
Mary Gentile explains how a new pedagogical model is helping to integrate values into the business education curriculum

The Holy Grail



Educating for values-driven leadership across the curriculum and giving voice to values



For those business educators working in the field of values-driven leadership development, finding a way to integrate attention to values and ethics across the curriculum has long been the “Holy Grail”.

Stand-alone, dedicated ethics and corporate responsibility courses can be valuable. They can act as signals of commitment and significance as well as curriculum-development engines for materials and approaches that could then migrate across the core. But the concern has always been that these critical issues may be marginalised at best or actively contradicted in other courses at worst.

For these reasons, a new and innovative pedagogy for values-driven business called “Giving Voice To Values” (GVV) was created a number of years ago. This was driven by research on how behaviour change really happens and by an examination of the actual experiences of managers who had effectively enacted their values.

It was also based on respect for the challenges that faculty face when trying to integrate this sort of topic into the traditional business disciplines such as accounting, operations management and so on.



Objections to the integration of values and ethics across the curriculum

In almost three decades of work at some of the world’s leading business schools, I have yet to encounter a faculty member who did not hope his or her students would become responsible and ethical business professionals.

And yet, these same educators often voiced deeply held resistance to the explicit integration of values and ethics into their teaching. For example, they would point out that they were not trained as philosophers but rather as experts in finance, accounting, marketing or general management. They would argue that the last thing they wanted to do was to force their own values/ethics onto their students, both because they believed this would be inappropriate and/or because such “preaching” would be ineffective anyway.

Additionally, their intellectual integrity led them to the conclusion that in many instances the “right thing” to do was actually not so clear. And, finally, their syllabi were already packed with the concepts, analytics and tools of their own discipline and they felt an obligation to make sure they turned out students who were knowledgeable and skilled in those areas.



They argued that inserted discussions of ethics often took up valuable class time with no clear deliverable or “take-aways” for the students. After encountering these same objections over and over, it was clear that they were not only deeply held but that there was a great deal of merit in them as well.

So what is giving voice to values and how does it respond to these objections?



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GVV was developed both as a response to research findings that suggested that “rehearsal” – literal practice – was an effective way to influence behaviours as well as an answer, hopefully, to the faculty resistance outlined above.

That is, instead of framing the conversation about ethics as an intellectual debate, suited only for the classroom – one that too often, albeit unintentionally, devolved into a schooling for sophistry – GVV frames it as one of action and implementation.

Instead of asking first, foremost and only “what is the right thing to do?” in a particular situation, GVV starts from the premise that in many (not all) situations, we know what we believe is right but we do not believe it is possible or feasible to get it done.

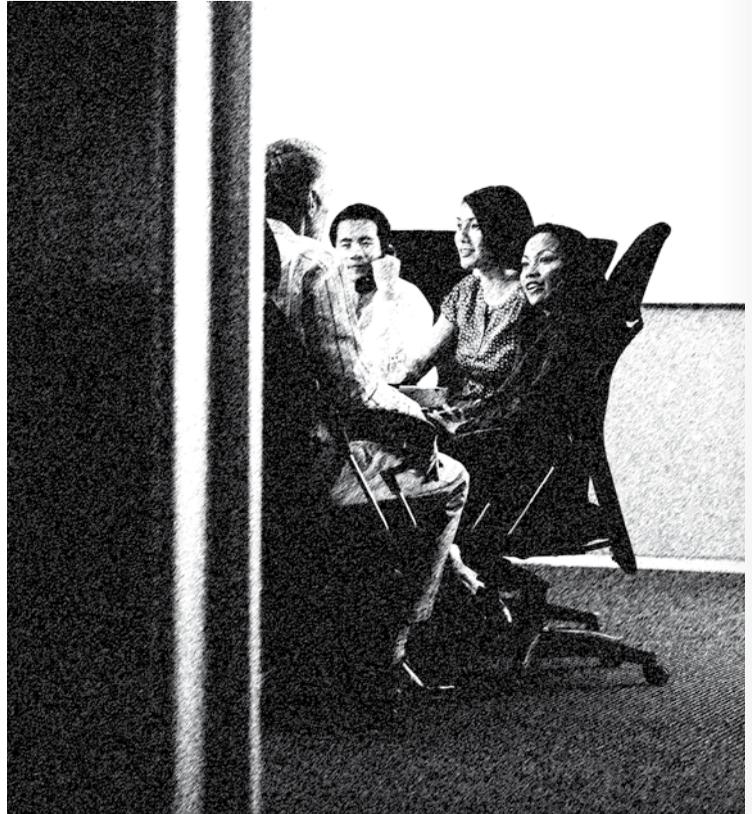
So GVV asks some new questions: “Once we know what is right, how do we get it done? What do we say? To whom? In what sequence? What will the push-back be and how will we respond to that? What data do we need? How might we re-frame the problem?” And so on.

Core principles of GVV include not only the asking of this “new question” – we call it the “GVV Thought Experiment” – but also:

- A focus on *how* (rather than *whether*) a manager can raise values-based issues in an effective manner—what he or she needs to do to be heard and how to correct an existing course of action when necessary
- *Positive examples* of times when people have found ways to voice and thereby implement their values in the workplace
- The importance of self-assessment and a *focus on individual* strengths when looking for a way to align one’s individual sense of purpose and that of the organisation
- Opportunities to construct and *practise responses to frequently heard reasons and rationalisations for not acting on one’s values*
- Practice in providing *peer feedback and coaching*

By shifting the focus in this way, GVV also begins to address faculty concerns. The GVV exercises and case studies end with a protagonist who knows what he or she believes is right so the conversation is not one of philosophical debate but rather of implementation. The tools, concepts and arguments that students apply and develop are based not on John Rawls or Aristotle but rather upon the vocabulary, frameworks and analytical tools of the discipline in which the GVV scenario is being discussed.

The time spent on these discussions and exercises yields action plans and scripts and involves literal practice with the tools the faculty are trying to



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convey. And faculty members are no longer in the role of preaching but rather of guiding a discussion of feasible approaches and applications of the core principles of their respective disciplines.

So how does this look in the classroom?

This GVV pedagogy and curriculum has spread rapidly, with pilots in well over 500 sites and is growing around the world. It is being increasingly adapted and adopted in businesses as well as business schools.

A new book, *Educating for Values-Driven Leadership: Giving Voice To Values Across the Curriculum* has just been published as part of the United Nations Global Compact Principles for Responsible Management Education Collection.

The book sets out to illustrate how the GVV pedagogy can and is being used both across the core business courses and also across cultures. Following an initial introduction to the Giving Voice To Values approach, each of the subsequent 12 chapters is written by a faculty member who has piloted GVV in his or her own teaching and discipline and who describes the approach taken and learning objectives targeted; materials used; student responses; benefits and challenges; as well as possible new opportunities. Disciplines represented in this book include: Economics, Accounting, Human Resource Management, Public Sector Management, Leadership, Negotiations, Ethics, Social Entrepreneurship, Marketing, and Management; and the contexts discussed include undergraduate, graduate and executive business education programmes in the US (including the US Air Force Academy), as well as India and Australia.

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The book's power lies in the fact that the faculty represented are trained in disciplines other than ethics. In his chapter, "Giving Voice To Values in the Economics Classroom", Daniel Arce, an economist, explains: "...GVV does not require stepping outside of the normal functioning of the classroom for an "ethics break" unrelated to the course material. Indeed, it purposefully does not require that non-ethics faculty educate students in the constructs of normative decision making, although it acknowledges and is complementary to the foundation provided in dedicated ethics courses."

And as Subhasis Ray, a marketing professor at Xavier Institute of Management Bhubaneswar, India, writes in his chapter: "Beyond the concept itself and its cases, GVV's achievement is to bring ethics out of the Business Ethics curriculum."

And as many of the authors explain, they find the action-orientation of GVV (as opposed to a predominantly philosophical and theoretical approach to ethics) to be a good fit with business education. Accounting professors Steven Mintz and Roselyn Morris comment: "Typically accounting professors rely on the use of traditional moral theories to provide the basis for values judgments. The problem is the discussion of what to do stops there and not with the critical issue of how to do it...We use the GVV approach to provide the bridge between ethical intent and ethical action."

MIT professor Leigh Hafrey explains: "I adopted Giving Voice To Values (GVV) in the classroom for the same reason that many others have: I needed something that would allow both me and my students in various graduate business programmes to ground the metaphysics of our ethical debates in action."

These comments are heartening but the true value-add in this collection is its demonstration by the diverse array of authors that the Giving Voice To Values pedagogy and curriculum does, in fact, offer a new pathway towards the "Holy Grail" of business education – the integration of values-driven leadership development across the core curriculum.

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FURTHER INFORMATION

Giving Voice To Values was developed by Mary C Gentile with The Aspen Institute as incubator and along with Yale School of Management, founding partner. It is currently based and supported at Babson College, Wellesley, Massachusetts, US. The Student curriculum is available for free download at www.GivingVoiceToValues.org. There is a faculty-only website with teaching notes and cases available to faculty upon request from Mgentile3@babson.edu. The books, as well as other videos, related articles, interviews and media reviews are available at www.MaryGentile.com

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Dr Mary C Gentile is Director, *Giving Voice to Values*, and Senior Research Scholar, Babson College. She is also Editor of *Educating for Values-Driven Leadership: Giving Voice To Values Across the Curriculum*. Business Expert Press, New York City, 2013.