

ETHICS & PROFESSIONALISM

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TOPIC

Define ethical and professional behaviour

Professionalism

- Professionalism is when a person acquires specialised knowledge and skills to become competent to practice a specific job/profession.
- Professional behaviour means that you take pride in your work and always adhere to the required standards of your profession

Ethics

- Ethics is guided by principles of what is right, wrong, and acceptable behaviour, following what society and individuals regard as good values.
- Ethics in the workplace it is expected from every employee to perform in accordance with a code of conduct.

Differentiate/Distinguish between the differences between professionalism and ethics

PROFESSIONALISM	ETHICS
Refers to when a person acquires knowledge and skills to practice a specific job or profession.	Refers to the principles of right and wrong and what is acceptable in society.
Set of standards of expected behaviour.	Conforms to a set of values that are morally acceptable within a business or organisation.
Focuses on upholding the reputation of a business or profession.	Focuses on developing a moral compass for decision-making.

Principles of professionalism and ethics

1. COMPETENCE

- Is when employees use their knowledge, skills, and ability in their area of expertise for the good of the organisation, society and the environment.

2. INTEGRITY

- Integrity means to perform all your work-related duties in the correct manner even when you are not being monitored.
- This means that all employees work and conduct themselves with integrity, honesty, and according to accepted standards of professional conduct and the law.

3. RESPECT

- Respect is the behaviour, performance, and the way in which employees conduct themselves in the workplace.
- Employees who work in a respectful environment will have a positive attitude and are motivated to work at their best.

4. OBJECTIVITY

- Employees should remain objective and act in a fair manner to all without any bias or favour

5. CONFIDENTIALITY

- Refers to non-disclosure of any confidential client or business information without permission.

6. TRANSPARENCY

- Businesses should pay attention to transparency and ensure that full disclosure is made when required.

7. CONFLICT OF INTEREST

- Employees should avoid conflict of interest situations within the business environment.
- a situation in which the concerns or aims of two different parties are incompatible.

8. COMMITMENT

- Employees are to respect the dignity and rights of others in the workplace, as well as the image of the profession or business within which they work.

9. CARING

- Businesses or large organisations should practice social responsibility to ensure that they give back to poor communities.

10. ENVIRONMENTAL RESPONSIBILITY

- Businesses should operate in a manner that ensures that the environment is taken care of in a sustainable manner for the benefit of future generations.

Briefly explain the following theories of ethics that are applicable to the workplace:

Consequential theory

- The **consequentialist theory** suggest that an action is good or bad depending on its outcome.
- It tries to answer the ethical questions about right or wrong and how we arrive at this answer.
- It determines whether to do or not do something based on the expected result of the action.
- If the expected result is good then, it's ethically right to do; if the expected result is bad, then it is ethically wrong to do.

The common good approach

- The **common good approach** ensures that business values and ethical principles are in line with the society in which the business operates.
- It recognises that ethics and values vary from area to area, and from country to country.

The rights approach

- The focus of the **rights approach** is on individual rights – where people are treated with respect and dignity.
- Business should not impose its mission or products on people.
- Employees working within a business should not be ill treated for any reason.

Differentiate/Distinguish between good and bad decisions and give examples of each.

GOOD DECISIONS

- Good business decisions are usually taken after giving a situation a lot of thought and considering ethical principles attached to it.
- These decisions are ones that businesses will not regret as it will impact positively on their operations.
- It is in the best interest of individuals and businesses to follow their instincts once they have all the facts when making these decisions.

EXAMPLE

An example of a good decision is when an up and coming business (after careful thought and planning) decides to expand its premises to accommodate additional operational activities. In the longterm, the decision taken will increase the value and profits of the business.

BAD DECISIONS

- Bad business decisions are made on the spur of the moment without critical analysing or consulting due process.
- The inputs of all business role players may not be considered when making these decisions.
- As businesses may not have taken all the correct information into account, these decisions could be regretted.

EXAMPLE:

An example of such a decision is when businesses employ staff in a position when they do not have adequate job experience. This may result in losses for the business as the employee/s may not be able to perform their work at the expected level.

Suggest/Recommend ways in which professional, responsible, ethical and effective business

- The business should ensure that they pay employees fair wages and salaries which corresponds to the requirements of the BCEA.
- Employees should be paid for working overtime and on public holidays.
- The business should respect employees and treat them with dignity by recognising the value of their human capital for work well done.
- All goods and services produced should be done according to the required standards and ethical requirements.

Explain/Discuss the advantages/benefits of ethical business ventures.

- Businesses can build a good reputation and attract more investors, thus increasing profitability.
- Customer loyalty is created and nurtured, and a positive business image will be created.
- Staff morale can be built and maintained by paying employees fairly.
- Staff who are hard-working and productive will be loyal and dedicated to the business.

Evaluate a code of ethics for any business and make recommendations for improvement.

Discuss different perspectives on ethics

- The way in which an employee views ethical perspectives is determined by their culture, religion, education and background.
- The employees background will influence the way in which he/she will respond to ethical dilemmas within the business.
- In ethics there is no absolute right or wrong. Businesses will manage ethical dilemmas according to what is deemed acceptable or not according to their code of ethics or business code of conduct.
- Businesses are entitled to decide the kinds of behaviour that it demands from its employees and customers.