Teaching Ethics by Adopting a Role Play, Scenario-based Learning Approach for an Authentic Learning Experience: The Fun Way

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Disclosures

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Can “Engineering Ethics” be taught using conventional lectures and tutorials?

- Minimal student engagement and insufficient participation
- Boring (as per some students)
- Minimal active and authentic learning
- Not ample opportunity for students to rationalize thought process and make ethically educated decisions

Thus it is important to teach this subject in a creative way that offers more simulated real life scenarios to the students, make it more relevant and interesting.
The proposed approach and activities will endeavour to actively engage the students and increase interaction and promote authentic learning.
Implementation methodology

Essential components:

1. **Key component:** Design and development of a relevant script by me that represent potential ethical scenarios that the students may face during their professional careers. The script will have different characters to be played by the students (specimen script is enclosed in the proposal)

2. **Enactment** of the script/scene by the students,

3. **Post-enactment activities** that involves identification of the ethical context followed by an open ended discussion and possible/probable conclusions that may be derived from the script
Salient features of the script

• Educational
• Engaging
• Relevant
• Not too time consuming
• Touch of humour...
This study examines the effectiveness of a novel role-play and scenario-based learning approach in the module EG2401 “Engineering Professionalism” (with 18 students divided into two tutorial groups)

As a form of simulation activity that aims to teach through experimental learning, these approaches immerse its participants in the imposed responsibilities and duties of their selected roles, in order to put learnt material into practice and context and to develop a solid basis for discussion.
Learning outcomes

• Students get more opportunity to examine the nature and social impact of the issue and then apply ethical theories to understand how policies are formulated and justified as well as analyze the options

• Active participants in their own learning while examining the critical skills necessary to make appropriate decisions

• This method will allow the lecturer to present abstract and complicated topics in ethics in a more relevant and inspiring manner

Radical shift in how learning is accomplished in classroom. Fun enacting (activity based) the skit in class (with a touch of humour)
Assessment of the technique implemented

Evaluation criteria

• Student feedback (both qualitative and quantitative)
  (*I developed an extensive student feedback form specifically for this project*)

• My own reflections

• Individual and focused group discussions
Implementation

1. Enactment of the script
2. Post enactment discussion on the ethical context
3. Student interview
Student Feedback (Quantitative)

The role-play approach is a novel way to identify, understand, analyse and address potential ethical issues that I may face in my professional career in the future.

The role-play exercise increased my creativity, curiosity and interest in the subject.

The post-enactment discussion was relevant and engaging.

The role-play exercise and discussion enhanced my ability to think rationally from an ethical perspective.
Positive comments

1. It is **engaging and a very innovative way to learn ethics**. It allows me to learn about ethical issues through a fun-filled way and hence, enhances my learning experience.

2. It is **indeed novel and does help make ethical issues seem more relevant**. The exercise is quite useful in supplementing ethical head knowledge and gives a good exposure to possible ethical concerns.

3. It is **novel way of understanding ethics**. It **would be nice if these role-play based learning approach continues in the future**.

4. It was **fun and relaxing instead of the usual tutorial**. Allowed us to see the problem and theories in action that **induced better learning as I am a visual learner**.

5. It was interactive so that I can **know more about ethics from not only the tutor but also from peers**. We were able to put ourselves in the shoes of whichever role we were playing, which was a fun experience. We also thought about what we were most likely to say if we were in that situation.

6. **Interactive/Fun**. It is much better than listening to the tutor all the time

7. **There is nothing in it I don't like**

8. **This exercise could be arranged several times for each semester**. Different tutorial groups could cooperate & arrange the exercise together, to share opinions.
Something to think about

1. It feels like work to me. I think that is partly due to the culture in NUS. Students are mainly grades-driven and are less interested in learning.

2. The exercise does involve a bit more time and effort on our part and in planning the skits, it is quite frustrating at times to find a common time for discussion and practice since tutorial groups have students from all courses and years.

3. We should have allowed dialects and singlish usage as probably that's what is happening in the industry.

4. I don't like acting, I am not good at it...

Not necessarily negative comments but rather positive comments in disguise…
Conclusions

• The techniques used elicited positive responses with regards to student interest as well as their perceived educational value and relevance to real-life scenarios.

• Interestingly, many students opined that this technique may and should replace the traditional lecture-based teaching approach, to impart authentic learning of engineering ethics.

• The study also showed positive student reaction to the novel approach, with students indicating that they found these methods interesting and would recommend them for future relevant courses.


