Importance of Engineering Ethics in Business Environment- With Reference to Views of Engineering Students

D.P.S. Wijesinghe[1], V.P.T. Jayawardane[2]

Introduction

Professional engineers have a huge responsibility towards the general public and employers. Engineering Ethics guide and remind professional engineers regarding their responsibilities. However, most of the engineers have to work in business environments irrespective of their technical disciplines. Therefore, every day in their professional life engineers have to deal with ethically difficult situations in business activities. Expertise in engineering, Business Management and Engineering Ethics is highly required for professional engineers in order to discharge their services in a sustainable manner. However, existing literature reveals that majority of engineering undergraduates from most of the countries are having less interest and attention towards non-technical subjects like Engineering Ethics. Therefore, the purpose of this research was to identify the perception of Sri Lankan engineering students on Engineering Ethics.

Literature Review

Engineering profession is regulated by a set of established regulations in order to establish and maintain a high standard of integrity, skills and ethical practice in the engineering profession (Khulief, 2008). Because of that, accredited engineering degree programs offer Ethics modules for their undergraduates ("Criteria for Accrediting Engineering Programs, 2016 – 2017 | ABET," 2018). Therefore, most of the state universities in Sri Lanka, have introduced such Ethics modules for their students. The Institution of Engineers Sri Lanka (IESL), as the apex body which govern professional engineers in Sri Lanka has introduced code of Ethics for engineers ("The Institution of Engineers Sri Lanka - Code of Ethics," 2013). Those Ethics modules have been developed based on that Code of Ethics introduced by IESL. Most referred Engineering Ethics text book in the world highlights the existing negative perception of majority of engineering students on Ethics as ''Why should I study Ethics?'' Engineers and engineering students often ask this question when the subject of Engineering Ethics is raised (Harris, Pritchard, & Rabins, 2009). As engineering students are always studying technical matters, this common misunderstanding may exist during their undergraduate period. A recent research conducted by Balakrishnan & Tarlochan, (2015) focussing Malaysian engineering undergraduates, have identified majority of their students were having negative perception on Engineering Ethics. Since this kind of research has not

---

[1]*praneeth@is.ruh.ac.lk , Faculty of Engineering, University of Ruhuna, Sri Lanka*