

# Ethics As The Engine Unlocking The True Power Of Education



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## Introduction

Private higher education has expanded rapidly over the past two decades, positioning itself as a flexible industry aligned alternative to public institutions. Public universities are state funded while private higher education institutions are privately funded. Private higher education institutions are often praised for their responsiveness to labour market demands, innovation in delivery and focus on employability. The battle is between receiving the right students, pushing output and ethical reasoning.

Recent public discourse in south Africa reflects widespread concern over ethical breaches over individuals who are highly educated and professionally credentialed. This asks the question are graduates ethically ready for the workplace? From a private higher education perspective these challenges institutions to re-examine not only what is taught but what values are cultivated.

## The ethics imperative

Private higher education institutions operate within a competitive educational marketplace where institutional credibility is closely tied to graduate output and regulatory compliance. According to the latest department of education statistics, -



***Are graduates ethically ready for the workplace?***

there are 26 public universities and approximately 131 private higher education institutions in South Africa. Trust from students, employers, regulators and society is maintained not only by knowledge transfer but by moral accountability. Ethical reasoning equips students to evaluate decisions beyond profitability enabling them to consider social impact and long-term consequences of actions. If an ethical foundation is not laid, institutions risk producing graduates who are knowledge adept but ethically disengaged.

## Embedding ethics across private higher education curricula

An institutional wide approach is required from private higher educational institutions rather than introducing individual modules on ethics. Ethical reasoning should be integrated across disciplines, including business and information technology. This integration allows students to engage with ethical dilemmas specific to their fields (Nguyen et al., 2024).

## Ethical leadership and accountability

Ethical education in private higher education institutions extends beyond student outcomes to institutional leadership and governance. Ethical leadership shows fairness, transparency and accountability reinforcing an organisational culture that values integrity (Botha & Naidoo, 2022). Accountability is critical in the private educational sector as institutions demonstrate compliance with the governing authorities while keeping an eye on survival and growth.



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An inclusion of ethics at academic and management level strengthens correct decision making in the organisation.

### **Preparing graduates for emerging ethical challenges**

Private higher education institutions are well positioned to respond to emerging ethical challenges, , including artificial intelligence and financial by integrating ethics into curricula, using case studies and simulations. Ethical literacy equips graduates to to act with clarity and conscience, -

***“An inclusion of ethics strengthens correct decision making”***

rather than relying solely on regulatory compliance (Floridi et al.,2022). By setting an ethical foundation private higher education institution can differentiate themselves not only through employability -

outcomes but through the quality of leadership the graduates embody.

### **Conclusion**

While knowledge and technical skills are important in higher education, an ethical foundation is imperative for both staff and students in organisations. Ethics must be understood as the engine that unlocks the true power of education in private higher education institutions. Ethical reasoning in curricula should be emphasised so that graduates will not only be skilled but trustworthy and responsible in the workplace. In a country that is reflecting on ethical issues, private higher education -



institutions can groom ethical leaders. It is not just what graduates can do but the way they impart moral values to society.

