

## **Using the student learning portfolio in the teaching of Professional Ethics: A virtue-centred/principles-based approach**

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In light of the global financial crisis of 2008 the demand for ethically-sensitive and morally-competent professionals have been at the forefront: especially those with some formal training. This paper proposes that a virtue-centred/principles-based approach addresses the ethical deficit of ethical sensitivity and moral competencies: principles provide guidance to the question *what is the right thing to do* and virtues address the issue of *what sort of person I ought to be in order to do the right thing*. In this context, the major research question this study seeks to answer is “does a virtue-centred/principles-based approach to teaching professional ethics affect moral competencies of students?” A Moral Competency Inventory (MCI) instrument that measures 10 moral competencies was administered to students in a final year undergraduate course at of The University of the West Indies, St. Augustine. Fifty-six cases which comprised two groups were analysed: the MCI instrument was administered on separate occasions at the start and at the end of the course. The development of a Student Learning Portfolio which incorporates the virtue-centred/principles-based approach was the main intervention strategy used to facilitate a self-management change. Quantitative (factor analysis, multivariate analysis of variance and discriminant analysis) and qualitative (content analysis) techniques were used for data analysis. The results indicate that there is statistically significant difference between the MCI scores at the start and the end of the professional ethics course suggesting that the teaching approach and assessment mechanisms adopted were effective in improving moral competencies. In particular, individual moral competencies are more likely to be affected than group competencies. Additionally, the constructs that are most influenced by the intervention strategies are students standing up for what they believe is right, the ability to let go of their own mistakes, and the ability to let go of others’ mistakes.

**Key words:** student learning portfolio, moral competency, professional ethics, virtue, principles, reflective practice

### **Introduction**

In light of the global financial crisis of 2008 the demand for ethically-sensitive and morally-competent professionals have been at the forefront: especially those with some formal training. This paper proposes that a virtue-centred/principles-based approach addresses the ethical deficit of ethical sensitivity and moral competencies:

principles provide guidance to the question *what is the right thing to do* and virtues address the issue of *what sort of person I ought to be in order to do the right thing*. In our case, moral competencies are reflected in the development of the virtues relevant to professional life and pre-suppose that one has knowledge of what is the right thing to do. As such, this paper seeks to address the issue of whether a virtue-centred/principles-based approach to teaching professional ethics affect moral competencies of students in a final year undergraduate course at The University of the West Indies (UWI), St. Augustine. The second section of this paper discusses the different approaches to the teaching of professional ethics, and in particular, makes a case for the virtue-centred/principles-based approach. This approach is developed within a Student Learning Portfolio (SLP) which includes critical summaries of weekly assigned readings, a record of students' moral development plan, and practices to build community life including a classroom climate that is conducive to learning. A reflective essay that captures these three dimensions is the culmination of the course experience. This is elaborated in the third section which discusses the characteristics of the SLP (including advantages and disadvantages). Ultimately, the aim of professional and/or moral life is attaining emancipation (especially from powerful environment and situational factors which encourages unethical behaviour) and achieving empowerment (through recognition of one's dignity). The third section of the paper deals with the research methodology, in particular, the Moral Competency Inventory (MCI) instrument which captures ten moral competencies or virtues is presented. Three multivariate data analysis techniques are used to investigate the research question in providing an overview or summary statistics: exploratory factor analysis examines the factor structure of the competencies, multivariate analysis of variance examines whether significant effects exist among the different group outcomes, and multiple discriminant analysis was employed to determine which variables account for most of the variations among the group outcomes. To explore the richness and depth of the research findings, content analysis was used to complement the quantitative analysis for triangulation purposes. The final section discusses and summarises these findings (including the importance of the classroom climate).

### **Teaching Professional Ethics**

The course in Professional Ethics was developed as a response to the global financial crisis of 2008 which was caused by a number of factors at the levels of the individual (for example, unrealistic assessment of liquidity risks, those who pursued quick and easy gains, lax enforcement of regulations, violation of fiduciary duties, etc.), the organisation (compensation packages that conflict with corporate objectives, insufficient and unsatisfactorily accounting standards, lack of board of directors risk oversight, etc.), and the political philosophy, namely, liberal capitalists mechanisms (growth and complexities of sophisticated financial instruments, deregulation of certain sectors that encouraged excessive risk-taking, errors in fiscal and monetary policies, etc.). Ultimately, it is not organisations and market mechanisms that fail,

but rather more fundamentally the flawed judgments and unethical actions of the individual economic agent and decision-maker. Professional ethics precisely targets the individual by developing discretionary judgment based on ethical and technical competencies directed toward providing high-quality service to others. The course, which was first introduced in 2011 and was offered to a target audience of final year undergraduate students at The University of the West Indies (St. Augustine Campus), uses a virtue-centred/principles-based approach to attempt to develop students' moral competencies which include personal integrity and responsibility, compassion and forgiveness, humility and detachment. Rather than focusing on a specific profession or considering several professions, the course was designed to be a standalone course that can be applied across disciplines and professions. The course does not focus on stereotypical or emerging professions (for example, medicine, law, engineering, health-care, education, finance and investment, etc.) but considers shared ways in which one performs one's work. The focus is on the moral relevance of how one does one's work (professional work) rather than what one actually does as a job and encompasses all honest and legitimate professions and occupations. To reflect this feature of professional work and shared values, the course has no pre-requisites and is open to any undergraduate student of the university.

Basically, five approaches to the delivery of professional ethics can be identified from the literature (1) legalistic (emphasises the application of professional codes of ethics and conduct), (2) meta-principles (uses universal principles of autonomy, non-maleficence, beneficence, justice, respect, fidelity, etc.), (3) traditional (focuses on ethical decision-making using ethical theories), (4) philosophical (focuses on ethical thinking using classical metaphysical, epistemological, political and social concepts), and (5) virtues (integrates cognitive and emotional elements that develop a more personal development oriented approach). Perhaps the most popular approach of providing guidance to professional ethics is by means of professional codes of ethics and conduct. This legalistic approach often falls under the jurisdiction of professional associations that have responsibility in developing such codes and offer relevant training in their applications. Codes can also be aspirational which are usually less precise and more abstract than its legalistic or prescriptive counterpart in providing professionals with guidelines of behaviour to which they should aspire (Gordon-Till, 2002).

Jones, Rivas and Mancillas (2009) propose a model for teaching that uses five ethical meta-principles that have significant implications for professional practice: (1) non-maleficence (usually considered the most important, this principle deals with the idea of doing no/minimizing harm to the various stakeholders), beneficence (this principle emphasizes the responsibility to do good and is complementary to non-maleficence), (3) autonomy (this principle is usually associated with respect for human dignity and includes the state or quality of self-governance), (4) fairness (this principle conveys the idea of justice in providing treatments and services which are due to others, and (5) fidelity ( this principle builds trust by maintaining confidentiality and providing clients with sufficient and

relevant information). Principles are fundamental norms for directing behaviour and they express the moral duty to behave in an upright or ethical manner.

The traditional approach is common in most university courses especially in business and professional ethics (Fisher & Lovell, 2009; Weiss, 2009; Brooks & Dunn, 2010). It focuses on normative ethical theories that are at the basis of ethical decision-making models. Some major theories include utilitarianism (an action is judged right or good on the basis of its consequences), universalism or deontological ethics (the right thing must always be done even if doing the wrong thing would do the most good for the most people), rights (individual entitlements that attempts to guarantee pursuit of freedom of speech, choice, happiness and self-respect), justice (focuses on equitable and fair distribution of wealth and burden), ethical relativism (one sets one's own moral standards), communitarianism (an approach that argues that people are inherently social and that they can only achieve their moral potential through community), ethical egoism (one pursues one's interests by applying one's reason in achieving one's own best interest, discourse ethics (involves the process of rational debate to arrive at a resolution of ethical issues).

Klonoski (2003) argues that there is a need in professional ethics education to include more discussion of classical metaphysical, epistemological, political, and social topics and concepts that focus on perennial concerns which undergird ethical dilemmas and contemporary issues. For example, a reflection on Max Weber's notion of the spirit of capitalism modern capitalism had been liberated from its Protestant work ethics and other religious and social supports that fostered traditional values such as modesty, honesty, the value of labour, the desire to work hard and to take pride in that work (p. 32). Such philosophical reflections can help students better appreciate contemporary ethical issues such as the underlying causes of the global financial crisis.

Finally, Griseri (2002) argues for a virtues approach that integrates the emotional and cognitive elements of one's ethical perception and behaviour. He notes that the root of the idea is that ethics is to be understood not in terms of actions (as normative ethics promote) but in terms of character and personality development of individuals. Blackburn and McGhee (2004) argue that there is a link between particular virtues (honesty, fairness, trustworthiness, toughness, loyalty, honour, empathy, and self-control) and excellent practice in that the former contribute to the advancement of the proper goals of business represented by empowerment, autonomy and transformation of people. Mele (2005) points out that this approach can provide motivation and could also counter the concept of ethical training which is reduced to mere application of rules or normative theories.

In order to avoid overlap and to focus on specific learning outcomes within an overall departmental teaching strategy, the design of the professional ethics course incorporates both the principles and virtue ethics approaches since the normative ethical theories (traditional approach) are covered in another undergraduate course on business ethics, training in codes of ethics and conduct (legalistic approach) falls under the ambit of national or professional associations, and the philosophical approach is grounded in the humanities. The virtue-centred/

principles-based approach complement each other: principles and rules are guide to the question *what is the right thing to do* while the virtue ethics approach is grounded in the question *what sort of person ought I to be in order to do the right thing*. Combining these approaches then is not mutually exclusive and is integrated using a Student Learning Portfolio (discussed in the next section) that incorporates the appropriate teaching methodologies which align the learning outcomes with the assessment structure. One of the primary objectives of the course is to impress upon students the importance of taking responsibility for educating themselves through ownership of their learning and accepting responsibility for their actions and consequences. Specific learning outcomes include the ability to analyse one's actions and to take responsibility for them, the ability to understand one's role in professional life, the knowledge to contribute to building an ethical culture, and the skills required for prudent judgment and moral reasoning that are essential for professional conduct. Teaching methodologies included role-playing and demonstrations, simulations and debates, the use of movies and video-clips (including YouTube), lectures and discussions. These methodologies are primarily targeted to a classroom experience that attempts to achieve the learning outcomes by personal reflection and example.

### **The student learning portfolio**

In recent times, innovation in educational theory and practice has been making a strong case for the transition from the traditional teacher-centred process to one that is more student-centred (Thomas et al., 2004; Barr & Tagg, 1995; Neo & Neo, 2011; Partin & Worch, 2011). As higher education moves from the former to the latter, assessment and evidence of performance exhibiting what students know, understand and can do as a result of their educational experiences has obtained a higher degree of importance (Hattie & Timperley, 2007; Burchard & Swerdzewski 2009; Zubizarreta & Mills, 2009; Sobel & Wolf, 2011). In other words, the implications for developing higher order thinking skills and an engagement in active learning is paramount in determining the type of student-centred teaching practices that should be adopted and implemented. One such assessment tool in ascertaining what each student has learnt is the concept of the Student Learning Portfolio (SLP). Portfolios can provide the lecturer with a body of student work that shows growth in performance, illustrates a range of quality, or demonstrates achievement of specific skills. In other words, the use of portfolios allows for the possibility to move towards what Mueller (2005) refers to as authentic assessment as opposed to traditional examination. With its focus on learning, students are encouraged to come to terms self-consciously with responsibility to take ownership of their learning over the duration of an academic endeavour. Davies and Le Mathieu (2003) provide example where portfolios are used in different ways in different classrooms to show learning to specific audiences in different areas including: early childhood, students who have special needs, teacher education programmes, science education, service learning, and more traditionally in performance-based

disciplines such as music, fine arts, journalism and other technical/professional areas.

According to Zubizarreta and Mills (2009), the portfolio approach to gauging students' learning is a compelling and diverse method of recording intellectual growth which can lead them to a higher-order, critically reflective process which enriches their educational experience and helps transform them into self-directed, reflective learners. A portfolio is a collection of written accounts of events and activities experienced by an individual, kept in the form of a journal. It is a purposeful selection of samples of a student's work accumulated throughout an assessment period. Portfolio-based learning is an approach firmly rooted in the principles of experiential learning which is a cyclical process of recording, reviewing, reflecting and learning from events that are embedded in a holistic model of the learning process on how people learn, grow and develop (Grant, 1999; Kolb et al., 2000). The inherent value of portfolios in improving student learning resides in engaging students, not only in collecting representative samples of their work for assessment and evaluation, but also in addressing critically stimulating questions that focus on achievements as positive contributions, unlike the traditional examination which is designed to uncover what the learner has failed to achieve.

McIntosh (2009) identifies three basic forms of portfolios in use in higher education: working portfolios; showcase portfolios; and assessment portfolios. Working portfolios are designed to be on-going interchanges between educators and their students. Such interactions allow for the identification of the strengths and weaknesses of students which can be readily diagnosed and treated by providing guidance on how students can improve upon their work. With constant feedback from the lecturer, the students can develop their reflective skills and learn to be self-evaluative by working on the projects within the portfolio. The showcase portfolios enable students to include their best work and define who they are in terms of their culture, learning, experiences, and beliefs. The main objective of the showcase portfolio is to allow students to select their best work from a variety of experiences to demonstrate their skills and learning. The primary purpose of an assessment portfolio is to document a continuous map what the student learned during the course and how it is connected to the student's intellectual, personal, ethical, and spiritual development. Items in an assessment portfolio are designed to help the student manifest learning related to specific course objectives defined in the course outline/syllabus. In other words, the items in the portfolio must show that the student has achieved the intended learning outcomes of the class. Though these three basic forms appear to be the most common cited, other researchers identify different categories. For example, Haladyn (1997) classifies five types (ideal, showcase, documentation, evaluation, and class portfolios), and Melograno (2000) identifies nine types (personal, working, record-keeping, group, thematic, integrated, showcase, electronic, and multiyear).

The benefit to students is evidenced by an opportunity for mentored, critical reflection as well as an immediate assessment of learning grounded in

direct outcomes or products, particularly when reflective learning pedagogies are carefully and intentionally integrated into courses and programs (Zubizarreta & Mills, 2009). Generally, the learning portfolio is an excellent mechanism to capture and document reflective practice (what, why and when have I learned (or not learned) and in what circumstances or under what conditions? Do I know what kind of learner I am? How does what I have learned fit into a full, continual plan for learning?) (p. 11). SLPs are also beneficial to an academic organization looking for new ways to demonstrate the value-added dimension of its influence on students. For example, Campbell et al. (2000), citing responses from a survey administered to students in a teacher-certification programme, demonstrate value-added dimensions that include: building confidence, identifying strengths and weaknesses, becoming aware of what future employers may be looking for, helping to become more organised, helping set and achieving goals, and striving for excellence and becoming professional. Moreover, the benefit of this opportunity to students is an appreciation for and understanding of the visible, recorded, shared evidence of the outcomes of their reflective learning. Moon (1999:34) summarizes various ways in which students benefit from reflective activity and organized assessment of the student learning portfolio:

- Portfolios demand time and intellectual space
- The independent and self-directing nature of the process develops a sense of ownership of the learning in the learner.
- Portfolios focus attention on particular areas of, and demand the independent ordering of, thought.
- Portfolios often draw affective function into learning, and this can bring about greater effectiveness in learning.
- The ill-structured nature of the tasks involved in portfolio development challenges a learner and increases the sophistication of the learning process.

The disadvantages of the SLP include: it is time consuming and challenging to evaluate since portfolio assessment requires a great deal of time and effort on the part of the evaluators (collecting, scoring and establishing valid scoring rubrics are challenging); students must retain and compile their own work usually outside of class management of the collection and evaluation process including the establishment of reliable and valid grading criteria is likely to be challenging; potential security concerns may arise as to whether submitted samples are the students' own work; and faculty may be concerned that there is a hidden agenda of validating their grading if the samples to be included have been previously submitted for course grades (Thomas et al. 2004; Birgen & Baki, 2007; Zubizarreta & Mills, 2009).

In order to achieve the learning outcomes, the SLP (in our case, both the working and assessment (paper-based as opposed to electronic-based) forms were integrated in the delivery of the Professional Ethics course) is the main vehicle used

to incorporate and facilitate the execution of the virtue-centred/principles-based approach in developing an individual moral plan or map of self-management. The moral development plan of self-management, developed by Goleman et al. (2002), uses a five-step process in which one takes charge of one's learning: (1) understand your ideal self (the person that you want to be), (2) recognize your real self (your actual strengths and weaknesses in the context of who you want to be), (3) develop strategies to reduce the real-ideal gap (decide how to build on your strengths and reduce the gaps between your real and ideal selves), (4) experiment with new behaviours and feelings, and (5) develop trusting relationships with those who will support your learning process. These authors argue that one does not learn (necessarily) to be a better person or a better leader by attending training programmes, but one builds human and leadership capabilities through actual life experiences. The stages of this moral development plan require a critical self-examination that leads to self-knowledge, then to self-ownership, and finally to self-giving (Helming, 1997).

The SLP facilitates the moral development plan which enables students to boost performance by requiring them to record moral development goals and outline specific actions they will take to become increasingly morally-competent. The SLP comprise three aspects. Firstly, students are required to critically summarise the assigned readings each week (this also helps them actively participate in class discussions) and to give practical ways in which the ideas can be implemented both in their personal and organizational life. Secondly, students are required to record their moral plan which is guided by a structured six step process (Lennick & Kiel, 2010): (1) describe their ideal self (identify principles, values and beliefs to them as the kind of person they would like to be), (2) document their goals (the most significant things to accomplish in all of the important areas of their lives), (3) identify the moral competencies that they need most to reach their goals (alignment worksheets are provided to assist in this activity), (4) leveraging their strongest moral competencies (for example, how can they use those competencies to get closer to their goals and in new situations), (5) reducing the moral gaps (for example, to strengthen the moral competencies that are their Achilles' heel), and (6) developing their moral development short list (three to five most important actions that can boost their moral competence). Putting their moral development plan into practice involves, for example, considering the steps they take in breaking bad habits (including vices), rewarding themselves for positive changes, and other ideas from books, seminars, mentors, etc. Finally, the third aspect includes activities to build community and create an active learning environment in order to build trust and confidence in the learning process. Young (2010) notes the importance of an active (or interactive) learning environment in which the lecturer organizes and creates situations that facilitate effective communication, motivation, engagement, excitement for learning. Each student's SLP is assessed and examined weekly with one-on-one feedback also given on a weekly basis. All three aspects are integrated in a reflective essay which is submitted for examination.

## **Research methodology**

The study examines the impact of a virtue-centred/principles-based approach to teaching professional ethics on students' moral competencies. In particular, the study investigates whether this theoretical proposition impacts positively on students' moral competencies and employs a post-positivist perspective towards scientific research. According to Creswell (2007), post-positivism research views inquiry as a series of logically related steps in data collection and data analysis. This paradigm proposes a multiple level data analysis to emphasize rigour, validity and reliability. To achieve these goals, the research used a combination of quantitative and qualitative methods in data collection. Quantitative data were collected from self-administered questionnaires and qualitatively supported with student's summary notes. Triangulating research methodologies facilitates a deeper more enriched understanding of the impact of the learning-centred approach incorporated in the SLP can have on students' moral competencies.

In order to implement the moral development plan, Lennick and Kiel (2010) develop the Moral Competency Inventory (MCI) instrument which is a self-reporting survey and self-development tool comprised of 40 items measured on a 5-point Likert scale. It attempts to identify students' weaknesses, to capitalize on their moral strengths, and to strengthen their moral skills, and captures 10 aspects of moral competencies (virtues) : (1) acting consistently with principles (integrity), (2) telling the truth (honesty), (3) standing up for what you believe is right (courage), (4) keeping promises (loyalty), (5) taking responsibility for personal choices (responsibility), (6) admitting mistakes and failures (humility), (7) embracing responsibility for serving others (justice), (8) actively caring about others (compassion), (9) ability to let go of one's own mistakes (detachment), and (10) ability to let go of others' mistakes (forgiveness). It took about one hour to complete the questionnaire: 20 minutes to complete the survey, 10 minutes to score, and 30 minutes to reflect and record the results. Students were made aware of the confidentiality of the results and to avoid two self-rating tendencies: to give high ratings on the survey items because they sound like positive things to do and to give low ratings on the survey items because they may be too hard on themselves (Lennick & Kiel, 2010).

The MCI instrument was administered to 28 students enrolled in a third year elective course in professional ethics offered to undergraduate students of The University of the West Indies, St. Augustine. A test-retest method was used to collect data on students' moral competencies. Specifically, the instrument was administered twice: in the first and last class sessions. Data collected from each of the two stages provided quantitative measure of students' moral strength and skills prior to and after exposure to the teaching approach adopted. The sample composition remained constant throughout the semester. The treatment administered is the SLP which incorporated the learning-centred approach.

### Sample description

A total of 56 questionnaires were completed and categorised into two groups (cells): before SLP and after SLP. Each cell consisted of 28 cases, which satisfied practical group analysis guidelines set out by Hair et al. (2010), that is, a minimum of 20 cases per group. Students who participated in this study were between the ages of 20 to 26 years. Seventy-five percent were female and 25% were male. The majority of students in this class pursued a management specialist degree (82%), 11% pursued management with a psychology minor, and the remaining 7% were equally divided into finance minor and tourism students. A demographical profile is presented in Table 1.

**Table 1:** Sample demographic profile.

		Age			
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	20.00	2	3.6	3.6	3.6
	21.00	26	46.4	46.4	50.0
	22.00	12	21.4	21.4	71.4
	23.00	8	14.3	14.3	85.7
	24.00	2	3.6	3.6	89.3
	25.00	4	7.1	7.1	96.4
	26.00	2	3.6	3.6	100.0
	Total	56	100.0	100.0	

  

		Gender			
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Male	14	25.0	25.0	25.0
	Female	42	75.0	75.0	100.0
	Total	56	100.0	100.0	

  

		Discipline			
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Management Studies	46	82.1	82.1	82.1
	Finance Minor	2	3.6	3.6	85.7
	Psychology Minor	6	10.7	10.7	96.4
	Tourism	2	3.6	3.6	100.0
	Total	56	100.0	100.0	

### Exploratory Factor Analysis

Exploratory factor analysis using principal component with varimax rotation was conducted on the 10 dependent MCI variables. This technique aimed to reduce the 10 moral competencies variables into a smaller number of composite dimensions with minimum loss of information. The items retained for further analyses met the specific criteria: (1) all inter-correlation coefficients exceeded the prescribed

0.3, and (2) items did not load on more than two factors. One item (telling the truth) was dropped from the analysis because of factor cross-loadings (a violation of the second criterion). The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) statistic and Bartlett’s test of sphericity for the remaining nine items were used to evaluate the suitability of employing factor analysis. Kaiser (1974) recommends a value greater than 0.5. The statistic (0.703) was well above the stipulated minimum which suggested that there were sufficient inter-correlations among items to warrant factor analysis. Through the use of factor analysis data reduction, the nine items were reduced to two factors (Table 2) based on variable loadings. These two factors explained 65% of MCI variance, well above 0.5 recommended limit (Hair et al., 2010). The first factor explained approximately 49% of total variance and comprised six items. The second factor explained approximately 16% of total variance and comprised three variables (Table 2).

**Table 2:** Factor loadings.

	Rotated Component Matrix <sup>a</sup>	
	Component	
	1	2
Acting consistently with principles, values and beliefs	.745	
Keeping promises	.797	
Taking responsibility for personal choice	.734	
Admitting mistakes and failures	.711	
Embracing responsibility for serving others		.711
Ability to let go of one’s own mistake	.782	
Standing up for what is right	.685	
Actively caring about others		.882
Ability to let go of other’s mistake		.711

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.  
 Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization  
 a. Rotation converged in 3 iterations.

In order to ascertain reliability, the Cronbach’s alpha coefficient on each factor (with values of 0.869 and 0.722) shows that the reliability was well above acceptable minimum limit of 0.6. According to Hair et al. (2010), naming factors involve a subjective interpretation of each factor structure based on loading patterns. In the case of the first factor, six items had one commonality, that is, they all relate to the individual or oneself; in the case of the second factor, all items

related to the interaction with other human beings. The first factor was therefore labelled individual competencies and the second was labelled group competencies. Both individual and group competencies are regarded as outcome variables of the prescribed SLP treatment.

### Multivariate Analysis of Variance (MANOVA) and Multiple Discriminant Analysis

A Multivariate Analysis of Variance (MANOVA) was subsequently used to analyse the effect of the two groups (before SLP and after SLP) on two dependent variables: individual competencies and group competencies. The justification for using MANOVA lies with its advantage in controlling Type I error while simultaneously analyzing multiple dependent variables. The study employed a one-way MANOVA test to ascertain whether significant group differences existed in students' MCI scores. The analysis was done using a 95% confidence level. Prior to executing MANOVA, the data were tested for homoscedasticity. Hair et al. (2010) note homoscedasticity (defined as the equality of the variance-covariance matrix across groups) as a fundamental assumption on which group analysis is built and is assessed on two levels. Firstly, the assumption is tested using the univariate Levene's test (the p-values of 0.702 and 0.454 were both non-significant indicating that the statistical assumption of homoscedasticity was met at a univariate level). The second level involved assessing scores collectively by employing the Box's M test (a non-significant p-value (0.258) suggests that collectively the assumption of homoscedasticity was met).

The next step involved testing whether both groups had different MCI outcomes. This analysis was set at a 0.05 Type 1 error rate and the significance of four multivariate statistics was calculated. These were: Pillai's criterion, Wilks' lambda, Hotelling's  $T^2$  and Roy's Largest Root (Hair et al., 2010). Each of the four statistics measured whether or not statistical differences exists across groups (Table 3).

**Table 3:** Test of group differences.

Multivariate Tests <sup>b</sup>							
Effect		Value	F	Hypothesis df	Error df	Sig	Partial Eta Squared
Intercept	Pillai's Trace	.000	.000 <sup>a</sup>	2.000	53.000	1.000	.000
	Wilks' Lambda	1.000	.000 <sup>a</sup>	2.000	53.000	1.000	.000
	Hotelling's Trace	.000	.000 <sup>a</sup>	2.000	53.000	1.000	.000
	Roy's Largest Root	.000	.000 <sup>a</sup>	2.000	53.000	1.000	.000
GROUP	Pillai's Trace	.262	9.388 <sup>a</sup>	2.000	53.000	.000	.262
	Wilks' Lmabda	.738	9.388 <sup>a</sup>	2.000	53.000	.000	.262
	Hotelling's Trace	.354	9.388 <sup>a</sup>	2.000	53.000	.000	.262
	Roy's Largest Root	.354	9.388 <sup>a</sup>	2.000	53.000	.000	.262

a. Exact statistic

b. Design: Intercept + GROUP

In this two-group analysis situation, all four multivariate techniques had significant p-values (0.000). This suggested that overall, students' MCI scores differed across groups. In other words, students' MCI scores before exposure to the SLP was significantly different to their MCI scores after the SLP treatment. This result supports the proposition that exposure to the SLP does have an effect on students' moral competencies. To examine which group explained the largest variation in the students' MCI score, univariate statistical analysis was performed (Table 4) for individual and group competencies.

**Table 4:** Univariate tests for individual outcomes

Univariate Test Results							
Source	Dependent Variable	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
Contrast	individualcompet	8.632	1	8.632	10.053	.003	-.157
	groupcompet	5.756	1	5.756	6.312	.015	-.105
Error	individualcompet	46.368	54	.859			
	groupcompet	49.244	54	.912			

Table 4 shows a highly significant p-value for each MCI outcome ( $p < 0.05$ ) which suggests that both individual competencies and group competencies have significant differences across the two sampled groups. Specifically, individual competencies and group competencies were different after being exposed to the SLP treatment. Therefore, the intervention had an effect on both individual competencies and group competencies. The exact nature of this effect was examined through the contrast estimates presented in Table 5.

**Table 5:** Test for group outcomes

Contrast Results (K Matrix)				
Group Simple Contrast <sup>a</sup>		Dependent Variable		
		individualcompet	groupcompet	
Level 1 vs. Level 2	Contrast Estimate	-.785	-.641	
	Hypothesized Value	0	0	
	Difference (Estimate - Hypothesized)	-.785	-.641	
	Std. Error	.248	.255	
	Sig.	.003	.015	
	95% Confidence Interval for Difference	Lower Bound	-1.282	-1.153
		Upper Bound	-.289	-.130

a. Reference category = 2

Table 5 shows a negative contrast estimate for both individual competencies and group competencies. This suggests that both variables were higher in the after SLP group than the before SLP group. The value of the contrast estimates

also gives an indication of the relative scores of each group's MCI outcome. The contrast estimate for individual competencies (-0.785) is higher than group competencies (-0.641) which suggests that exposure to the SLP intervention had a greater impact on individual outcome as compared to group competencies. To verify this inference, the analysis employed Multiple Discriminant Analysis which is used to determine which independent variable accounts for most differences in the average score profile between the two groups. The two independent variables defined were individual and group competencies and the dependent variable tested was class-group which comprised the two categories of before SLP and after SLP. The calculated discriminant function explained more than half of total variance which was statistically significant (p-value = 0.000). Table 6 shows the standardized discriminant coefficients for each independent variable.

**Table 6:** Standardized discriminant coefficients.

Standardized Canonical Discriminant Function Coefficients	
	Function
	1
individualcompet	.828
groupcompet	.696

From the coefficients, it is clear that individual competencies contribute more (0.828) to the discriminant function than group competencies (0.696). This finding suggests that individual competencies explained more variance to group differences than group competencies. This supports the conclusion that the SLP treatment had a greater effect on individual moral skills than on social group skills.

In order to ascertain which of the indicators was most affected by the SLP intervention, a comparison of MCI item on the two groups (before and after SLP) was examined using the factor loadings (the correlation between the variable and the factor) which represent the unique contribute of each variable to the factor (Table 7).

Relative to individual competencies, the indicator most affected by the SLP treatment is students' ability to let go of their own mistake (the percentage change in this variable was 29.1%), followed by standing up for what is believed to be right (26.2%), acting consistently with principles, values and beliefs (10.5%), taking responsibility for personal choice (9.8%), admitting mistakes and failures (4.2%), keeping promises (2.7%). In terms of group competencies, ability to let go of other's mistakes had the greatest change (20.5%), followed by embracing responsibility (6.9%) and actively caring about others (2.8%).

**Table 7:** Competencies factor loading.

<b>Factor 1: Individual Competencies Factor Loading</b>			
	Group 1: <b>Before</b> SLP	Group 2: <b>After</b> SLP	Difference
Acting consistently with principles, values and beliefs	0.717	0.822	0.105
Keeping promises	0.743	0.716	0.027
Taking responsibility for personal choice	0.762	0.860	0.098
Admitting mistakes and failures	0.780	0.822	0.042
Ability to let go of one's own mistake	0.898	0.607	0.291
Standing up for what is believed to be right	0.443	0.705	0.262
<b>Factor 2: Group Competencies Factor Loading</b>			
	Group 1: <b>Before</b> Professional ethics course	Group 2: <b>After</b> Professional ethics course	Difference
Embracing responsibility for serving others	0.780	0.849	0.069
Actively caring about others	0.859	0.887	0.028
Ability to let go of other's mistake	0.527	0.732	0.205

### **Qualitative analysis**

To understand why individual competencies ranked higher than group competencies, a content analysis was conducted on the lead question: How has this course affected your life? Students were asked to write (voluntarily) notes describing the impact this learning experience had on their lives. Twenty summary notes, written in their own time, were submitted. Each submission was reviewed and summarized using line by line coding method (Creswell, 2007). Although data summarization was essential in reducing content disclosed in the summary notes, careful attention was taken to highlight significant statements and phrases students used to describe their experiences. These statements were further categorized into key themes guided by the two MCI factor scores generated in the quantitative analysis. The coded statements clustered into the two main categories of individual and group competencies are presented in the appendix.

Relative to individual changes, 46 significant statements emerged. Some of the terms students used to describe the effect of SLP intervention were *awaken my principles, values and beliefs, taking responsibility, admitting mistakes, forgiving myself, engaging in personal development, and attaining self-actualization*. Students expressed positive sentiments towards the outcome of SLP intervention in which experiences all related to some form of self-improvement or self-development. Many drew on spiritual, emotional and professional changes to reflect on the impact that the course had on their lives. Students reflected on their individual experiences as they journey towards an individual transition. On the other hand, there was significantly less emphasis placed explaining the

change in attitude towards others, (group competencies). A total of 14 statements emerged from the content analysis which made specific reference to the student treatment of others. Some key terms used by students to describe this collective impact include caring for others, forgiveness, and appreciation of others. Students were less expressive of the attitudes and behaviours to their social environment compared to the personal transition. It was apparent from the content analysis that through the SLP intervention, students' determination to recognize and change what is perceived to be personal deficiencies was more pronounced compared to perceived social deficiencies. While there was an overall improvement to students' moral competencies after the SLP treatment was administered, both qualitative and quantitative findings noted a greater effect on individual self aspects than on collective or social aspects.

### **Discussions and conclusion**

Although this study did not directly consider the impact of building community and an interactive classroom environment (a suggestion for future research), this aspect certainly contributed positively to the overall learning experience of the students. The creation of a classroom atmosphere and environment (the psychosocial milieu which includes physical, psychological, interpersonal elements as well as attitudes and behaviour) conducive to learning was found to correlate highly with students' performance, contribute to students' achievement goals orientation and influence students' engagement in reflective practice in learning (Cheong Cheng, 1994; Phan, 2008). Feedback from the students' summary notes included:

*The class is very interactive and the discussions helped me to really understand all that was being taught.*

*Fostering community life helped as well because I realized that building a community can help people feel more comfortable and relaxed in a specific setting.*

*The community culture we were attempting to foster...excellent experience...I would normally not approach someone I did not use to speak to outside my classes but because of the small size of the class, the way we seated and the overall nature of lectures you already felt like you knew everyone so it was easy to approach them and engage in a conversation.*

*The environment in the class room was refreshing. For the first time a class felt like I sat among peers rather than classmates...The forum created was quite unique because you seldom find yourself among peers discussing moral issues.*

*I believe that the lecturer does a very good job at developing the right type of classroom climate that is required for such a course...The setting at UWI does not necessarily always foster an environment*

*that is conducive to such a course.*

*I absolutely loved the open forum style, and the free and comfortable environment that was created as it allowed me to feel more at home and opened my mind to new perspectives.*

Changes to practice included groups of students having breakfast meetings to discuss the assigned readings before the class (classes were held weekly from 9 a.m. to 12 noon), creating a punctuality culture where students made an effort to arrive 10 minutes before class began and professional courtesies were extended when students arrived late or could not make a class. Other changes included the use of name –tags; de-briefing sessions given to students who registered late or missed classes by other students; drinks and snacks were provided (by both students and the lecturer) so that during the class-break informal conversations would be encouraged to get to know each other better, and a full movie was shown and discussed in the last class in a festive atmosphere. One of the challenges was to determine what mix of teaching strategies ought to be employed, but it appears that an interactive learning environment is non-negotiable for an effective learning experience.

The results of this study show that a virtue centred/principles-based approach effected through the SLP proved to be a significant treatment and positively impacted upon students' individual and group moral competencies. It turned out that though both were statistically significant, individual competencies explained more variance to group differences than group competencies. This is expected since one first needs to focus on building individual competencies before developing group competencies. Secondly, time constraints would not allow the adequately development of group competencies. Future research can consider more longitudinal studies to track students' changes in moral competencies and to account why such changes take place. Results of this study not only demonstrate the importance of professional ethics in the moral development of students, but that the teaching approach and strategies can be adapted and employed in other courses.

Given the moral development plan of self-management (the process that involves self-knowledge, self-ownership, and self-giving in developing strategies to reduce the real-ideal self gap), the SLP, which incorporated the virtue centred/principles-based approach, was found to be an appropriate instrument to facilitate reflective practice. While the SLP may not be the most appropriate assessment mechanism for most courses, aspects of the virtue-centred/principles-based approach can be infused in the delivery of any course because of its universal appeal.

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### Appendix 1. Results of content analysis

Effect on Student Life	Evidence of change	Explanation
1. Awakening principles values and beliefs	1.1 Commitment to Principles of Life: Integrity, Compassion, F o r g i v e n e s s , Responsibility	# 2: This course has taught me that integrity, responsibility, compassion and forgiveness are foundation cornerstones of society and should be upheld more. I believe these traits are important for society to morally move forward.
		# 3: The universal principles that govern a moral leader are: responsibility, integrity, compassion and forgiveness. These four principles are the basis on which a professional will be considered ethical or not.
		# 3: This course has impacted on my life as it has taught me what it really takes to be ethical. We all think we are moral creatures but a true moral individual genuinely expresses responsibility, integrity, compassion and forgiveness..... it taught me that once you lived a life of principles, i.e., (responsibility, integrity, compassion and forgiveness), I am in essence living a moral life.
		#4: The course was very useful in teaching me the value of moral competencies such as integrity, responsibility, compassion and forgiveness. It encouraged me to evaluate myself using these four competencies and analyze where I fall short to see where I can improve. Before attending this course I had a deluded view of myself and I did not even know it.
		#5: The course sought to explain how much we need the moral principles to guide our actions and behaviors. We should allow these principles to govern the way we determine our goals and how we achieve them.
		# 8: It is about becoming a better individual and treating yourself and others with integrity, compassion, forgiveness and responsibility.
		# 13: It has showed me that I can be a better person, somebody who can have a positive impact on others.
		# 17: I also now really appreciate the principles of integrity, compassion, forgiveness and responsibility; therefore, I believe my personality has been positively affected by this course.
		# 19: To build a better character for themselves in terms of being full of integrity, responsibility, compassion and forgiveness, and also help them to learn the importance of understanding and caring for others besides themselves.
		#18: What especially stood out for me personally were the principles of integrity and tolerance, to which I have been actively applying them in my daily 'adventures'. From the first lecture where the timeline was drawn on the whiteboard illustrating all we truly have is the present, and that we must live in it with such , excitement and passion, I was ready to change my life into a more positive sense of well-being, and deconstruct my delusions into my realities.

Effect on Student Life	Evidence of change	Explanation
2. Taking Responsibility for personal choice	2.1 Commitment to Breaking bad habits	#5: I have also made efforts to stop drinking because I realize that I should forgive myself for my personal failures and just continue to live up to the fullest. I have a more positive outlook on life due to the material taught in the course.
		# 13: I have decided to strive to be the best that I can be and break my bad habits.
3. Admitting mistakes and forgiving self	3.1 Promise to accept faults and personal weaknesses	# 4: I now know what it means to live reality. It means recognizing one's faults and taking the necessary actions to correct such faults.
		#8: It has allowed me as a person as well as my fellow students to take a look at the awful truth of ourselves, see the faults that are within and realize the ideal individual that we should strive to be.
		#16: I was able to recognize that actively caring for others was actually one of my weaknesses. I believe that the progress in the short term may not appear to be significant however in the long run I think it would be.
		#20: This course has helped me recognize my real self. I think by recognizing my faults and my issues I can now begin to work on them and try to correct my behavior. I have seen improvements in my actions and my thoughts. I am more honest, more compassionate and I now know when to mind my own business. Words cannot express the lessons I have learnt from this course; hopefully I can continue to develop as an individual in the necessary areas.
	3.2 Promise to forgive self	#3: As a person, I am too hard on myself for the mistakes and failures I make.
		#4: I also struggled with letting go of the mistakes I made in the past and they have still played an active part in my frustrations at times. However the course has helped me to realize the importance of letting go of mistakes in the past and has taught me that it is actually a moral virus that prevents me from becoming the person that I should be.
		#5: I have also made efforts to stop drinking because I realize that I should forgive myself for my personal failures and just continue to live up to the fullest. I have a more positive outlook on life due to the material taught in the course.
	3.3 Commitment to changing life in a positive way	#18: All we truly have is the present, and that we must live in it with such vigor, excitement and passion, I was ready to change my life into a more positive sense of well-being, and deconstruct my delusions into my realities.
4. Caring for and serving others	4.1 Commitment to become less judgmental	#12: The discussions that took place throughout the semester have led me to become a more open-minded person and now before I jump to conclusions, I analyze the possibilities that may have lead towards a particular outcome.

Effect on Student Life	Evidence of change	Explanation
	4.2 Acceptance of others	#15: I also realized that everyone is not the same, nor will we ever be, and it makes no sense to try to change anyone to suit my own agenda. I learnt I must accept others for who they are on the inside and what they stand for and try to work on making our clashing personalities otherwise mesh so that we form some sort of common ground and our principles, don't necessarily become the same principles, but that they coincide with each other
	4.3 Accept others for who they are	# 13: The course has also allowed me to become a little friendlier and calm when approaching various aspects of my upbringing.
	4.4 Forgiveness of others	#13: I have learnt that I do forgive people but I am unable to forget their mistakes. This is something I will try to work on because true forgiveness brings peace of mind and this is part of becoming my ideal self.
	4.5 Appreciate others	# 8: It has been able to give me a new outlook on life and to be more appreciative of everyone and everything around me. The way I treat people now is how I would like to be treated in return and this is something that will stick with me forever. # 8: I would tell little lies to get out of being around people and could not wait to see another day finish... but now I look at others as part of me as my community.
	4.6 Helping others	# 8: This course makes me want to help others. I want to help people and make a difference because I genuinely want too and would not (expect) anything in return. Now, I see the good in helping others there is nothing more rewarding than that feeling you get. I always thought of myself as a nice person and very kind towards others but, I was really wrong and I am happy with the changes I have made and proud to be the individual that I am today. #13: The course helped me to have a different approach towards life. It has showed me that I can be a better person, somebody who can have a positive impact on others.... I have decided that I would give a little more to my community. As a past first communion teacher, I believe that learning the different principles which were taught I can use them in order to help families who are having difficulties with their children.
	4.7 Thinking about others in my decisions	#10: I have made a conscious decision to think more about others when I act and this change is reflected in my changed scores. Even though I had always held acting well towards others in high regard, I had not acted consistently with that belief. This course has resulted in me becoming more aligned with the person I want to be.
	4.8 Ability to work with others- and develop a team spirit	#16: This course has helped my development both as an individual and a team player. The course has also improved my ability to be a team player.

Effect on Student Life	Evidence of change	Explanation
5. Engaging in personal development	5.1 Conquer personal challenges	<p>#18: I was able to get over a terrible breakup with my boyfriend of four years and deal with the scrutiny of everyone in our circle of friends and also his new girlfriend. Every class I was appreciative of all the debates and discussions that took place between we as students and our lecturer because I always left the class feeling like it was a therapy session that was set in place to put me one step further to my path of becoming a better me.</p>
		<p>#5: I have also made efforts to stop drinking because I realize that I should forgive myself for my personal failures and just continue to live up to the fullest.</p>
	5.2 Develop confidence	<p># 8: It has allowed me to see myself in a positive light, boosted my confidence.... take on any challenge... before I was shy, I would not question other people, choose to stay quiet in class and let people take advantage of me. I did activities just because I had to not because I wanted to.... This course has made me realize that I am so much better than all this and made me realize my full potential.</p>
		<p>#13: I rarely ever speak in lectures, however, for this course it as actually the first time I stepped out of my comfort zone and spoke without being asked in a lecture, I would normally feel too shy to speak in front of a gathering but in this case I felt extremely comfortable in addressing my views.</p>
		<p>#15: I gained some confidence in expressing my morals in such a way that I could make a difference without coming out of alignment or what Sir would say, "without being deluded." This is a quote that I will forever remember and use in day to day activities and living, as it has more meaning behind it now, after completing this course, based on moral codes, principles, values and beliefs that it did before.</p>
		<p>#20: Before this class I was very shy to make contributions and speak in public. I realize now it is much easier for me to talk in class and give my contributions as compared to when I started this course. I have gained self-confidence that was lacking.</p>
	5.3 Moral development/moral preparedness	<p>#4: Essentially, the course was extremely helpful in my moral development.</p>
		<p>#5: The course sought to explain how much we need the moral principles to guide our actions and behaviors. We should allow these principles to govern the way we determine our goals and how we achieve them.</p>
		<p># 6: I appreciate that I was able to grow as an individual a little bit, which was more significant than anything. Today I feel that I am aware and prepared for ethical situations that life may throw at me.</p>

Effect on Student Life	Evidence of change	Explanation
6. Attaining self-actualization	6.1 Adjusting personal priorities	# 5: The course really taught me the importance of being responsible in all aspects of my life. It tried to instill the imperative nature of adjusting my priorities so that I may become a morally defined human being.
		#8: As individuals we tend to take many aspects of our life for granted but, with this Professional Ethics course it allows us to slow down and see what the world actually has to offer.
		#1: After evaluating myself I was able to see what kind of leader I would become. I was able to set goals and get a road map as to how to get there.
		#5: I have readjusted my life goals because I now realize that what is important is not having a rich life and money. But rather to be a morally aligned human being which means to think and act consistently with the principles that I attain from my conscience. It has shown me the importance of being ethical in everyday life and even through the consequences may be severe the benefits gained will be greater.
	6.2 Enlightenment	#12: This course professional ethics has enlightened me about what is morally right or wrong.
		#4: It has opened my eyes in allowing me to realize my real self.
		#6: I had the opportunity to take a closer look at myself and most importantly I learned about myself.... Today I feel that I am aware and prepared for ethical situations that life may throw at me.
	6.3 Self realization....a journey to self discovery	#8: You are taken through an entire semester where you get to learn about yourself.
		#9: I was already aware that I am not perfect it permitted me the opportunity to make the small change in becoming a better person. In addition, I will consider myself to be openly opinionated and despite the fact I hear other's comments and view I often had a hard time understanding it. Professional ethics gave me the ability to sit down and not just hear others but listen and understand where they are coming from. Being openly opinionated may result in me being closed-minded and I believe that professional ethics gave me the tools I need to better communicate with others despite my opinion of them and their opinions.
		#11: This course has the potential to help and make aware of personal issues one may face.
		# 15: I definitely believe that having completed this course I am now able to confidently and honestly say that I have expanded on my moral intelligence, and I am now able to better live in alignment without having to second guess my thoughts, actions and reactions.
		#17: My understanding of morals and ethics is much sounder and I am now allocating efforts to establish my values and live in moral alignment.

Effect on Student Life	Evidence of change	Explanation
		<p># 18: Because it was more of a self-discovery as to better understanding of my life, I never thought such a course on life lessons could exist, but, as the saying goes “Good things happen when you least expect it.” As I complete my degree, and in whatever else life holds in store for me, this course will remain unforgettable, as if the stars that light your journey ahead walk backward.</p> <p>#19: I was very much appreciative of this class as it has helped me to take time to sort out exactly who I am from who I want to be, but most importantly this course has helped me to understand what it takes to better myself as an individual and not be deluded in my thoughts and actions towards others but mostly myself...</p> <p>#20: This course has had a drastic impact on my life and I must say I am a different person after doing this course. It has opened new doors for me to help me in discovering who I am. I have realized several things about myself that I was not aware of before, I understand better now, I should carry about myself as a person whom I would be proud of. I have never thought about my strengths, weaknesses, my ideal self and my real self or my values, principles and beliefs. This course has helped me give this some thought and I have discovered these things about myself.</p>
	6.4 Spirituality	<p>#9: Professional ethics gave me a life lesson. That lesson being, no matter what others say or do to you, once you are true to God and to the person you are, no one can corrupt or disturb your life.</p> <p>#20: I have learnt that real freedom is earned when we become detached from material things in this world. When we are detached we have everything. We begin to see the true beauty of life and live life to the fullest by enjoying every moment of it. We can only discover ourselves through suffering!!!</p>
7. Opening social blinkers	7.1 Awareness of the social reality	<p># 2: This course has opened my eyes widely to the huge problem of hypocrisy. A lot of people may pay lip service to morality; however they do not follow their own word. What’s worst is people that are hypocrites and they don’t know that they are hypocrites. They are living deluded lifestyles and are only fooling themselves. I now constantly ensure that my words reflect and do that is hypocritical.</p> <p># 14: The world truly lacks good and moral people, in which see with the many downfalls, and personal crises occurring around us.</p> <p># 2: This course has allowed me to open eyes to the moral issues surrounding society. It has allowed me to face reality and realize that vices and destructive emotions plague society.</p>

Effect on Student Life	Evidence of change	Explanation
		# 8: Most of us fail to take this into consideration and there are so much people out there that think they are acting and doing things the right way when in reality they are not. As individual's we tend to take many aspects of our life for granted but, with this Professional Ethics course it allows us to slow down and see what the world actually has to offer. It has allowed me as a person as well as my fellow students to take a look at the awful truth of ourselves, see the faults that le within and realize the ideal individual that we should strive to be.
8. Classroom environment	8.1 Created an interactive experience	#8: The class is very interactive and the discussions helped me to really understand all that was being taught
	8.2 Built social environment	#3: Fostering community life helped as well because I realized that building a community can help people feel more comfortable and relaxed in a specific setting  #13: the community culture we were attempting to foster...excellent experience ..I would normally would not approach someone I did not use to speak to outside my classes but because of the small size of the class, the way we seated and the overall nature of the lectures you already felt like you knew everyone so it was easy to approach them and engage in a conversation
	8.3 Generated a comfortable learning experience	#6: The environment in the class room was refreshing. For the first time a class felt like I sat among peers rather, than classmates.... The forum created was quite unique because you seldom find yourself among peers discussing moral issues.  #7: I believe that the lecturer does do a very good job at developing the right type of classroom climate that is required for such a course.... The setting at UWI does not necessarily always foster an environment that is conducive to such a course  #15: I absolutely loved the open forum style, and the free and comfortable environment that was created as it allowed me to feel more at home and opened my mind to new perspectives.