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Practical Workforce versus Critical Thinking Skills: A Case Study on Ethical Dilemma in Marketing of Higher Education Institutions

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Abstract. This study explores a balanced approach in higher education curriculum development, aiming to integrate both market-driven skills and critical-thinking capabilities. Universities face an ethical dilemma: whether to prioritize workforce-ready competencies or intellectual growth. This paper argues that an optimal balance ensures students are well-prepared for employment while fostering analytical and ethical reasoning. Using the frameworks of utilitarianism and deontology, this study evaluates the moral implications of prioritizing either approach. From a utilitarian perspective, maximizing overall societal benefit requires a curriculum that addresses both economic demands and intellectual rigor. A purely market-driven focus may neglect critical analysis, while an exclusively theoretical approach risks producing graduates unprepared for employment. Similarly, deontological ethics suggest that universities have dual duties—to develop students' reasoning skills and to prepare them for future careers. Neglecting either responsibility compromises ethical obligations. This study further addresses external pressures influencing curriculum shifts, such as industry demands and institutional marketing strategies. Recommendations include structured planning, stakeholder engagement, and curriculum audits to balance academic integrity with employability. Additionally, adherence to ethical codes of conduct ensures universities maintain transparency and protect student dignity.

Introduction

Higher education is viewed by people as colleges and universities that produce students or graduates who are knowledgeable about the technicalities of the world. Higher education is more than just knowledge factories. These are institutions where men and women struggle for the explanation and advancement of the world and for the betterment of the generations to come. Thus, higher educational institutions are symbols of a man's higher yearning (Cowley, 1955). The word higher yearning in Cowley's study defines higher education as one of the main pillars of our society on self-discovery, the never-ending search for man's purpose and higher meaning. To achieve this goal of higher education, students must practice critical thinking which is the main goal to be developed by higher education. The study by Lampert (2007) discusses the importance of harnessing an individual's critical thinking skills during undergraduate. According to her, critical thinking is the generally considered outcome of an undergraduate student. Lampert also added that critical thinking involves truth-seeking and open-mindedness.

It is important to note that higher education and this topic on critical thinking have been an issue of academic integrity for the past decades as the world enters into the 21st century. The world is now experiencing a shift in technology and engineering. The pressure on the need for graduates with extensive knowledge of technology, engineering, and the sciences has never been before this pressing. This also pushes the curriculum of the universities to be industry-aligned and acquire

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the skills that the market demands. In Raduntz's (2005) study the issue is whether to be influenced by this capitalist view in which in the long run the curriculum serves only a few capitalists which becomes "a travesty that requires resolute rectification".

This becomes an issue of academic integrity as posing the question of whether we teach students the value of critical thinking or teach them what skills society needs. This question is also the dilemma which is faced by officials and faculty members of universities as described in this case.

State and Society's Goals

The goals of society are changing, and so are the goals of universities. The study provided an understanding of how the university is viewed from the perspective of the new generation and how it is perceived by the state in terms of accountability and economic usefulness.
Accountability in higher education is seen as an important area by the state as this accountability to respond to the demands of the market is being vested by the state to learning institutions, especially to higher education institutions. Whether the number of skillful graduates is enough to accommodate the growing demands of the market. The economic issue is also pointed out in the study. According to the authors, the state is intrusively interested in the universities as if it is economically competitive. This leads the government to highly encourage the universities to produce graduates who have "useful knowledge" needed in the industry. With this, new universities are at the risk of losing their true identity and the balance that the industry needs with the traditional and classical approaches to higher education.

With this new society, the view and framework of knowledge are being challenged and changed. Now, society focuses knowledge on more "practical" rather than the pursuit of truth and good. The society we are living in pushes universities to teach only certain kinds of knowledge and values. Thus creating educators who are pragmatic in their approach to teaching. Now they tend to teach only "certain kinds of learning".

Universities which are seen for a long time as institutions and halls of emerging great people because of the purpose of knowing their true identity through personal reflection and critical thinking, are now a pool of people for commercialization of the market. The state and society are now reshaping our academic institutions. One central question provided by the authors is whether the university is a contributor to society (which has been for the past centuries) or should it be now a contributor to individuals.

Financial Goals

Financial aspects also played an important role in the influence of how educational institutions are treated today. According to Nataloe and Doran (2011), some higher education institutions are being run by highly oriented business executives thus the view and management of academic institutions are also in the arena of business where there are consumers who need to get what they want. In the case of academic institutions the students are the consumers. The approach of these executives is income generated, thus some courses are being eliminated if no one is enrolling in them. This approach in the financial aspect of the education institutions does not promote student's reflection and critical thinking. Education must be run by educators, viewed and managed by educators, not like a normal business.

The Contemporary Model of Education

Faculty members were once qualified in higher academic institutions based on their credentials and scholarly work; however, now credentials on their industry background are more important than their ability to teach. This new approach in qualifying faculty members is one of the effects and practices of the contemporary model of education in universities based on the statements of the authors.
In the past, universities were seen as institutions that deal with the nurturing of ideas and innovation, morale-building, and producing political and social leaders. But now we have a new definition, purpose, and framework of education. Universities have become training centers for industries.

The goal of the new framework of education is to prepare the students with the necessary skills needed in the workplace with more emphasis on science, technology, engineering, and mathematics. The classical goals of education are being taken

out of the picture, the ability to listen carefully, read critically, write accurately, and analyze exactly. With this new model the question becomes clearer, can we combine these two sets of education frameworks? Promoting skills and critical thinking?

With the pressure of external organizations to the higher academic institutions, faculty members are now viewed not as scholars, but as employees with publication. They are now viewed as providers of customer service and transmitters of industry-relevant skills. Faculty members in this proposed new education model are not educators, they are providers. Some of the new faculty members will agree to this new and transformed education process, but for the seasoned teachers, this is the start of the death of universities.

Faculty members are now being changed by the pressure brought by the demands of the industry or the market, they are now becoming "technopreneurs". The ethical dilemma being faced by faculty members in this study is whether it is fair that faculty members have to deal with constant changes to their way and what they teach, without any consideration for their well-being and input. This was posed in the actual study.

The Shifting Priorities

During the 90's a budget reduction happened for the state universities and locally funded colleges and this reduction had a significant role in the shifting of priorities of the government and the organizational and administration procedure of university officials. As the new millennium entered, funding for other universities came from donations from high-profile companies and industries. This resulted in the focus on the fields of technology, science, and engineering, while the arts, humanities, and social sciences were being outlasted during this era.
The authors of the study also provide additional information regarding another shift that happened. It was the view and role of the stakeholders in the university. Parents are now seen as customers and students are seen as consumers. Even the research that was once viewed as a process, now it is viewed as a product. This can be attributed to the funding and focus of this century where education was seen as a tool to prepare students in the industry and focus on the science and technology courses.

About the administrative and organizational functions of the university, there was a major shift from the classical approach. The materialist ideology was placed in universities due to the strong corporate background of the academic executives. More people were hired to satisfy the concept of bureaucratic administration, especially in the government. This led to the focus of being goal-specific academic institutions while the essence of the quality of the graduates and impact is still in question. No doubt having more administrative staff and personnel provides full operation of the school, but quality must not be sacrificed.

The shifting of priorities from the traditional and classical approach of learning to the pragmatic way of learning and administering provides an avenue to ask if quality is still attained. Education, especially in the practice of research is about the discovery of truth and making contributions to the body of knowledge. This is what separates technical skills from critical thinking skills in higher academic learning institutions, but with the rising trend and shifting of the teaching process, this view of research and education will soon fade away. This leads to an ethical dilemma, whether to continue the traditional and classical approach of education or to adopt the new pragmatic approach to learning skills.

Issues and Solutions

According to Natale and Doran (2011), there are six issues of why this dilemma exists within the perimeters of universities. The following were stated:

Ranking. The concept of ranking makes universities pressured, shrinking the quality and adjusting to the needs of the marketability of the school, in one interview, the president of Reed College stated that having a graduate-level standard, in-depth understanding of the humanities, and thesis-based requirements are the elements of having quality in Reed College. They are not pressured about the rankings of their peer universities. Reed College believes that its students will "contribute to" the "intellectual atmosphere". Reed's approach to its educational philosophy can be a solution to this rampant problem.

Branding. Schools are more focused on persuading students to become consumers of education, rather than participants of learning. Universities must be focused on the output of the students. Schools must inculcate in the minds of their students

that a degree should be obtained through hard work, requires personal sacrifice, requires personal accountability, and students must be ready to accept failure.

Faculty Morale. The core problem of the faculty is that they are bombarded with administrative functions rather than teaching. Another problem is the faculty evaluation, school officials need to review the anonymity of the students during evaluation. This can be a first step in addressing this problem of faculty morale.

Critical Thinking and Dumbing Down. Students are now entering universities and are expected to perform the skills demanded by the market or the demands of the "capitalist culture". Students are now being viewed as consumers of education, as the philosophy that consumers are always right becomes evident that faculty and administrators adjust to the needs and "wants" of the students by providing them higher grades, high academic achievements, and student-centered decision-making. This is where the term "dumbing down" can be seen, instead of promoting to students the value of pressure and critical thinking. We are now creating students who are grade-conscious, soft-hearted, and praise seekers. According to the authors of the study, it is suggested that teachers must provide students with a deeper understanding of critical thinking and the importance of traditional and relevant education. Teachers must support student transformation despite the pressure from management to focus on the skills needed for the job.

Ethics in Research. Upholding the integrity of university research should always be done with research who are externally funded. Providing true results even if it does not align with the intended outcome can be the first step.

Export market. With the expanding ideas and actions of Neoliberalism, higher education becomes a victim of students being trained for the capitalist people, promoting skills rather than critical thinking. The introduction of cross-border education in first-world countries has become more and more accessible, issues have been arising such as it will undermine the traditional values of education.

To address these issues it is suggested to have quality assurance mechanisms and human resource capacity. With this event and shift in the teaching process, the question of the quality of education and graduates arises, paving the way for university officials and faculty to have ethical dilemmas. It is important to note that critical thinking and skills are essential for any student to learn which leads to the objective of this case study to view these dilemmas with different ethical principles to provide or suggest possible solutions. However, the presented ideas from the goals of the internal and external stakeholders and the shifting priorities truly make up the reason why this contemporary model of education thrives. It is evident in the study that this generation's learners are now shifting to this new approach to learning which is skill-centered and pragmatic in teaching approach.

Methodology

The study used meta-analysis or systematic review of related literature. The paper shall delve into the case titled, "Marketization of Education: An Ethical Dilemma" by Natale and Doran written and published in January 2012 in the Journal of Business Ethics. The case provided an ethical dilemma for university officials regarding what teaching compositions should be included in the curriculum provided that the world is in the era of Neoliberalism. The study aims to provide a clear understanding of the following:

Ethical Principles

The study is expected to dive into the principle of ethics of utilitarianism. This will enable able to understand the principle in a larger context than just an individual perspective. Also, this will give a better understanding of the principle of consequentialism under the principle of utilitarianism in a larger context.

Educational Policies
With the understanding of the dilemma, university officials can use this study as a reference when making policies such as a code of ethics. The findings will help us understand the importance of ethics and moral values in the workplace. Also, it can clarify existing policies that involve ethical dilemmas.

Practices.

Faculty members and curriculum developers may use this study to elevate and emphasize the value of critical thinking in their syllabi and curriculum. Other practices of universities may apply the recommendations of this study.

This paper uses a descriptive type of research which enables the review of the case in a more detailed manner by observing the facts and providing descriptions of each ethical principle. By doing so, the proponents can provide conclusions and analyze each principle in full details

Results and Discussion

An ethical dilemma is defined as a situation where there is no ethical outcome provided that there are multiple options that lead to choosing an action that will contradict ethical principles (Crowder, 2013). The academy as an institution is no exception in experiencing ethical dilemmas, from students, faculty, and university officials. All actors of the academic community are subject to decision making thus involving ethical principles.
This review of related literature provides cases of ethical dilemmas experienced by faculty and school officials. The focus of this review is the dilemma of academic integrity. A thorough examination of the actors, the dilemma, and the ethical principles it violates are presented.

Ethical Considerations of Students Towards Academic Integrity

Students tend to commit academic disintegration as a result of external pressure and interpersonal relationships. The study highlighted a situation wherein students revealed that such pressure came from high expectations exerted by their family members and maintaining the scholarships that sustain financial support to continue their studies. From the cultural perspective of the case, honoring the efforts and sacrifices of family members is perceived as a contractual duty and it could be achieved through performing with excellence in one's education (Hattingh et al., 2020). Thus, it can be implied that students were battled with choosing between academic disintegration to adhere to the above-mentioned contractual duty or to maintain academic honesty which may lead to family disappointments.

A specific scenario was presented in the book of case studies of Denney and Roberts (2023) wherein a foreign exchange student found out that she failed one of her classes. Because of this, she would have to repeat the course which also means she would need additional expenses for studying abroad and would not be able to continue her studies with a failing grade. When she got the copy of her transcript of records, the student had to face an ethical dilemma and was left with two choices. Her first choice was to use Photoshop and forge her failing grades into a passing mark. Then submit the edited transcript to her home university. Aside from violating the duty of the student to maintain academic integrity, this choice would also mean that the student would not have the virtue of courage to face the consequences of her shortcomings. ChatGpt also mentioned that this choice means a lack of wisdom to view the broader perspective of possible long-term consequences of forging academic records. The second choice of the student is to accept the failing grade and set it aside from academic disintegration. However, this means that she has to transgress from the perception of obligation to honor the sacrifices and investments of her family. Such a failing mark would mean a setback in the aspirations the family holds for the student.

Academic Integrity through the Perspective of Faculty Members

While students have the choice of whether to adhere to academic integrity or go against it, faculty members are obliged with duties to overview and ensure that students understand the importance of ethical behaviors in academic pursuits. This section presents cases of ethical dilemmas handled by faculty instructors in ensuring academic integrity within the school premises.

A case written by Loretta Frankovitch and published in the book of Denney and Roberts (2023) showcased the ethical dilemma of an instructor whose students hired an online tutor to do their computer science homework. During the confrontation, the students admitted their act but deliberately mentioned that they did not use the assignment of the tutor for submission. Upon comparing the submitted assignment with the "purchased answers," the faculty was convinced that there was no resemblance between them. Thus, the faculty had to weigh two choices whether to sanction or not the concerned students. ChatGpt says that it would be morally wrong for the instructor to punish the students because that would mean that he would deviate from the virtue of wisdom or good judgment. It would be unfair for these students if they

would receive punishments because none of the purchased assignments was used in their final submission. The second choice was also immoral because it implies that the instructor would neglect its responsibility to uphold academic integrity. Worse, this might lead to more students committing academic dishonesties which negatively impact the greater majority, thus a contradiction with utilitarian ethics.

Moreover, Cabral-Cardoso (2004) analyzed a plagiarism case committed by an international student which was detected by a faculty examiner. During a research presentation, it occurred that the faculty examiner used to have a previous student whose portions of his research work were deliberately copied by the international student. Due to the limited time, they had to proceed with the examination. After much consideration of the international student's paper, the examiners marked it passed with an "unwanted academic practice" remark. The external examiner had told this story to one of the faculty members of the university who also became another actor in this ethical dilemma, to inform or not to inform the dean. After reporting the case, the issue leaked to other stakeholders and caused a scandal in the university. Thus, it can be argued that reporting the case was a violation of utilitarian ethics because it led to worse effects on the majority of the institution. Should the faculty member not report the issue, it was against the duty of adhering to academic integrity.

From a different perspective, Thomas (2017) revealed in her study that faculty members tend to be reluctant to report academic misconduct. The author cited personal emotional discomfort in taking disciplinary actions and the lack of efficient procedures in dealing with such cases. The situation explicitly identified two moral choices that faculty members had to face when violations of academic disintegration arose, to act or not to act. Similar to the study of Ferguson (2015), consulting legal actions on these cases may imply expulsions or severe academic penalties to the students, thus, outweighing the benefits of upholding academic integrity. These dissociate the choice from the virtue of compassion which neglects the situation of the students of why they committed a violation.

The second choice may also be considered immoral under deontological and utilitarianism. It is immoral under deontological ethics because faculty members are morally responsible for correcting misconduct. Their emotional discomfort must be set aside if this would lead to the faculty going against their duty. Moreover, acting on academic misconduct serves as a regulatory deterrent to prevent further dishonesties. Rules and policies were made to uphold honesty and integrity that would increase the benefits of the community as a whole. Thus, not acting on these cases also violates utilitarianism because it might lead to an influx of more violations that demerit the integrity of an institution.

A similar issue on ethical dilemmas with different cases is the study of Shapira-Lishchinsky (2010) published in the Oxford Review of Education. The case provided several sub-cases on ethical dilemmas. One case is under the organizational versus family agenda. According to the interviewed respondents, she had an encounter with this student in their private residence accompanied by his parents and brought a gift to them. Although the semester already ended and grades were already encoded, the teacher saw this act as a form of bribery. The teacher then asked the student and the parent why they were doing such an act. The parent told the teacher that it has been a family custom to provide gifts as a form of gratitude. However, accepting gifts is prohibited by the Code of Ethics among teachers.

The teacher was faced with an ethical dilemma whether to accept the gift as it was customary to the child's family or not to accept it as it was a form of bribery. This study points out the practice of utilitarianism. Accepting the gift from the student and parent would eventually create a mutual understanding for both parties, but a negative outcome may come from bias or bribery. Another form of ethical principle is professional ethics, where the teacher must preserve equality and impartiality to avoid any conflicts of interest. On the other hand, declining the gift suggests that the teacher would not recognize the family's tradition of gift-giving and undermines its cultural symbol of gratitude and respect (ChatGpt, 2024).

It can be further summarized that ethical dilemmas faced by faculty members are a battle between upholding their duty as agents of academic integrity and practicing compassion as a virtue. More than this, other factors may be considered such as the potential effects of a decision towards the greater community.

Policy Making to Address Academic Dishonesty

In the case presented by Kiviniemi (2015), a Doctor of Philosophy candidate was sanctioned with a failing grade after copying the majority of his assignment from a website. He appealed that the sanction was too severe. Some of his colleagues argued that the sanction was indeed overly harsh and could tremendously impact the career of the student. This implied an ethical dilemma faced by the faculty as to whether to continue implementing his policy of failing grades as a default punishment or go to a more lenient approach in dealing with academic dishonesty. The former choice is deemed morally

wrong from the perspective of virtues because it undermines the virtue of wisdom. ChatGpt also argued that treating cases with the same harsh punishments ignores the concept of individualized justice and other factors such as intent or degree of misconduct. However, lowering the severity of his punishments might also be immoral under utilitarianism because it might be perceived as an opportunity to commit disintegration. As a result, this might weaken the integrity of the institution as a whole.

Academic Integrity in Research Ethics

Research Integrity has been an issue in the academic community that has questioned the credibility of institutions, instructors, and students to properly and ethically conduct research. One such issue is the scientific gift, providing a place for research advisers on scientific papers as co-authors. This scientific gift would not be an issue provided if advisers have been actively involved in the research, but their absence, inability to contact, and minimal supervision is a question of whether they should be given this privilege to become co-authors. This was the presented issue in the case study provided by Elega (2023). In this study 15 Doctor of Philosophy candidates were interviewed regarding this issue. The study specified that their research advisers wanted to publish their study in highly indexed journals such as Scopus and wanted them to be co-authors.

For the ethical dilemma, the actors of the case were the PhD Candidates, and their first moral action was to exclude their advisers/ supervisors provided that they had no minimum supervision and contribution to the study. The second moral action is to include the supervisors as they are the ones who created and suggested the topics. Also, this second action creates the potential benefit for the advisers about the publication. This case presents an ethical principle of virtue ethics. Honesty and integrity are virtues at stake in this case. These virtues provide an avenue for the researchers to properly present the contributions of each author. Having their advisers as co-authors with no significant contribution will promote only dishonesty.

Marketing of Education Institutions

An interesting sub-topic on academic integrity is the ability of the universities to promote education based on their main goal to craft their abilities to think critically and have an in-depth understanding of their world or to become an institution whose goal is to prepare the students to become members of the workforce, making universities market their students. This was the case presented by Natale and Doran (2012) in the Journal of Business Ethics. This becomes an academic integrity where the essence and purpose of the academe are being questioned. The integrity to hone the students to become critical thinkers or to be prepared for the capitalist culture. Although this study has no particular actor or scene, it has presented the study theoretically using literature and other studies. Implicitly, the actors of this study are the university academicians.

Overall, the presented cases of ethical dilemmas showed how maintaining academic integrity challenged the morality of students, faculty, and even the institutional levels. Students' dilemmas often come from societal expectations, external and internal pressures, and their respective personal values. Among the presented cases faced by faculty members, tensions include balancing out the practice of compassion and adhering to their duties in reinforcing academic standards, may it be formalized by a written policy or a categorical imperative. Carefully addressing these dilemmas allows the players within the educational sector to better navigate ethical principles that support integrity while uplifting the overall welfare of the stakeholders.

Additional Related Literature

The following are the related literature in comparison with the study of Marketization of education. These studies focus on the effects of the postmodern education framework and dealing with them. The goal of the related literature is not to prove that one of the dilemmas is the right choice, rather it provides a different perspective of the dilemmas presented.

In the study of Solmitz (2001) the effects of capitalism in the pedagogy of the public education system was discussed. According to him, the aim of the capitalists especially during the industrial revolution was to focus the curriculum of schools in preparing students for the needs of the companies. This would create a pool of students who are industry ready. This concept is the Marketization of students by integrating the skills in the education system.

In his article it showed samples of what skills based can do to people. The need for skillful people was in demand during the progressive era. Thus, people were trained about the needed skills and abilities for the workplace. The study mentioned that an interview was conducted to some of these trained men and showed that after gaining their skills and practicing it over and over again it resulted in mastery, but showing no improvement. The skill was mastered, but there was no improvement leading also to lack of interest to earn more knowledge and other skills. This scenario implies the importance of having people learn the practice of critical thinking. When students are taught critical thinking, they begin to ask questions and pursue the attainment of truth and desirable meanings. Critical thinking promotes the idea of philosophy, theory, and frameworks that become actions of an individual on how we deal with situations, making decisions, and skillfully dispense our abilities. These findings support the initial statements of Solmitz in this study that in order to attain a successful life, a successful nation the need for an educated citizenry is inevitable. To him, an educated citizenry is not only skillful, but is a critical thinker.

In contrast with the later's findings, Raduntz (2005) provided a different perspective on understanding capitalism in the marketization of education. In his study, he posed three interaled questions that answers within the global capitalist economy point of view. One of the questions answered was "what are the driving forces that lead to the restructuring of the education systems in conformity with the capitalist market requirements" These question is relevant to the case study presented as it provides the side of the capitalist and pragmatic approach in teaching as opposed to the classical approach.

According to Raduntz's findings, one of the main factors that lead to the restructuring of the education system are the conditions of the market. Because capitalism is a market of change from the traditional pattern, its goal is to redirect the country to economic growth. Other reasons is that capitalism rapidly changes the market's needs, wants, sales, and demands. With this a rapid change of skills is also needed. Also, a global capitalist economy is highly influenced and changed by technology, engineering, and the sciences with this the need for skillful people in this field is in high demand thus creating a reason for education institutions to offer more technical courses and subjects.

A question was posed in the study (implicitly) regarding, why education should be the tool by the capitalist in creating skillful people, especially universities and colleges? The answer lies in the ducation's ability to produce graduates who can resolve economic crises. Also, the majority of the universities are funded by the state or federal government which minimizes the need for the industries to flush out financial aid to people. Integrating skills needed in the industry and with the participation of the educators and funding of the government is the best way to produce graduates who are skillful and industry ready. Again, this resolves the issue of the capitalist culture that the industry is aways in need of more skillful people.

In the study of Xiong, T. (2012) provided some manifestations where the Marketization of education can be identified. According to him this was the case for China; "the adoption of a fee-charging principle; diversification of educational services by the non-state sector; creation of market-driven courses and curricula; revenue-generation activities; and the introduction of internal competition". Although these manifestations were in the context of China, still some of them exist in other countries. Similarly, in the Philippines, the creation of market-driven courses and curricula is very rampant in state colleges and universities. According to Xiong, this happened due to the involvement of the universities in serving the "state's economic and cultural priorities". This happened due to the demands of the market regarding employability.

The related studies discuss mostly the importance of critical thinking as an outcome and not just a process. According to Lampert (2007), critical thinking is an ability or skill that is generally accepted as a desirable outcome in universities and colleges. Cited also in her paper that critical thinking has been around since the time of Socrates. It modernized the way humans think and shaped the values and beliefs of great philosophers. Socrates' method used questioning the claims of others, thus putting all premises and claims into the question of their validity and quality. Using the California Critical Thinking Disposition Inventory (CCTDI), Lampert was able to calculate and make claims about the critical thinking abilities of students in different colleges of the university.

The study reveals that as students gradually earn their years in college the level of their critical thinking increases. It showed that junior and senior high school students had higher dispositions for critical thinking skills. It shows that the disposition to critical thinking increases as you spend more time in college. The study measured the truth-seeking of students, open-mindedness, and maturity level. This only shows that students are more susceptible to nurturing their critical thinking skills if they are in academic institutions. With regards to this case study, this implies that critical thinking is a vital ability that students must develop to think properly and make proper decisions.

In an essay review, Levy (2006), described the good and bad effects of the marketization of universities by systematically five books that are also central to the issue. According to the review, it shows that the biggest positive effect or the term "good market" that Marketization has provided is the ability of companies and industries to finance universities, given that some of the state universities have experienced cuts in their subsidies, especially in research. With this, it created more research and the results became more relevant and had fast phasing direction. It also helped the not-so-big and top universities to have additional rooms and laboratories.

In contrast, the review also provided the bad market or the negative effects of the Marketization. The concept of Marketization like other authors who suggested in this study aligns with Levy's findings that students become consumers more than clients wanting to consume the benefits of the professional expertise. The Marketization process also poses a threat to the classical pedagogy approach and it also affects the way and performance of faculty members.

A similar essay review conducted by Geiger (2004) analyzed the pros and cons of commercializing universities. According to the reviewed articles, it had a single idea that universities must be a "protected space" where the finding, advancement, and process of learning is nurtured, implying that commercialization is not a solution to this institution. It is provided that universities must uphold integrity in teaching and learning rather than commercializing the academic institution. It is suggested that the concept of commercialization is somehow misaligned like the organization, it becomes a misalignment when pursued.

According to Geiger's analysis, the academic community has been producing large quantities of knowledge in various forms such as research and extension engagements, with these private institutions and industries drawn to interfere with the academe's ability to teach and administer. In the words of Geiger, "commercialization of universities is a curse of success" The fields of technology, engineering, and the sciences have been drawing also to the needs of the market for their instructions to prepare the students for industries, still in the long run it will pose a threat to the existence of universities and its natural organization.

Batabyal (2006) has also presented questions from the book Kirp, regarding the effects of commercializing or marketing higher education. According to his review, it shows that education in the United States has been shifting towards the needs of the companies which is the important point of the book. Some courses and subjects are highly influenced by this commercialization such as the field of information technology where IT certifications have been rampant. This study presents the idea that change in approach to education is inevitable due to the passage of time especially with the changing field of technology the demands of the market will also change. Although the book presented ideas regarding the negative effects, it failed to provide alternatives or solutions. These findings are according to the essay review made by Batabyal.

This related literature provides support to the case study at hand. It does not present what ethical dilemma should be the right option, rather it presents other cases with similar situations. The presented literature provides similar cases and reviews regarding the issue of incorporating the demands and needs of the market or industries with the curriculum and pedagogy of the university. It also shows that there are similarities with the issue of funding of research and sharing of the results or findings. Another area tackled in the literature is the issue of critical thinking which has to be harnessed in universities. In contrast, there are also positive insights regarding the commercialization of higher education which is vital in discussing this paper. The goal of the proceeding sections is to understand how the identified ethical principles can be used to understand and take action with the ethical dilemma confronted by university officials regarding this topic of marketization of education

Description of the Case

This case study focused on the ethical dilemma of marketing higher education institutions as presented by Natale and Doran (2011) in the International Journal of Business Ethics. The authors claimed that the mentioned dilemma was an epidemic issue. The first choice faced by the academicians is the prioritization of the marketability of the students preparing them for the workforce. The second choice offers a promising approach in focusing on the development of critical thinking among their students. The next two subsections present why any of these choices is morally wrong from the perspective of normative ethics. Additional related literature was used to back up the arguments which were presented in establishing the ethical dilemma.

Underlying Immoralities Behind the Market-Centered Curriculum

This subsection presents why prioritizing marketability of the students by developing workforce-related skills over the development of critical thinking ability. This covered the three normative ethics under utilitarianism, deontological, and virtue ethics.
Within the era of modernization, it was perceived that the marketization of education was a viable answer to the demands of the market's needed skills. Though the university may benefit from this approach such as revenue generation (as results may include several skillful graduates), it was questioned whether this new approach benefits the university, specifically the students.

The prioritization of the marketability of the students in preparation for the workforce means that university institutions have to set aside the development of critical thinking among the students. Flores et al., (2010) added that developing critical thinking among higher institutions has not been lived yet thus leading to the development of less effective leaders. Thus, believers of utilitarian ethics would argue that if the universities shift to a market-centered curriculum, the lack of critical thinkers would create long-term societal harm despite having short-term revenue generation.

Moreover, the proponents of deontological ethics would also argue that the first choice of the institutions is immoral because it indicates that university institutions will treat the students as a means to an end of getting a good reputation, marketability, and generating better revenue. Specifically, this implies that students' value relies on their potential to enter the workforce thus undermining their dignity and autonomy. In addition, the focus on the marketability of the students puts the duty of the university to foster holistic human development at risk. The approach neglects the broader goal of human flourishing and self-determination (ChatGpt, 2024).

In summary, a market-centered curriculum is not a morally acceptable option in this ethical dilemma case because of its inconsistencies with utilitarian and deontological ethics. In utilitarianism, the long-term societal harm outweighs the short-term economic gains of the institutions. In deontology, this approach models the students as a means to an institutional end and the neglect of holistic human flourishing duty.

Underlying Immoralities Behind the Critical Thinking Approach

If universities choose to prioritize critical thinking skills over the marketability of the students, the institution would also face ethical concerns. In analyzing this option, the concern shifted toward the potential long-term consequences of neglecting workforce preparation among the students. This subsection presents the arguments why the second option of honing the critical thinking skills of the students as the focus of the curriculum is also immoral. This covered deontological and virtue ethics.

From the standpoint of deontological ethics, merely focusing on the development of critical thinking skills neglects the institution's duties of preparing the students for the workforce and economic future. The action also undermines the autonomy of the students in choosing their career paths, thus hindering deontological morality. It was found from the study of Jackson (2015) that several individuals who had barriers to work-integrated learning felt that their placements in the workforce were offering limited opportunities. Thus, choosing this option could potentially result in the institution's neglect of helping the students reach their full potential. Solely focusing on critical thinking skills while leaving behind other essential skills to meet the practical demands of society also lets the students be unprepared for the challenges that they will face in the real world (ChatGpt, 2024)

In summary, the pursuit of critical thinking skills offers a promising benefit in terms of intellectual capacity. However, this choice may also be seen as immoral under deontology and virtue ethics. In deontology, the choice reprimands the ethical duty to prepare students for the workforce in a way that respects their autonomy and fulfills their potential and autonomy in their life beyond academia.
To recap, this study presented the case of a higher education institution that faces an ethical dilemma on the marketability of the students. Two choices were considered in this case; (1) To target the needs of society in the workforce as a form of marketing and (2) to foster critical thinking skills among the students. It can be implied that neither of the two choices would fully give an institution a morally acceptable option as both choices have a fair share of counterarguments from the perspectives of utilitarianism and deontology.

Related Professional Code of ethics

This section introduces the professional code of ethics related to the functions of school administrators particularly in the higher education context. This study utilized ethical principles adapted from different documents involving codes of ethics among higher institutions First, the American Association of University Administrators (AAUA) mandates HEIs to adhere to the highest level of academic integrity. The codes lifted from the International Association of Universities and the Magna Charta Observatory (IAU-MCO) will focus on the alignment of marketing strategies with core institutional values and the promotion of critical thinking and critical analysis. Furthermore, the mandate of respecting the dignity and psychic integrity of the beneficiaries and stakeholders of HEIs and the mandate to refrain from seeking managerial profit were lifted from the code of ethical practice presented in the Ministry of Education and Science of the Republic of Armenia.

American Association of University Administrators

The American Association of University Administrators (AAUA) is a state-recognized professional organization that fosters effective management and leadership among colleges and universities. It serves as a platform to share resources, offer support and professional development authorities, and address the challenges in institutional administration. One of the nine principles discussed by AAUA recognized the commitment of higher education to the highest level of integrity. Institutions shall strictly adhere to honest behaviors to establish the trust of stakeholders. Universities shall not make deceptive claims or engage in misleading statements. Officials have to take responsibility for their actions and inactions and take relevant and prompt steps to correct any form of distortion.

International Association of Universities and the Magna Carta Observatory (IAU-MCO)

The collaboration of the International Association of Universities (IAU) and the Magna Carta Observatory (MCO) encouraged the adoption of a comprehensive Institutional Code of Ethics by higher institutions. While numerous mandates were presented, this study focused on the sections that highlighted the alignment of marketing strategies with core institutional values and the promotion of critical thinking and critical analysis. IAU-MCO recognized that the credibility and autonomy of higher education institutions rest on the quality of their services, integrity, and transparency of procedures. Section 3E on Procedures, Practices, and Actors mentioned that the pursuit of individual and institutional reputation must be anchored to the institution's commitment to the provision of accurate and factual information. It must also reflect their respective mission and principles of academic freedom. Any inappropriate or untruthful pursuit of materials must be sanctioned accordingly. This code of ethics as formulated by the IAU-MCO is related to the current stated study because it emphasizes the need for honesty, integrity, and alignment of the marketing strategies with their core institutional values

Moreover, Section 3G of the similar code mandates university institutions to promote critical analysis, freedom of speech, and reasoned debates by guaranteeing academic freedom within the profession. This also serves as a mandate to allow all members of the academic community to express themselves freely and instill in the students the capacity for reasoned dialogue. This code is related to the current study because it implicitly aligns with the broader mandate of the universities to instill critical thinking skills among the students. For students to achieve critical thinking skills, they must be exposed to diverse perspectives and be able to challenge ideas being presented to them.

In conclusion, IAU-MCO has encouraged transparency and the alignment of institutional practices with its core values. Ethical marketing practices empower the students while reinforcing the role of universities as a space for truth, integrity, credibility, and intellectual growth.

Codes of Ethics for Actors in Higher Education Institutions (Republic of Armenia)

This document aimed to set out a framework for codes of practice for ethical conduct in higher education institutions in the Republic of Armenia. This will cover the notion of using students as a means to an end of generating revenue and profit.
In this document, the governing bodies of higher education institutions were mandated to place the interests of the institution above personal interests. This includes seeking profit from their positions unless otherwise stated in a legislative force. Should be enacted, marketing the employability potential of the students for the sake of seeking a good reputation and publicity is not anchored in this code. The document also mandated institutional managers to show respect for the dignity of the physical and psychic integrity of the stakeholders involved in HEIs, including the students.

In sum, this document emphasized the ethical responsibilities of institutional managers in upholding integrity, respect, and dignity for stakeholders. This included refraining from the practice of exploitive marketing approaches in building reputation. Altogether, the ethical frameworks emphasized transparency, integrity, and respect for the dignity of stakeholders while doing their primary mandate to educate and empower the students. While there is a limited number of codes that highlight the ethical mandates of higher institutions, it is important to note that fabricating such documents plays an important role in guiding the behavior, decisions, and actions of the organizations to ensure integrity, respect, and accountability.

Analysis of the Ethical Dilemma

It was presented in previous sections the ethical dilemma of university administrators wherein they have to decide whether the university should focus on implementing market-centered curriculum or critical-thinking centered learning. It was established that neither of these choices is ethically good in reference to the normative ethics.
This analysis in resolving the dilemma attempted to provide an alternative solution which finds a balance and common ground between the two established choices. The first subsection presents the resolution to the ethical dilemma while the succeeding subsections justify the morality and acceptability of the alternative choice through the lens of utilitarianism and deontology. Arguments were backed up with related professional code of ethics. Tables were used to briefly summarize the description of the ethical dilemma.

The Resolution

This subsection briefly describes the proposed approach in balancing the market-driven and critical-thinking curriculum in higher education. In a balanced approach, the universities are encouraged to create a curriculum that caters both of the choices in the ethical dilemma. The bottomline in this approach is to create a well-rounded learning experience for the students that equips them with practical workforce skills without compromising their ability to think critically to foster intellectual growth.

Some of the key aspects in considering the balanced approach includes interdisciplinary programs and an integrated curriculum design. Pragmatic learning must be an enhancement and application which bridges the gap of theory and practice. Collaborative efforts are encouraged to engage industry professionals in curriculum development to ensure depth of knowledge and skills. In this approach, universities get to develop learners who are both skillful and thoughtful. Through careful consideration of the strengths and benefits of both spectrums, universities can ensure that they meet the dual role expectations of the society from them. This balanced approach navigates through the imperatives of normative ethics while addressing practical realities of the business nature of university institutions.

Justification through the Lens of Utilitarianism

This subsection presents the arguments why achieving a balance between the two prescribed choices is more acceptable for utilitarians. Utilitarians' concern is how to increase net utility. Their moral theory is based on the principle of utility which states that "the morally right action is the action that produces the most good" (Driver, 2014). Table 1 reviews how prioritizing either market-driven or critical thinking approaches produce less benefits.

Market-Driven Curriculum	Critical-Thinking Curriculum
It leads to the production of less effective leaders in the longer run (Flores, et al., 2010) because universities would fail to develop critical thinkers.	It leads to an ill-prepared workforce which is essential to progression and development of any state (Tharpe, 2022).

Table 1. Inconsistencies of Market-Driven and Critical-Thinking Approach with Utilitarianism

It is clear that the dominance of each approach in higher education will produce immoralities and negative effects. Having a balance of both market-driven curriculum to foster work-ready skills and the critical-thinking curriculum offers the maximum benefit not just to the students but the entire state as well. The pursuit of developing students to engage in abstract and critical thinking does not literally equate in sacrificing the practical and marketable skills needed by the workforce. Through this balanced approach, universities will be able to cater both essential skills rather than absolutely choosing one side. As a result, students will develop their full potential beyond academia.

The Deontological Approach

This subsection presents the arguments why achieving a balance between the two prescribed choices is more acceptable to the believers of Kantian Ethics. Kant believes that morality must be rational. His morality models science which seeks to discover universal laws that govern the natural world (Karnak et al., 2019). Table 2 reviews how prioritizing either market-driven or critical thinking approaches violates deontological ethics.

Market-Driven Curriculum	Critical-Thinking Curriculum
Neglects the duty of the institution to develop critical analysis among the students.	Neglects the institution's duties of preparing the students for the workforce and economic future
It treats the students as a means to an end of getting a good reputation and higher revenues (Natale and Doran, 2012).	

Table 2. Inconsistencies of Market-Driven and Critical-Thinking Approach with Deontology

Through the International Association of Universities and the Magna Carta Observatory (IAU-MCO), institutions must promote critical analysis, freedom of speech, and reasoned debates by guaranteeing academic freedom within the profession. However, focusing on this spectrum indicates a neglect to the expected duty of the universities in preparing for the workforce beyond academia. Stephen and Fru (2023) also added that employability skills are essential outcomes of a university degree. El-Sakran also revealed that employers are now increasingly looking for competencies beyond academic qualifications. The market driven approach is also essential and cannot be taken out of the picture. Therefore, having the balance of market-driven and critical thinking skills allows the universities to perform both duties without undermining integral skills. This leads to a holistic development that fosters intellectual growth, workforce skills, and sure life-long learning.

For the case of market-driven approach wherein the students were perceived as means for school marketing purposes, it can be addressed by following the ethical code of conduct as presented by the American Association of University Administrators. Here, institutions shall strictly adhere to honest behaviors to establish the trust of stakeholders. Universities shall not make deceptive claims or engage in misleading statements. This means that universities have to be transparent of their goals and that their marketing strategies must be aligned with their core values. In such a way, the universities may continue their business affairs while respecting the dignity of physical and psychic integrity of the stakeholders. This further aligns with the Codes of Ethics for Actors in Higher Education Institutions (Republic of Armenia).

This ethical principle provided the two approaches with the right point of view in terms of the education institutions' duties and responsibilities. Focusing and choosing one dilemma will eventually have an effect on the other. Yet, higher education institutions may preserve their identity while adhering to the needs of the economy of this fast changing world.

Addressing the Invisible Forces

Establishing a balance between industry-aligned skills and critical thinking skills offers promising results that aligns with the norms of morality. However, it will be a challenge for the universities to implement these because of the aforementioned invisible forces which drive the shift towards contemporary education or the industry-aligned curriculum. This subsection analyzes how universities could address these invisible forces without jeopardizing the benefits of critical thinking.

It is suggested that universities balance the skills-based approach with critical thinking skills by having a strong regulation and audit of the university's curriculum and syllabus. Conducting stakeholders' meetings with industry partners and scholars may help to address the forces of this invisible hand. Focus group discussion among industry partners and academicians may also improve and address this issue. Engaging with all stakeholders provides a better understanding of the reasons or theories behind the industry that can be further homed in a cademia. This process is attributed to the process called structured planning as proposed by Golden (2023).

Addressing the invisible forces means focusing on what is greater or lesser, it is all about striking the balance between the two forces that truly help the academe to become more adaptable in this 21st century and for the next years to come. Theories, frameworks, and paradigms must evolve in order to sustain critical thinking and have these theories put into action in the industry. Again, the study does not prove which of the two is the best skill that should be developed in students, rather the study has provided what ethical principle it falls under and how it can be addressed.

Conclusion and Implications

The central point of this paper is to understand the case of the Marketization of Education written by Natale and Doran, identify the ethical dilemma, and have it analyzed in different lenses of ethical principles which are presented in the latter parts of the chapter highlighting the principles of utilitarianism and deontology. In the case, two choices were considered in this case: (1) To target the needs of society in the workforce as a form of marketing and (2) to foster critical thinking skills among the students. Neither of the two choices would fully give an institution a morally acceptable option as both choices has a fair share of counterarguments from the perspectives of utilitarianism and deontology.

With the findings of the study, the authors recommend that higher academic institutions balance the approach in marketing and in critical thinking. It shows that the guiding principles of ethics have their pros and cons. It's still up to the university officials to decide what principle can be adopted in making such a decision. The balance between the two approaches can promote the highest benefit as it caters both necessary skills needed by the students beyond academia. The alternative option also poses a promising effort of the universities in performing both of its duties in enhancing critical thinking analysis while preparing them for the workforce. Adhering to the code of ethics in maintaining transparency and highest level of integrity resolves the conflict of marketing the students to an end. This saves the university from jeopardizing the dignity of its own students.

Universities may also consider the related code of ethics presented in this study in establishing their own code of ethics regarding pedagogy and curriculum considering the dilemmas presented. Also, it is highly recommended that further analysis and extended studies be conducted by other proponents with other case studies in order to understand other ethical principles besides utilitarianism, deontology, and virtue ethics.

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Data Availability Statement

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Appendices

No appendices are included in this article.