Antes, Murphy, Connelly, & Mumford, 2009). Moreover, there is no consensus on what type of approach to ethics should be taught (Slocum, Rohlfer, & Gonzalez-Canton, 2014). In a recent interview-based article (de los Reyes et al., 2017), a panel of prominent business ethicists proposed that, to tackle these challenges, it is necessary to integrate normative and behavioral approaches to ethics.

Normative ethics concerns “the adjudication of what to do in complex ethical choices” (de los Reyes et al., 2017: 315) by developing capacity for prescriptive evaluation of action, and thus defining how one ought to act. Identifying general decision rules is complicated by the multiplicity of alternative prescriptions proposed by moral philosophers (for an effective summary of these “first” ethical principles, see Hosmer, 1995: 396–397). Besides, individuals might mismatch situations and abstract principles, hold ill-conceived principles (e.g., strict egoism), or incorrectly interpret broad principles, for instance

thinking that, since family is important, nepotism is acceptable (Reynolds, 2006). Finally, a paradox looms over the provision of strict normative directives: blindly complying with mandated rules weakens individuals’ ability and motivation to exercise moral judgment (Stansbury & Barry, 2007).

Ethicists have tried to overcome these problems and contradictions by focusing on the development of moral reasoning capabilities (Kohlberg, 1981; Rest, 1986), the capacity to recognize the ethical implications of decisions, and navigating the ambiguous consequences of the practical application of abstract principles. A limitation of some moral reasoning approaches is the assumption that all ethical decisions are the outcome of deliberate, passionless calculations. This is contrary to empirical evidence that, frequently, moral judgment is based on intuition, followed by a *post hoc* rationalization produced to justify one’s behavior (Haidt, 2001). Ethical actions are often performed according to preconscious prototypes (Treviño, Weaver, & Reynolds, 2006), making ethical behavior the expression of a moral identity (Aquino & Reed, 2002) that is constitutive of a person’s self-conception and social identity. Ethical action is also based on scripted responses, triggered in particular situations (Treviño et al., 2006), and often inscribed in organizational routines (Patriotta & Gruber, 2015).

These observations underpin *behavioral ethics* approaches (for a review, see Treviño et al., 2006), which consider ethical behavior as an embodied response, shaped by emotional and social factors. Emotions trigger moral responses, such as guilt (Tangney, Stuewig, & Mashek, 2007), gratitude (McCullough, Kilpatrick, Emmons, & Larson, 2001), or disgust (Schnall, Haidt, Clore, & Jordan, 2008; Tangney et al., 2007), which operate as forms of tacit knowledge (Polanyi, 1966) on how to preserve social cohesion, for instance by activating a “morality of sympathy” (Tomasello, 2016: 1).

Normative and behavioral approaches to BEE are not necessarily conflicting. One possible way to achieve integration is by means of a “map-and-car model” (de los Reyes et al., 2017: 328), in which normative ethics sets goals and defines boundaries for acceptable action, while behavioral approaches are used to develop effective means, acknowledging biases and influences that shape moral decisions. In practice, knowledge of “human psychology [tells] us how to motivate people to act as the normative premise prescribes” (de los Reyes et al., 2017: 323).

This “clean division of labor” (de los Reyes et al., 2017: 329) is appealing, but ethical actions are not

simply clear-cut strategic choices that can be effectively implemented. A “spaghetti model” (de los Reyes et al., 2017: 329) offers an alternative approach. The spaghetti image conveys the notion of the intertwining of cognitive and emotional dimensions, and their collocation within a particular sociomaterial context that contributes to shaping learners’ character. This model implies “complexifying” (Tsoukas, 2017) BEE by connecting different aspects of human experience: emotions and rationality, abstract principles and contextual conditions, organizational and discursive influences. It also implies combining tacit and explicit knowledge (Moberg, 2006), and considering organizational and work team influences (Baker, 2014) by employing immersive, practice-oriented approaches such as *experiential learning* (de los Reyes et al., 2017).

A rich body of literature has considered the potential of experiential learning for business education (for a review, see Kayes, 2002). Founded on the idea that “learning is the process whereby knowledge is created through the transformation of experience” (Kolb, 1984: 26), experiential learning involves four phases that are interconnected in an iterative process: concrete experience, reflective observation, abstract conceptualization, and active experimentation (Kolb, 1984). The interaction between different phases is essential: having an experience is insufficient to produce learning if it is not transformed into a conceptual interpretation and then acted upon in the real world (Ng, Van Dyne, & Ang, 2009). Learners are thus considered as reflective practitioners who build up a repertoire of ideas, examples, and actions that they can draw upon while experimenting with concrete situations (Schön, 1983). The focus on experience does not imply that individual learning happens in isolation; rather, it is framed by existing social knowledge, incorporating both tacit and explicit knowledge (Kayes, 2002). The institutional learning environment plays a role, interacting with individual learning styles (Kolb & Kolb, 2005). Experiential learning is instrumental in promoting a synthesis of theory and practice, rigor and relevance (Berggren & Söderlund, 2011), helping learners to deconstruct the configurations that embed their social environments (Raelin, 2007). In this way, it can also enhance the capacity to critically reflect on the lived experience, considering alternatives and challenging the inevitability of the status quo (Antonacopoulou, 2010).

A number of approaches have been proposed that incorporate experiential learning and attempt to combine normative and behavioral

approaches to ethics education. Some authors have advocated leveraging both emotions and rationality by using narrative methods, such as reading novels (Michaelson, 2016) or watching theater (Kostera & Kozminski, 2001). Fotaki and Prasad (2015) recommended the use of experiential and participatory methods to highlight the importance of answerability (i.e., the capacity to justify one’s act to a relevant moral community) and relationality (i.e., the moral notion of emotional kinship between the self and the other). Other authors have highlighted the combined effects of multiple factors (e.g., institutional reinforcement, service activities, experiential challenges) that operate across the university experience and that might include external sociocultural factors in shaping the moral development of students (Crossan, Mazutis, Seijts, & Gandz, 2013; Hanson & Moore, 2014; Hanson et al., 2017). A pedagogy that is aligned with this model is “Giving Voice to Values” (Arce & Gentile, 2015), a method that presents to learners case scenarios, conceived as thought experiments. Students must put themselves in the shoes of agents who have already determined the “right” decisions, and must determine effective courses of action to implement these decisions, identifying arguments and relational levers that can be used to this end. This method builds upon a normative “foundation of Awareness and Analysis” (Arce & Gentile, 2015: 538), but focuses on developing behavioral, character-like traits that will help students to respond to ethical dilemmas in the workplace (de los Reyes et al., 2017).

The Need for a Power and Context-Sensitive Integrated Approach

Despite their potential, integrated models based on experiential learning might not suffice. In real conditions, outside the safety of a classroom (Baker, 2014; Hanson & Moore, 2014), full decisional agency in the face of business ethics issues cannot be taken for granted, especially in organizational contexts that are nonconducive to ethical behavior (Moberg, 2006). Agency involves making judgments regarding alternative choices (Emirbayer & Mische, 1998): as such, it incorporates an evaluative element, but also a capacity to act creatively, which is contingent on power relations (Sewell, 1992). Ethical challenges are often experienced by managers in the context of contradictory requirements (e.g., due diligence as stewards of shareholders’ interests, versus duty of care toward junior colleagues). This further stresses the importance of agency, since coping with paradoxical demands in the presence of oppressive

power conditions engenders pragmatic paradoxes, which entrap individuals in a pathological relationship (Berti & Simpson, 2020a, 2020b).

Moral deliberation, or “the capacity to generate responsibility and motivation to take moral action in the face of adversity” (Hannah, Avolio, & May, 2011: 665), incorporates not only moral ownership, efficacy, and courage (Hannah et al., 2011) but also the capacity to strategically plot a “virtuous” course while being aware of the power dynamics organizational actors face (Cunha, Clegg, & Rego, 2013). This involves navigating underlying tensions between different obligations (Weber, 1994) that are “inextricably linked with power relations” (Clegg, Kornberger, & Rhodes, 2007: 118), since power shapes ethical practices.

Management ethics is affected both by explicit power plays (of the type explored by the Giving Voice to Values method) and by implicit forms of influences that are embedded in social structures (Hardy & Clegg, 1996), supported by dominant discourses and prevailing technologies (Clegg, 1989) that shape identities and rationality (Fleming & Spicer, 2014; Foucault, 1977). In particular, the taken-for-granted principles of managerialism (Clegg, 2014; Locke & Spender, 2011), which emphasize the primacy of management, treating employees as expendable or replaceable resources that are subject to constant surveillance (Boje & Al Arkoubi, 2009; Deem & Brehony, 2005), have a pivotal role in shaping organizational decisions. The discourse of managerialism orients managers “toward the solution of technical problems” (Habermas, 1987: 103), treating ends as given (MacIntyre, 2007). For instance, cost-saving measures (such as workforce downsizing, casualization, offshoring) are presented as technical necessities, discursively justifying them by using metaphors such as “trimming fat” (Dunford & Palmer, 1996), creating a context in which concerns for fellow humans are expunged as unwarranted sentimentalism.

In such contexts, it is unsurprising that individual managers fail to consider the ethical implications of their decisions, performing actions that are inconsistent with their actual beliefs while maintaining “erroneously positive perceptions” of their morality (Bazerman & Tenbrunsel, 2011: 62). These frameworks also directly impair moral deliberation capabilities, causing ethical blindness—a “temporary inability of a decision maker to see the ethical dimension of a decision at stake” (Palazzo, Krings, & Hoffrage, 2012: 325)—and ethical muteness (Bird & Waters, 1989), or a reluctance to describe actions in

moral terms, even when they are formulated in response to normative expectations (e.g., “we must proceed with this restructuring because it is our duty to maximize shareholders returns”).

Additional challenges derive from the nature of the problems that are the object of managerial decisions. Ethical issues often manifest as “wicked” problems (Dentoni, Bitzer, & Schouten, 2018; Rittel & Webber, 1973), or situations characterized by ambiguous and uncertain settings and conflicting stakeholder interpretations. Wicked problems often have paradoxical implications, since they imply considering persistent interdependent contradictions (Schad & Bansal, 2018) that cannot be resolved but only navigated (Smith & Lewis, 2011).

The complexity of ethical challenges combined with the presence of power dynamics shaping possibilities for moral deliberation and action can only be tackled in practice. Thus business ethics becomes “an ongoing process of debate and contestation [...] circumscribed by organizational rules, norms and discourses” (Clegg et al., 2007: 107–108), intermediated by tools and artifacts, and situated in a specific context (Gherardi & Rodeschini, 2016). Practices are often opaque to practitioners, who take them for granted, mastering them by means of embodied, tacit knowledge (Polanyi, 1966). To reveal them it is necessary to create a temporary breakdown (Sandberg & Tsoukas, 2011) that disrupts the practical “reality” in which practitioners are absorbed. Thus, experiential learning can be employed to show students that some taken-for-granted notions such as the “technical,” and “impersonal” character of managerial decisions are in reality fraught with political and ethical implications.

These considerations further support the adoption of integrated, experiential approaches in BEE, but also stress the necessity of “empowering” the reflective and experimental components of the learning cycle, considering both innate and socially constructed prejudices that shape students’ decisions. We therefore expand the abovementioned spaghetti model, which acknowledges the entanglement of embodied or reflexive and rational or normative aspects of ethics (de los Reyes et al., 2017). In particular we add a “sauce”—an awareness of and a capacity to cope with power relations and social contingencies—to the “pasta” of the model.

Another benefit of our approach is that, by incorporating the role of power and context, it can address some limitations of Kolb’s (1984) model of experiential learning. First, the model assumes learners’ agency, their willingness to learn from direct

experience, and their capacity to reflect on it. However power relationships intrinsic to the learning environment and the broader society shape subjectivities and senses of reality, and both positive and negative emotions shape learning capabilities (Vince, 1998). Second, Kolb's (1984) model underplays the role of the social and institutional context in which learning takes place. Social context constrains possible reactions and makes learning an argumentative and rhetorical process (Holman et al., 1997). An example of social influences on ethics is the pivotal role that perceived peer behavior, together with institutional commitment toward integrity, plays in determining business students' proclivity for academic dishonesty (McCabe, Butterfield, & Treviño, 2006).

Critically exposing dominant discourses can be controversial. While we agree with Fotaki and Prasad (2015) that it is necessary to question neoliberal capitalism in the business classroom, we are also aware that our audience may construe criticism of inequality only as a partisan political opinion. Even if they embrace our criticism, they might feel daunted by the perspective of challenging a powerful establishment (Kayes, 2002). To address this problem, we must introduce another principle that can be used to "cautiously" build ethical capacity in future managers: *phronesis*.

THE POTENTIAL OF EMBODIED PHRONESIS IN BEE

Phronesis

Aristotle's practical wisdom, or *phronesis* (Aristotle, 350 B.C.E./2002; Flyvbjerg, 2001), is a form of knowledge that is distinct from technical, instrumental, and context-dependent rationality (*techne*), and analytical, context-independent rationality (*episteme*). *Phronesis* implies critically reflecting on one's actions and intentions (Antonacopoulou, 2010) while figuring out how to achieve desired results (Michaelson, 2016). The focus on practical application is coherent with a *virtue ethics* approach that considers ethics as a trait of character (Audi, 2012) and requires accounting for the ethically salient features of a situation (Hartman, 2006).

Flyvbjerg (1998, 2001) introduced the concept of *phronesis* in contemporary social science, presenting it as an approach that "emphasizes practical knowledge and practical ethics" (Flyvbjerg, 2004: 401), with the specific intent to arrive at social and political sciences that effectively deal with

deliberation, judgment and praxis" (Flyvbjerg, 2001: 196) by asking questions such as: "Where are we going? Who gains and who loses, and by which mechanisms of power? Is this development desirable? What, if anything, should we do about it?" (Flyvbjerg, 2004: 405). This contemporary take on *phronesis* explicitly investigates the power dynamics that underlie social phenomena (including management choices) and questions the ways in which power shapes knowledge (Foucault, 1977).

Applications of Phronesis in Business Education

Kemmis's (2012) work on Aristotle's dispositions helps to situate the potential of *phronesis* in business education by emphasizing the connection between knowledge and action in the power-saturated contexts of management practice. A *phronetic* approach brings attention to *praxis*, or meaningful action in a given context, enabling consideration of the impact of behavior on collective welfare, instead of being merely focused on what is good for the individual (Kemmis, 2012).

Several authors have proposed the use of *phronesis* in business education to develop critical pedagogies, applying it to the MBA curriculum (Antonacopoulou, 2010), international business (Śliwa & Cairns, 2009), ethics education (Jarvis & Logue, 2016), and strategy (Clegg, Jarvis, & Pitsis, 2013). The discriminating factor that distinguishes *phronetic* approaches is a commitment to critiquing and questioning the taken-for-granted assumptions that are embedded in organizational practice and theory, and reflecting not just on the "how," and "what," but also on "why," and "to what effect" issues (Śliwa & Cairns, 2009). Such an approach challenges taken-for-granted assumptions about the purposes of business (Parker, Jones, & ten Bos, 2005). For example, a pedagogy such as Giving Voice to Values (Arce & Gentile, 2015), is coherent with a *phronetic* approach, provided that sufficient attention is given to the principles that act as implicit, invisible warrants (Toulmin, 1958/2003) that frame and ground moral reasoning. One assumption that must always be questioned is the presupposition that individuals have full agency in making choices or in navigating contradictions (Berti & Simpson, 2020a). Alternative pedagogical approaches that could raise students' ethical awareness are those based on service learning (Kenworthy-U'Ren, 2008; Steiner & Watson, 2006), sustainable enterprises or integrated economic ethics (Ulrich & Fearn, 2008), and forms of stakeholder democracy (Ferrerias, 2017).

Despite the potential of phronetic approaches, there is the risk that reflection on political and social implications turns into an abstract, ideologically driven assessment. In contrast, it is important that practical judgment is not seen as the result of a detached, cerebral calculation, but incorporates emotions and tacit knowledge. For this reason, our pedagogy stresses the “embodied” character of phronesis.

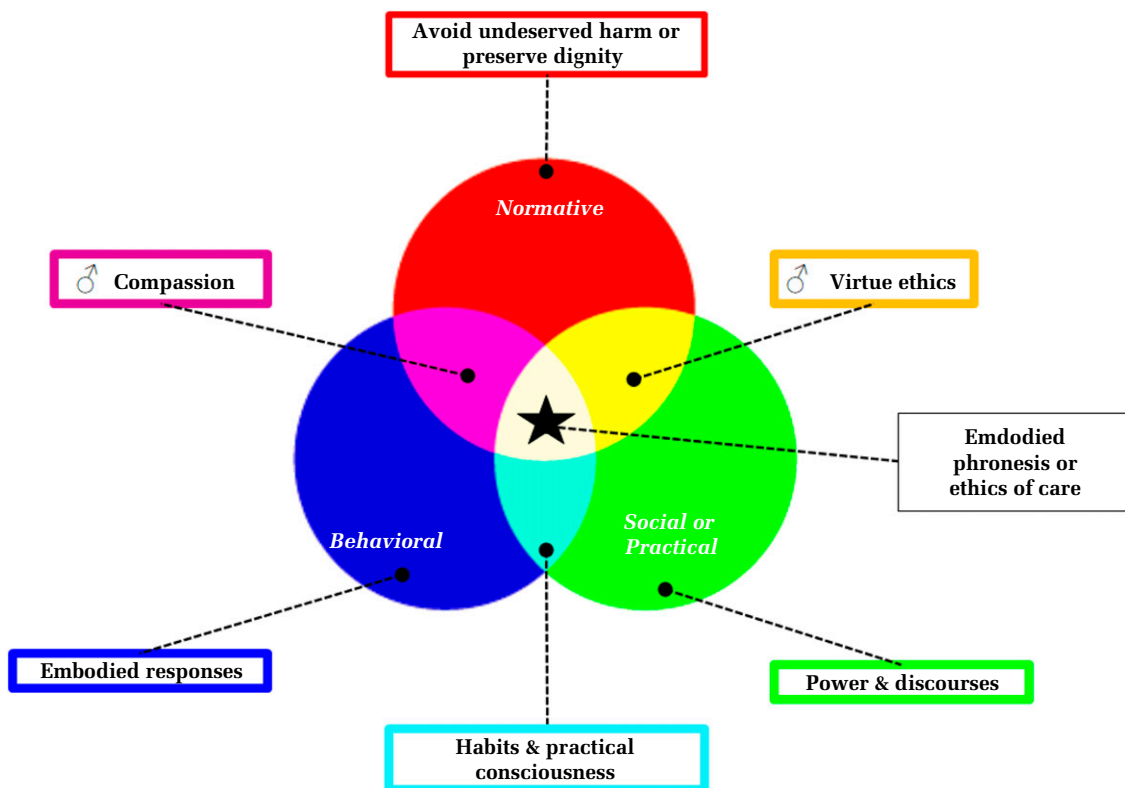
Embodied Phronesis

Embodied phronesis, as a method to facilitate learning in BEE, includes three features: (a) commitment to critiquing and questioning the taken-for-granted assumptions that are embedded in organizational practice and theory, foregrounding of the role of power and discourse; (b) seeing moral judgment as not exclusively based on a detached, cerebral calculation, but incorporating emotions and tacit knowledge; and (c) nurturing the capacity to devise concrete strategies aimed at maximizing the wellbeing of all parties in a relationship, and managing the tensions that derive from dealing with multiple stakeholders

(Burton & Dunn, 2005). Embodied phronesis thus integrates normative and behavioral factors with social determinants (see Figure 1) to enrich students’ understanding of moral challenges and actions, integrating (Roberts & Wood, 2007) and synthesizing (Kristjánsson, 2010) both justice-based emotions and moral judgments as means to regulate direction (Zagzebski, 1996). As such, embodied phronesis enriches BEE in the three ways described in the following subsections.

Normative direction. Embodied phronesis is informed by general normative principles inspired by Aristotelian virtue ethics: avoid undeserved harm and preserve dignity (Aristotle, 2002). An exclusive emphasis on virtue as a normative principle could suggest an overly heroic, muscular, and masculine view of ethics (as betrayed by the etymological root of “virtue,” *vir*, which is Latin for man). We thus propose to counterbalance the normative or practical dimension with a normative or behavioral one, drawing from a feminist-informed *ethics of care* perspective (Burton & Dunn, 2005; Giacalone & Promislo, 2013; Noddings, 1984). Ethics of care

FIGURE 1
Empowering Integrated Business Ethics Education via Embodied Phronesis



recognizes the centrality of relations and of feelings of empathy and compassion, considering the effort to improve the situation of those who are in need of care as the compass of moral action (Noddings, 1984). This perspective highlights the importance of relationality (Gergen, 2009; Thayer-Bacon, 2002), or the idea that relations are constitutive of individual identity and knowledge. If phronetic inquiry were exclusively guided by a self-centered, “heroic,” and machist conception of *virtue*, it could degenerate into a nihilist, destructive form of “dissidence.” Incensed by injustices caused by the status quo, students might decide to fight or reject “the system” entirely. Yet, our purpose is not to dissuade them from becoming managers, but rather to make them more ethical ones. Hence, we emphasize the importance of fostering relations, caring for others, and fulfilling stewardship duties, which is encapsulated in the ethics of care approach we put at the center of our pedagogy (Figure 1). An ethic of care embraces the concrete, the contextual, the person as embodied and affective, and the public and private as fundamentally integrated.

Emotional components. Aristotle saw moral emotion, such as outrage at injustices (Kristjánsson, 2015), as an essential component of practical wisdom, understood as a balancing of the demands of head and heart (Kristjánsson, 2007). Embodied phronesis foregrounds the role of emotions and preconscious reactions in shaping ethical behavior, bringing attention to the importance of empathy, nurturing, and compassion. Stimulating emotional reactions to the experience of unfairness and injustice is not just a way to make ethical challenges, which are intrinsic to management, salient for learners, but also provides an opportunity to stimulate reflection on the role of conditioned responses and acquired habits in guiding behavior.

Practice and power dynamics. By addressing power dynamics, we add a practice-oriented perspective that is often missing in current approaches to teaching ethics. We consider the role of power in its multiple faces and dimensions, both explicit and implicit (Fleming & Spicer, 2014). In particular, we distinguish our approach from courses that emphasize the application of tools or techniques such as mission and values statements, stakeholder consultation, risk analysis, and codes of conduct. These approaches are not without merit, but often foreclose discussions on taken-for-granted assumptions, which are based in power inequality (e.g., an entrenched primacy of shareholder agency) and instrumental thinking (Parker et al., 2005).

RESEARCH OBJECT AND METHOD

Just as an overly rich sauce can be indigestible, so too can awareness of power relationships and social contingencies be overwhelming for students interacting with the complexities of BEE. For instance, becoming aware of the trade-offs between the interests of different stakeholders in the face of corporate restructuring might lead to open-ended, undisciplined discussion that could paradoxically be “tied up neatly [...] only with gross oversimplifications” (de los Reyes et al., 2017: 330). Therefore, it is imperative to better understand how students react to the “complexified” BEE we propose. By looking at students’ reaction to a course designed according to “embodied phronesis” principles, we investigate the learning processes triggered by the combination of normative principles, behavioral approaches, and awareness of political and social dynamics.

Object of Study: The Course

The 12-week course at the center of our study has been a core component of the postgraduate management curriculum in an Australian business school since 2015. To address the mandate to make our students “work-ready,” we seek to cultivate their capacity to make, defend, and be accountable for their judgments and actions in relation to moral challenges connected with management and leadership, while being aware of the role of contextual conditions. In sum, the course intent is to demonstrate that moral accountability is an inherent component of managing and leading.

The course has been delivered for nine teaching terms, across five years, involving more than 1,500 postgraduate students, with its methodology and content being refined over the years based on students’ and peers’ feedback. Students are both Australian and international, and about 50% of them have significant work experience (including managerial roles). The structure of our course closely resembles a traditional experiential learning model:¹ each week, in tutorial classes, an expert instructor guides the class in a different experiential challenge, which is then debriefed and discussed, giving specific attention to dynamics of power as both constraining and enabling factors, distinguishing power

¹ A figure providing a comprehensive view of embodied phronesis as an experimental learning pedagogy is available from the authors upon request.

over others and power to act in concert with others (Göhler, 2009). In this way, we help students understand how power constrains possibilities for ethical action, both in its overt manifestation as direct coercion or social structure-enabled domination, and in its implicit forms of manipulating decisions and regulating identities (Fleming & Spicer, 2014). At the same time, we stimulate students to plot practical strategies that—considering the specific context in which they are situated and taking into account feedback from others—support the implementation of conditions that facilitate ethical action. Typically, the lessons from one week are applied by learners in the following week, as they experience a new “challenge.” The critical reflection on taken-for-granted elements and the foregrounding of power conditions encapsulate the “phronetic” component of the methodology. The emotional engagement deriving from the “lived” experiences, together with the focus on stewardship and relationality, constitute its “embodied” aspect.

Each iteration of experience, abstraction, reflection, and experimenting also specifically aims at complexifying learners’ understanding of the moral implications of management, with the intent to develop moral imagination, the ability to question mental frameworks to discover new viable possibilities (Werhane, 1999), and the ability to purposefully deliberate about how best to live (Kekes, 2006). At the same time, students are invited to avoid common alibis, such as justifying action with a version of the infamous Eichmann’s defense (Arendt, 1963/1994): “I was just following orders.”

Coherently with the iterative and processual nature of experiential learning, these four components do not follow each other in a neat temporal sequence but interact through multiple back-and-forth exchanges between experience, abstraction, reflection, and experimentation. The variety of experiences to which students are exposed is intended to prevent them from approaching these as routines and to “surprise” them with new ideas and challenges to their taken-for-granted understanding of management practice.²

Analyzing Students’ Reactions and Reflections: A Qualitative Methodology

To investigate students’ reactions to the course, we employed a qualitative method based on a narrative

approach. This implies collecting and analyzing the stories, or ordered sequences unfolding over time, that actors (in our case, students) use to account for their attempts to make sense of their experiences (Boje, 2001; Rhodes & Brown, 2005). In particular, we wanted to understand how this sensemaking process unfolded at the beginning, during, and at the end of the course. We applied three different analytical techniques (theme analysis, textual data mining, and inducing sensemaking processes) to understand the way in which students interpreted and assimilated the complex tapestry of intellectual and emotional inputs they received during their learning experience.

Research data are provided by the students’ reflections, as captured in their reflective diaries. These texts, each of which is approximately six pages long, are a sort of learning portfolio (Scott, 2010) comprising three sections that are written by students (being an obligatory assignment) at separate points in time. In the pre-course reflection (PRE), students are asked to describe their main assumptions about and reflect on the key concerns or tensions associated with managing, leading, and stewardship. In the mid-section (MID) of the diary, prepared after six weeks, students are asked to reflect on how well their existing knowledge is working in their everyday practice, and what needs to change in terms of their thinking and practice, on the basis of topics and experiences provided in the course so far. In the post-course reflection (POST), students integrate and extend the considerations made in their MID reflection, and outline a commitment to realistic individual action-guiding principles, providing concrete examples of how they plan to apply these in their work practice. Since the course commenced in 2015, over 1,500 reflective diaries have been completed.

Theme analysis: Identifying recurrent themes. We employed NVivo to perform the first analytic technique, aimed at identifying key themes. The purpose of this analysis was to gain insight into students’ thought processes, affects, and associations related to their learning experiences (Baden, 2014). The analysis provided a first level of abstraction from our rich dataset. We focused on a cross-section of students’ reflective diaries submitted in 2015 and 2016, including 20 diaries totaling 141 pages. Two of the four authors chose 10 of the diaries submitted, and 10 diaries were randomly selected to offset bias.

The analysis included independent identification of themes, followed by comparison and discussion of the results, with any disagreement leading to a joint

² A table providing in-depth details about the course, course activities, and materials is available from the authors upon request.

review of the entries to settle any discrepancies. As a result, a list of key themes represented in the 20 diaries across the three diary sections was generated. Examples of key themes included: the nature and role of managers and leaders, management as a key organizational function, stewardship as a new concept, the nature and aims of organizations and their role in society, employees and their relations to managers, the nature of management decisions, and ethical issues and tensions.

Textual data mining: Elaborating themes and their connections. To study in further depth the transitions in students' views revealed by the theme analysis, we applied a logic of purposeful sampling to identify "information-rich cases for in-depth study" (Patton, 2015: 264), selecting 100 of the highest-marked (and hence the most articulate) diaries from the period 2016–2018 (over 600 pages of written reflections). To decipher and visualize the structure of these complex textual data we employed a textual data mining software (Leximancer 4.0). The underlying assumption of the software is that words are defined by the context within which they occur, and words that cooccur reflect concept categories with specific meanings. Leximancer applies a Bayesian learning algorithm to identify: (a) the most frequently used concepts within a body of text and (b) the relationships between these concepts. Accordingly, Leximancer extracts the main concepts of the text by identifying keywords, and then groups the keywords that describe an idea and occur in close proximity (Constantinou & Kuys, 2013). Machine-based concept identification exhibits close agreement with expert judgment, making it suitable for sophisticated exploratory research, as it exhibits high reliability and reproducibility of concept extractions and thematic clustering (Campbell, Pitt, Parent, & Berthon, 2011; Rooney, 2005).

Leximancer first generates a thesaurus of words that are closely related to a concept—that is, a collection of words that carry related meaning (Campbell et al., 2011). Relationships between concepts are then identified and aggregated into themes, represented as circles, creating "maps of meaning." The importance of a theme is shown through the size of its circle, which is proportional to the number of concepts that have been clustered together. The distance between concept circles shows how closely the concepts are related: the closer the circles the stronger the semantic relationship between concepts (Campbell et al., 2011; Rooney, 2005). To "clean" the list of concepts generated by the software, we adopted the standard practice for Leximancer (Letch,

2012) of merging similar concepts (e.g., managing and management, organizing and organizations) and removing irrelevant concepts (e.g., the name of the course).

Inducing sensemaking processes. To explore what processes enabled the changes in key concepts and their relations revealed by the textual data mining, we also examined the content of individual journal entries. Using the first sample of 20 student diaries, we moved back and forth between the data and literature to interpret the results (Orton, 1997). Two of the authors read through the selected diaries, coding passages in the diaries in which students were making sense of learning (and work) experiences as they progressed from PRE to MID to POST reflections, and focusing on passages that revealed shifts in perspectives, struggles in dealing with ethical tensions, and descriptions of planned or current actions. This led to the grouping of diary excerpts and refining them analytically into higher-order categories while continuing to make connections to the literature and our research question. The two authors met repeatedly to discuss the codes and categories, resolving interpretation discrepancies by discussing the texts. In the final step, we identified the sensemaking processes that unfolded over the narrative sequence (PRE, MID, and POST) presented in the diaries (Kothiyal, Bell, & Clarke, 2018).

FINDINGS

Theme Analysis Findings

As we reviewed the three sections of the diaries, we noticed how key themes discussed in students' MID and POST reflections changed to include a much higher consideration of context, personal values, emotions, power, and social relations in comparison to the pre-reflections. For example,³ in PRE, a view of management as instrumental and being in control was expressed, along with a belief in the separation between management and employee work:

My main assumptions regarding managing, leading, [and] stewardship is heavily influenced by my current role in [human resources]. I perceive the management and employee relationship as, us vs. them mentality. I have always believed that management and employees were on completely different levels in which management had power over lower levels. My

³ We chose these exemplary quotes as representative of the prevalent sentiments expressed in our sample of reflective diaries.

understanding and experience of managing is ensuring employees have the right tools for productivity to achieve business outcomes. Managers implement the solutions and employees simply follow. I have always believed, “what managers say is always right ethically, morally or legally.”

There was also a belief that managers and organizations are responsible for achieving profit independent of the means for doing so, and that a manager cannot be accountable for multiple goals:

Prior to the start of the course [...] I believed a manager is responsible for the achievement of company objectives regardless of the perceived integrity of the task. Therefore, in some cases a manager could not also act as a steward.

The role of managers and leaders was seen as clear-cut, focused on instrumental goals. Students expected that the course would reinforce many of the above beliefs and provide them with techniques on how to be more effective as a manager or a leader:

I am expecting to learn some practical theories on different forms of management and how [they] can be used to get the most out of different types of people. As everyone has unique personalities and [come] from different backgrounds, I think there will be several methods to address this.

In MID, a perception shift is noticeable: students often described their experience as a “revelation,” allowing a more nuanced understanding. Difficult feelings were expressed (e.g., “heart sinking” in the engagement of learning in the role-plays). A shift in beliefs on leadership practice was expressed, taking up notions of emotional intelligence and stakeholder concerns:

What I found to be common sense, was evidently not in traditional business practice, and extensive academic research lends support to this. For instance, Freeman et al (2004) and their Stakeholder Theory presented a eureka moment for me.

After reflecting on different scenarios with the class, my perspective changed [...] I learnt it comes down to a personal choice. Taking part in unethical practices and breaking away from the culture could be easy for some and not for others. It is determined by what the individual is driven by. As a leader I can only guide them in the right direction, which made me ponder my actions. I learnt that my workplace was run by destructive leadership and ethical blindness and I felt anxious going to work each day. I began to make my own choices but this backfired with much resistance from management.

A shift in understanding of the role of a manager or leader was common. Students were revisiting earlier definitions and how these affected their own leadership practices:

I believe [that] a manager can be emotionally intelligent when making decisions whilst reading the signs; stimuli such as nonverbal communication, aggression, fear, happiness, thoughtfulness and sincerity all allow for the best possible outcome. [It is about] understanding stakeholder concerns as opposed to my original view of leadership being a transactional approach. [...] taking an approach that a manager cannot be the friend of all staff but they can show that they care for all staff. This simple change can quickly and significantly change dynamics and it is one I have started to implement in my own workplace.

In POST, students reflected on how their perspectives had widened, which enabled them to analyze issues in practice from multiple perspectives:

the [course] has taught me to evaluate a given problem using multiple perspectives, multiple organisational theories as each theory has its assumptions, and each assumption will lead to a different solution. I have learned to question what is taken for granted, to think critically. [The course] highlighted the importance [of thinking] in a pluralist way, hence seeking long-term well-being and avoiding injustice and undeserved harm.

They also revisited their original views and assumptions, and reported on their changed understandings:

I have learnt there is nothing to be scared [of when it comes to] power. Moving forward, when I attain power, I will use it to inspire future leaders and [avoid] negativity. Although I lack experience in very complex decision-making I can only prepare myself the best I can. It seems absurd to assist employees in complex situations having never experienced certain issues. As a leader I can only encourage employees to make a decision they are comfortable with.

Textual Data Mining Findings

Figure 2 show the key themes as identified in the PRE, MID, and POST student reflections.

The analysis of these concept maps allowed us to identify eight major trends (Table 1). These trends reveal a general increase in complexity of the narrative frames employed by students to describe and make sense of their experiences, with an increased understanding of the social dynamics that characterize organizations, and a renewed focus on

FIGURE 2
Diaries: Concept Maps (Main Themes)

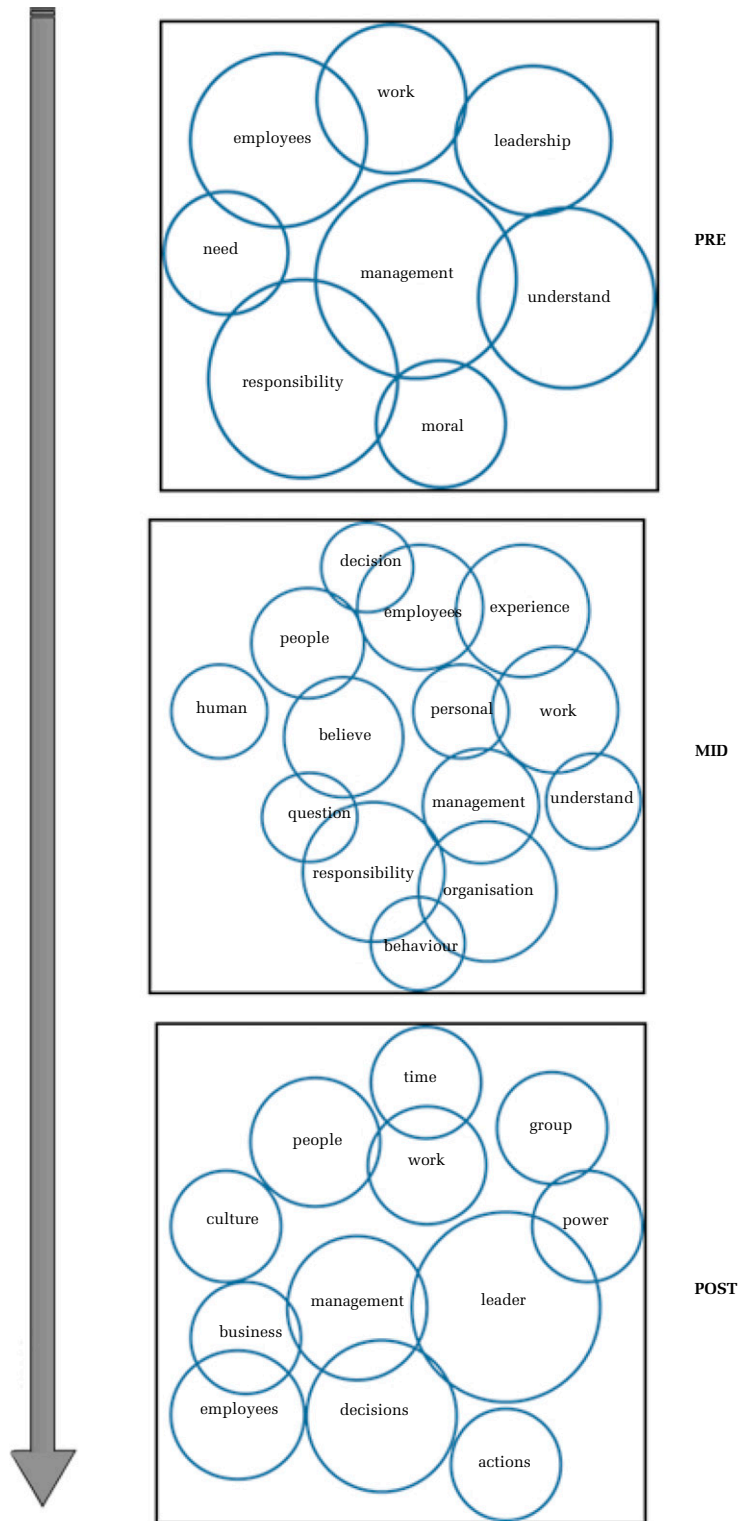


TABLE 1
Trends Revealed by Textual Data Mining

Trend	Evidence	Interpretation
<i>Increased awareness of interdependencies in managing and leading</i>	Number of concepts referring to the key themes increase markedly (almost doubling between PRE and MID); emergence in MID of “question,” “(personal) experience,” “organization,” etc.; emergence in POST of “culture,” “power,” “time.”	The linear picture revolving around the centrality of management fragments In POST learners make sense of complexity through practical engagement with a specific social context.
<i>Increased awareness of ethical dilemmas intrinsic to management</i>	Concepts “moral” and “ethical” are the top rising concepts by hits in the progress of the course; concepts such as “moral” “leadership” or “management” and “ethic” or “stewardship” that are disconnected in PRE become paired in MID; in POST “stewardship” and “morality” become intertwined.	Concepts such as stewardship and responsibility become integral to students’ understanding of management (which thus ceases to be a merely technical activity).
<i>Shift from theory to practical understanding</i>	In PRE concepts “example,” “understand,” and “theory” are strongly connected with “learn,” but in MID and POST learning becomes more associated with “practice,” “action,” or “change.”	Lived experience of simulations and reflection on their own experience leads students to appreciate the centrality of situated practice in managerial action and ethical behavior.
<i>Shifts toward management as a social, rather than individual, accomplishment</i>	“Society” and “community” emerge as key concepts in POST; “leadership” is associated with “skills,” “actions,” and “goals” in PRE but becomes related to “team,” “trust,” and “moral” in MID and with “followers,” “feel,” and “group” in POST; also in POST the concept “others” is strongly related to “actions,” and “responsibility”; in POST “management” is strongly related to “followers,” “group,” “stakeholders,” “culture,” “society,” and “community.”	Students tend to reconsider the concept of leadership from a relational perspective, and acknowledge that it is not purely linked to the possession of technical skills: they realize that the course is not about developing personal skills but much more about developing constructive relationships with others.
<i>Increased awareness of stakeholders (in particular the role of employees)</i>	“Stakeholder” newly emerges in MID, in strong relationship with “responsibility” but also in relationship with “understand,” “need,” and “different”; in POST, “need” becomes very relevant and specifically related to “community”; the relationship with “stakeholder,” and “decisions” emerges in MID and strengthens in POST.	The existence and role of different stakeholders become salient to students, who try to incorporate stakeholders’ perspectives and interests into their picture of management.
<i>Increased awareness of power or politics</i>	“Power” emerges in MID, in a strong relationship to “trust,” “question,” and “moral”; in POST there is a stronger focus on power toward or for others (being related to “follower,” “community,” “other,” and “human”).	Students do not solely acknowledge the role of power but feel encouraged to question current relationships of power; they also become aware of how (their) power affects others.
<i>Increased awareness of corporate culture and situational context</i>	In POST, the concept of “culture” has a key relationship to “company” (1st rank) as well as to “organization” (3rd rank); in MID, “situation” emerges, with a strong relationship to “personal,” and “action”; in POST the top relationship of “situation” is with “feel or being aware.”	Students acknowledge the influence of previously taken-for-granted corporate culture, and start to think about their actions with regard to the situational context.
<i>Increased awareness of the “human” components</i>	In PRE, “human” mostly refers to “human resources”; by contrast, in MID, “human” becomes associated with “dignity,” and “stewardship”; in POST “human” shows key relationships with “community,” “social,” and “others.”	Concepts related to humanity and dignity develop toward a sociological understanding that foregrounds the importance of community-building.

relations, human values, community, and stewardship responsibilities.

Inducing Sensemaking Processes

This last step in the analysis led to the abstraction of three key processes through which students made sense of the introduced complexity: (a) emotional involvement, (b) contextualized deliberation, and

(c) self-awareness and reflexivity. In describing how these three processes unfold in the overall learning process, we follow again the time sequence of students’ reflections (PRE, MID, and POST). We also note how these different processes assume different levels of relevance (i.e., they are more or less emphasized in students’ accounts) in the three moments of reflection (see Appendix A for a selection of relevant quotes from the diaries).

Pre-course reflections. At the start of the course, students showed a general openness and willingness to have their assumptions challenged, noting that their understanding of management and leadership may be subject to questioning and shifting. The stated purpose of the course opens questions and possibilities (e.g., a challenge to the idea that management involves technical, rather than ethical, judgment). This openness comes with a cost, expressed in the form of doubt and skepticism about the ability to achieve better ways of engaging in business.

The common belief that managers instruct (and manipulate) employees, reducing them to passive “followers,” is associated with a feeling of powerlessness. This is coupled with expressed admiration for managers who are perceived as “authentic.” Conversely, the individual and structural barriers to the achievement of authentic leadership are perceived as a source of emotional distress and ethical predicaments. Power relations are usually construed as a source of tension and emotional discomfort, and, especially through disempowerment and voicelessness, as a major influence in the manifestation of ethical tensions in the workplace. Tensions and alignments between theory and practice are pivotal in developing the ability to apply knowledge in a way that is consistent with personal beliefs and ethics. The existence of incompatible value systems in the workplace, also manifested in different personal values and priorities, is often identified as a major challenge and a source of doubt and lack of confidence.

Mid-course reflections. By mid-course students began to demonstrate an increased awareness of how ethical concepts apply to their life and work. Course content was perceived as “challenging and demanding” (intellectually, but also in relation to the investigation of personal values) but also rewarding. Students highlighted the disparity between what is assumed as “common sense” and what takes place in the business world. The role of trust, in particular, was viewed as a significant factor in facilitating ethical decision-making, as opposed to compliance or regulatory requirements. Trust also presupposes relationality—that is, considering that “the other person is not an object to use and manipulate, but a living being who can be present to us in a reciprocal relationship” (Govier, 1998: 24).

Role-playing of specific scenarios or dilemmas assumes both a cathartic and confronting function, shifting perceptions of management and leadership. While some experiences were seen as “contentious,”

students acknowledged that these allowed them to reframe their personal experiences and beliefs, applying knowledge to conflicted and ambiguous terrain. Role-play experiences were constantly referred to in students’ reflections as pivotal moments, which allowed a profound shift in their perspectives, enabling a nuanced articulation of the emotional and ethical implications of making difficult decisions (e.g., the issue of dissociation from blame). In particular, emotional reactions and the power of empathy were highlighted in these learning experiences: students referred to embarrassment, and passion, as they engaged in the simulations. This is in line with the idea that empathy is central to moral development (Hoffman, 2001). This leads to a reported shift in students’ understanding of leadership practice, opening their views up to be more receptive of ideas of emotional intelligence and multiple stakeholder concerns, as opposed to the managerialist orientation that dominated their PRE reflection.

These MID reflections also highlight students’ direct experience of unethical practices and behaviors in their current workplace. Thus, the embodied awareness of ethical tensions acquired in class through simulation and reflection instigate a desire to become more inquisitive and critical in the examination of their lived reality. At this stage the emphasis appears to be on individual agency: practices are viewed as determined by “personal choice,” with the consequence that students feel a degree of antagonism and anxiety, deriving from the perceived difficulty in resisting some unethical but widespread practices (e.g., not showing reciprocity in the relationship with employees, who are first asked to put all their best energies and emotional commitment to the job and are then treated as disposable tools to pursue short-term economic gains).

In the process, multiple doubts and fragility are present. Students expressed concern about the concrete applicability of ethical principles in practice due to limitations and constraints experienced in their current employment, in particular because of a sense of being “voiceless.” The necessity to balance multiple stakeholders’ interests and needs is also seen as both a challenge (juggling contraposed interests) and an opportunity (gaining alliances).

These shifts are largely enabled by the collective nature of experiential learning activities, with students reflecting that the need to provide critical feedback and receiving feedback from others facilitated “actual” reflection on their work. Group work allows a deeper reflection on what choices are made and how these change in the process of dynamic and

open discussion in group situations. Collective learning experiences facilitate understanding of the benefit of incorporating alternative points of view, and a more context-based mode to supporting decisions on a wider collective level, emphasizing the importance of relations. In the words of one student:

The benefit of this exercise was not the exercise of critical debate, argument and influence, it was the feedback obtained from [other students] when doing so. This highlighted my intricate actions and idiosyncrasies [. . .] In business practice, reflection on this will mean that I shall seek feedback from those under my management in order to improve my management style.

Post-course reflections. At the conclusion of the course, POST reflection entries described the course as an encouragement to be more aware of one's role in business. This comes with a price: one student explained that they had been "shaken to the core" with regard to the topics and content presented, while another cited the "emotional toll" caused by the realization of the negative impacts of business practices. Another student described the experience as "being humbled," by the realization that their feelings of moral discomfort did not trigger any concrete action. The outcome of this difficult journey is, according to students' reports, a renewed capacity to question the status quo, which also stimulates a conscious effort to build up the moral courage required to create change for the better.

At this final stage, a degree of confidence in applying knowledge to future business activities is achieved, together with a sense of empowerment to drive change, expressed as specific "change strategies." For instance, one student outlined that they would be applying learning and self-reflection to counteract a "fast-paced" attitude, questioning business practices in the intent of aligning two worlds, work and life, that they had previously seen as separate in terms of values. Another important reflection concerned the notion of "honesty," as students started to question notions of lying and cheating, and how these become sometimes normalized, even required, in business contexts. Central to this transition in attitudes is the realization that the collective learning experiences enabled them to revisit past experiences with new knowledge, and to find novel value in disagreement and differences in opinions. In this regard, empathy and accountability in relation to multiple stakeholders are seen as pivotal elements, together with the acknowledgment of impulses toward greed and self-interest. Students

also reported having developed a less pessimistic view about the possibility of ethical management, which they learnt to understand as a complex challenge rather than an exercise in ritual compliance with formal norms.

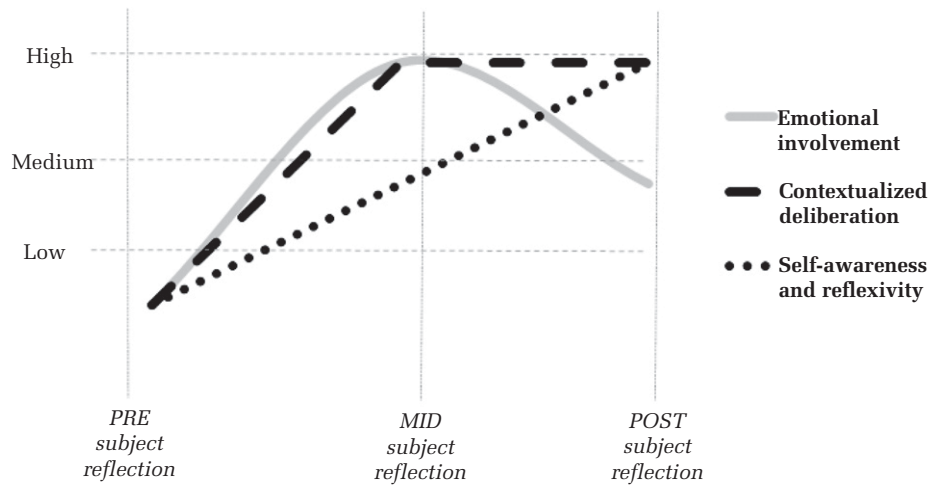
This optimistic picture should not shroud the persistence of tensions and contradictions: in some cases, students felt that the course compelled them to face the reality of a misalignment between their ethical principles and the practices of their current workplaces, a feeling compounded by a sense of impotence in changing the situation. Indeed, in the case of at least one student this led them to resign from their job, beginning a "new chapter" in their professional life.

Key Findings: The Sensemaking Process Activated by the Course

Our analysis of students' diaries revealed the sense-making process that allowed students to reinterpret the relationship between leadership and stewardship, giving meaning to a newly discovered idea that managing others does not simply imply controlling subordinates and extracting productivity, but also entails taking responsibility for the consequences of one's action, caring for others and respecting their rights. The process (schematically illustrated in Figure 3) starts with questioning an entrenched instrumental view of management, informed by technical rationality and a values-free "engineering" way of knowing (Khurana, 2007). Students become aware of the consequences of their decisions and actions for others by being exposed to simulations that shake their belief in the political and ethical neutrality of management, and having to swap roles, assuming the perspective of different stakeholders. These experiences make them realize that some of these situations are paradoxical (e.g., when their ability to manage conflicts serves to preserve an oppressive regime) and cannot be reduced to a problem-solving exercise.

As the linear logic of management as technique is challenged, a spike in emotional involvement is recorded by the diaries. This is partly triggered by a sense of outrage deriving from understanding unfairness and injustice not as ideal concepts but, thanks to the role-playing exercises, as personally lived experiences. Emotions are also fueled by an increased awareness of the complexity of management ethics in a context of power differentials and structural constraints, which leads to feeling of discomfort and—for some students—doubt in their adequacy to meet the challenge.

FIGURE 3
Emphasis on Different Sensemaking Processes at Different Moments



This emotional storm abates in the POST reflection, as they realize that “complexification” is not just a harbinger of difficulty and anxiety but can also marshal new possibilities of action. Acknowledging the existence of an interdependent relationship with other stakeholders offers also opportunity for creating new forms of collaboration and synergies. In addition, embodied phronesis stimulates a practical immersion that is achieved both through direct experimentation of actions and through a reassessment of personal experience. The reassessment (a form of contextual deliberation) takes the form of an introspective dialogue in which learners consider their past behavior in light of the new awareness of ethical complexity.

The vast majority of final reflections in student diaries attested to students recognizing the significant merit of reflective judgment in crafting their own action-guiding moral principles for ongoing challenges. Thus, “students value and identify with intellectual curiosity, critical thinking and introspection which would ultimately pave the way for serving the public interest” (Koris, Örtenblad, & Ojala, 2017: 176). Embodied phronesis enhances self-awareness and reflexivity, not as a navel-gazing exercise in introspection, but as a frank consideration of how visible and invisible forms of power shape choices and rationality (Flyvbjerg, 2001; Flyvbjerg, Landman, & Schram, 2012). Our success in this enterprise is never perfect, since students have varying willingness and capacity to critically reflect or to challenge their own assumptions. Yet, the learning outcomes of the course can be assessed

in light of both the transformation in attitudes and the new considered possibilities that are documented in the reflective portfolios, and—informally—in subsequent encounters with former students.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

With this paper we have aimed to contribute, both conceptually and empirically, to the debate on how to improve the impact of BEE on managerial practices. Recent literature has advocated for the adoption of integrated models that combine normative and behavioral ethics, either by using the former to devise a roadmap and the latter to support the implementation of coherent actions (a “map-and-car” model), or by considering normative and behavioral aspects as practically intertwined (a “spaghetti model”) (de los Reyes et al., 2017). Our paper advances a third option, one that augments the spaghetti model by incorporating an understanding of power and social dynamics, while at the same time empirically assessing the viability of this solution.

We have presented a pedagogy (embodied phronesis) that is based on the acknowledgment that managerial ethics is a practical activity, dealing with wicked problems in social contexts characterized by power dynamics, ambiguities, and persistent tensions. This experiential learning pedagogy challenges students’ assumptions through engagement in simulations and role-plays that activate emotional responses and foreground the role of power and relations. Aware that the resulting “dish,” including

normative, behavioral, and social ingredients, could be too difficult to digest for students, we also investigated their reactions. We found that proficient students activate a sensemaking process that enables them to enrich their understanding of management ethics without being paralyzed by this complexity. They learn how to manage complexity by focusing on practical engagement with specific contexts and leveraging tacit knowledge while being politically savvy. Practical immersion implies a capacity to accomplish that is in part cognitive, in part embodied, in part embedded in tools (Gherardi, 2012). This underscores the usefulness of distinguishing between ethics, as individual virtue, and morality, as capacity to align with social expectations (Ulrich & Fearn, 2008): ethical managerial practice requires both personal character and capacity to maintain legitimacy.

We are aware of some of the potential negative side effects of our pedagogy. In particular, we are concerned that leveraging emotions could cause distress for some students. The exposure to—albeit simulated—management injustices, and the discussion of toxic organizational practices, might remind some students of negative, even traumatic experiences that they have lived in the workplace. Yet, students demonstrated a remarkable capacity to elaborate these experiences and to reflect on them. They thus deal with such lived experiences by coping with them in practice, employing: (a) a higher-level conscious cognitive system for exploration, self-awareness, and reflexivity (Tomasello, 2016; Tsoukas & Shoter, 2014); and (b) an intuitive, tacit, and emotion-driven system for identifying and activating responses to morality issues (Orlitzky, 2017).

Our paper offers a contribution to the literature on BEE that is at the same time practical and theoretical. In first place, answering to the call to engage “both the normative and empirical dimensions of business ethics” (de los Reyes et al., 2017: 333), we have shown the benefits of using integrative spaghetti models over linear map-and-car approaches, and the need to further enrich this integration of behavioral and normative ethics by considering power and social dynamics. Second, by demonstrating that a practice, rather than merely “practical,” orientation (Corley & Gioia, 2011) is key to navigating contradictions, conundrums, and conflicts that derive from managerial ethical action, our study supports calls for cultivating business graduates’ capabilities in accordance with a profession-like public trust orientation (Khurana, 2007; Trank & Rynes, 2003). A

practice orientation requires application to a specific context, involving embodied engagement, relationality, awareness of field logics, and political awareness (Gherardi, 2012). Making tensions between organizational roles and profession-like agency salient, we encourage learners toward an engaged reflexivity, understood not as detached speculation but as concrete acts. Finally, we signal the opportunity to leverage relationality to augment the potential of Kolb’s (1984) of experiential learning. Perceiving ourselves as part of a system of relations implies treating judgment as a political ability, the capacity to think from the standpoint of everyone else (Arendt, 1992). Combining care for others (Noddings, 1984) and awareness of invisible power relations (Flyvbjerg, 1998) also helps us, as instructors, to navigate the critical pedagogy paradox that manifests when learners “experience more repression than ever as they become stripped of their own capacity to respond to new, more challenging demands that come with emancipation [from a dominant discourse]” (Kayes, 2002: 142). The emerging form of responsible leadership is not made up of individual attributes and virtues but is relational and socially constructed, emanating from connections and interdependencies of organizational members (Uhl-Bien, 2006).

The proposed pedagogical approach has limitations. Emphasizing the value of personal responsibility and accountability might overwhelm individual students. As they find themselves in toxic organizations that value profit over human dignity, students could feel unable to drive change. Therefore, instructors need to be aware of the constraints that learners encounter, cautioning them against Quixotic crusades. It is important to stress that we consider embodied phronesis as a “working hypothesis,” an ongoing learning opportunity, rather than the single best way to teach business ethics. Moreover, the course we designed and analyzed represents just one possible exemplification of the embodied phronesis pedagogy. From this perspective we—as educators—accept that we are not merely imparting our superior “ethical wisdom” to students, but are implicated with them in an open-ended learning process. We believe this openness to learning is, in coherence with the focus on relationality and together with a practical orientation, an effective way to maximize the impact of formal learning on ethical behavior.

One limitation of our research design is that our data are limited to a period of time during which students completed the course (12 weeks). We are

therefore not able to conclude whether the changes reported by students are adopted following course completion or whether students' learning has a long-term impact on their attitudes, behavior, and practice. Conducting longitudinal research studies with students who complete this or similar courses incorporating BEE will provide valuable insights into the interplay between lessons from BEE and competing discourses, goals, and identities in practice (Bansal, Smith, & Vaara, 2018). Such studies could also investigate ways to continue to engage with alumni and support them in navigating ethical-moral issues, for example through ongoing seminars or other forms of life-long learning. Another limitation is that the course is largely based on Western philosophy that encourages students "to actively participate in their own learning, to gather and critically evaluate information, and challenge, question, and justify understandings and beliefs" (Hardy & Tolhurst, 2014: 271–272). In contrast, the Confucian philosophy stresses the need to respect and obey authority figures, and to view such figures as the source of knowledge. Students originally from Asia struggle with the requirement to question taken-for-granted assumptions and practices and established power relations. However, we observe that many of these students increasingly adopt critical thinking practices during the course. Existing research has demonstrated that a practice-based, experiential learning approach is well aligned with Buddhist and other Eastern philosophical traditions (Hardy & Tolhurst, 2014). Further research could focus on conducting comparative studies on different student populations to investigate potential differences in how to best engage students from different cultural backgrounds in BEE, including potentially the need to develop different approaches to challenging and questioning existing assumptions and practices.

Little of substance has changed in the business school curriculum since, prior to the global financial crisis, Ghoshal (2005) and Khurana (2007) denounced its amorality and subjugation to short-term-profit mentality. Systemic reform, based on a shift from neoliberal *homo economicus*, which is exclusively concerned with shareholders returns, to a more inclusive range of societal and moral obligations (Stout, 2012) is now demanded. Given ongoing corporate and organizational scandals and questionable organizational practices from around the globe, business schools need to do more to cultivate moral and ethical capabilities of their graduates as current and future managers and leaders. To achieve this, it is not sufficient to teach aspiring managers to

be honest and courageous; it is problematic to consider that being ethical requires some unique virtue or willingness to self-sacrifice. Mindful of Brecht's admonition, "Unhappy is the land that needs a hero" (Brecht 1955/2015: 115), we should try to teach our students to become "practically wiser" so that they can create organizations in which public accountability for ethical concerns is a defining part of managerial practice.

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APPENDIX A

TABLE A1

Processes for Making Sense of Complexity: Exemplary Quotes from Student Diaries

Portfolio	Emotional Involvement (Emotional Reactions, Including Outrage, Empathy, Shame, Etc.)	Contextualized Deliberation (Cognitive Elaboration of Specific Experience)	Self-Awareness and Reflexivity (Incorporating Learning into Practice-Praxis)
1	“[M]y ‘tensions’ of managing and leading have come from conflict with staff and trying to avoid conflict rather than address it and be critical of people.”	“The benefit of this exercise was not the exercise of critical debate, argument and influence, it was the feedback obtained from ‘staff’ when doing so. This highlighted intricate actions and idiosyncrasies which students found obstructive or condescending.”	“There is a great importance in weighing up options and making carefully considered actions or decisions—not ‘gut’ feelings. This can be achieved through careful consideration of rational defence of judgement; A judgement that at its heart, should seek the most good and the least harm.”
2	“This course is a hard course, full of tensions and struggles, and a lot of times I was fighting internally before, during and after the class.”	“Similar to [the case], a lot of state-owned companies are closing down in China. [...] the managers are only interested in what they could gain, and forget about all the other stakeholders.”	“I have always had a weakness that I saw the world as black and white. [...] if there is one most important thing that I have learnt [it] is that the world is not only black and white, it is full of greys.”
3	“Reading the role-play environment, I saw from the student playing the [managing director] was empathetic especially when students’ role-playing as staff and families start saying ‘How will I pay the bills? How will I feed my children?’ I felt my own heart sink and you could see it on his face also.”	“I found myself thinking sincerely of [...] aged workers who were saving hard at the tail-end of their careers for the future and the unlikelihood of finding work again. Stewardship teaches patience, empathy, thoughtfulness—key skills not just in work but in life. They affect all things; relationships, self-worth, engagement, purpose.”	“I learnt that I need to control my natural fast-paced attitude to both work and life by trying to [pose] questions to all stakeholders.”
4	“During the role-play it slowly became evident that firing employees has a profound and lasting effect on all stakeholders. . . It was clear that the decision to lay off workers was an extremely tough one, even for my classmate who was acting as the managing director. From time to time, he looked physically shaken.”	“I feel at times that being a follower means being voiceless and mindless. This voicelessness is particularly pertinent in modern society. . . These followers are voiceless, which serves to indoctrinate the notion that all followers, in general, should be voiceless drones.”	“One way to overcome this entrenched attitude is to encourage people to think about morality [...]. [The course] has fostered a sense of moral accountability in the decisions I make and the actions I take. I can safely and confidently defend those actions if I have critically reflected upon them before engaging in them.”

TABLE A1
(Continued)

Portfolio	Emotional Involvement (Emotional Reactions, Including Outrage, Empathy, Shame, Etc.)	Contextualized Deliberation (Cognitive Elaboration of Specific Experience)	Self-Awareness and Reflexivity (Incorporating Learning into Practice-Praxis)
5	“The discussion in class was somewhat similar to how I would have approached it as well. I envisioned myself as a robot where I had to give difficult news and not allow any emotional responses to affect me.”	“My shortcoming is that I do not consider everyone and everything. It is embarrassing that I subconsciously have justified my choices by focusing on the beneficial aspects rather than taking a closer look at how it can negatively affect others.”	“My pessimistic mentality towards management has improved tremendously. [...] I was headed towards a path where I felt most corporations abused their power. [...] I feel that I have learned there is still good in the work environment and that it is possible to change with the right ideas and people backing it.”
6	“[P]ower creates tension for me. Personally I have never been comfortable acquiring power in decision-making, for fear that I will make the wrong decision and be frowned upon.”	“My new [...] philosophy is to apply the question ‘Why is it like that?’ in complex situations. Each person has their own perception [of reality], which is dependent on their experience. I took this into account at work [along with] the importance of respecting other people and their perspectives broadened my knowledge.”	“My view on management has changed; [it is] no longer about making something more efficient or instructing lower levels. It is about influencing employees to trust your leadership skills and decision.”
7	“I found that I was able to relate to a more emotional interpretation of the downsizing experience through the lived case than had been my previous perception of redundancy.”	“Upon reflection this was because I felt powerless to improve a situation that very clearly was impacting irreparably on the lives of so many. This was directly at odds to my personal experience of redundancy, in which I had felt empowered to use the event as a catalyst for career growth.”	“Through this subject I have developed a view that a humanistic and community centred approach to business is vital to ensuring my personal values are aligned with that of the organisation for which I work. I do not believe that my current workplace is aligned to my personal values.”
8	“Having this responsibility was the worst thing that ever happened to me as a manager: knowing the ‘ugly truth’ before having to follow the redundancy procedure; also knowing that I could not really talk to anyone but my boss about this was very stressful.”	“My studies in this unit have helped me see just how ruthless this company taking over my employer was and how little they seemed be to thinking about employees as important stakeholders in the company. After having a semester to reflect on their behaviour it looks very short sighted.”	“I plan to put these ideas into practice as a manager. However, I realise from our studies this semester that managers have to be adaptable and as contingency theory reminds us we should act based on circumstances not just be driven by overly rigid ideas and theories.”
9	“During the role-play [...] the managing director felt stressed and frustrated when delivering the bad news. Even in a fake scenario, the manager felt a sense of guilt and [discomfort].”	“The case showed that solving problems in the corporate world using a purely technical perspective might help the organisation to survive, but also might lead to disastrous consequences.”	“First, there is no rational decision unless it satisfies the moral law. Second, during a moral crisis, the worst decision is not taking any decision.”
10	“I found this exercise confronting yet cathartic in many ways. I was afforded the hindsight to realise that my own personal redundancy had been delivered by someone who in turn had little to no control over the final outcome and that leadership in this area comes from above.”	“However testing, this semester has been insightful [...] highlighting public and sometimes sensitive topics for discussion. The lack of a formula for success as a manager or leader [...] proved that everything was reflective and grew out of the operational context and setting.”	“[C]onsidering all the knowledge I have gained from this course must be now incorporated into my future enterprise and that is on me to do... I am confident in my knowledge and ability [...] to apply these to my start-up and aspire to drive the change I have been looking to create.”