

Towards More Radicalized Business Ethics Studies

EDITORIAL

Tuomo Takala, editor-in-chief

Every day we read in the papers about the impacts of globalization on the social and economic development of nation states around the world. The structural change in business which started centuries ago has gained increasing momentum since the 1800s. It appears that some nations benefit more while others seem to lose in this battle, whose direction is governed by late-capitalist processes. We are witnessing an elimination game – a game which the most unscrupulous companies, often but not always, seem to be winning. A very recent case is the corruption scandal around Siemens.

What might business ethics research do in this kind of context? One possible move is to take a more radical, a more critical approach to research. We need studies and conceptualizations which consider society in its entirety and take into account not only the interests of business but those of the global village as a whole. The new form of critical theory offers a fruitful basis on which to investigate our ever more complex empirical reality.

Over the past 15 years critical theory has gradually won its place as an approved research method, or philosophy, also in leadership and management studies and is now a paradigmatic and legitimate branch of management studies. While we do have this research option, critical re-

searchers nevertheless have remained in a marginal role. For example, the United States – the model land of business management theories – does not provide fertile ground for this type of research.

Business ethics scholars too often tend to drift into a kind of “silent functionalism”. The business management perspective is taken as a given without much thought to other potential alternatives. It might be advisable to steer research into areas relating to themes that are closer to the revised critical paradigm, such as:

- Research on power
- Organizational conflicts and co-operation
- Women in working life
- Inherent structural juxtapositions in the economy
- Racism, sexism and diversity
- Emigration of business firms and capital
- New rhetoric – responsibilities and ethics as mere talk
- Subordinating people to the “altar of profit making”

Such themes can – and hopefully will – be studied from a perspective which incorporates both critical and ethical aspects. These are offered as suggestions to future EJBO authors.

In 2008 we are planning to publish a special issue of EJBO with a critical focus.

Call for papers, page 50