

## Working with Universities: The Cátedra Programme (Colombia)

### Summary

The *Cátedra* programme is an inter-university initiative promoted by *Transparencia por Colombia*, TI member in Colombia, and supported by several Colombian higher education institutions.<sup>1</sup> *Cátedra* upholds the ethical formation of future professionals by providing pedagogical tools, and by bringing together leaders of public and private organisations, university academics and students. *Cátedra* thereby advances reflection on the values and ethical challenges of contemporary organisations, with an emphasis on the construction of public good.



The programme illustrates the use of a multi-component approach, using a teaching method that is interactive and based on case studies, combined with teacher support and development.

The *Cátedra* programme was designed by *Transparencia por Colombia*, in September, 2001, and first implemented in 2002. It is funded by Shell, Merck Sharp and Dohme, member universities and *Transparencia por Colombia*.

### Background

"The *Cátedra* helped me regain hope in the students of today, hope in a better country for me and for them. It will be them who take the decisions that prior generations did not dare to take, to build our country."

*Andrés Morales*  
Professor and facilitator of the *Cátedra's Values in Action Workshops*

According to the TI Corruption Perception Index 2004, Colombia still ranks at 3.8 points out of 10, occupying the 60<sup>th</sup> place among 146 countries. A recent

<sup>1</sup> The Initiative for Social Enterprises (IESO) of the University of the Andes, the College of Higher Management Studies (CESA) and the Politécnico Grancolombiano.



José B. Toro, dean of the faculty of education at Javeriana university, speaking at a plenary on social responsibility

analysis of Colombia's National Integrity System"... recognises the courage and strength of the Colombian people but warns of the fragility of its institutions and the excesses of its leaders. It values the contributions of millions of honest men and women who make daily efforts and sacrifices to get the country moving ahead ... but warns of the deterioration of values and principles at the levels of power, in the political leadership and in the government ..."<sup>2</sup> and private sectors.

Thus, any corruption prevention strategy should include the ethical formation of future leaders of public and private organisations, who will influence, at different levels, the decisions affecting the integrity of the country.

However, today's university education tends to focus on technical ingredients for a successful career, neglecting social responsibility. Colombia needs citi-

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2 Colección Cuadernos de Transparencia No. 4: El Sistema Nacional de Integridad, análisis y resultados del estudio de caso, Introducción de Juan Lozano Ramírez, Enero 2002, p. 6 [Transparency Notebooks Collection No. 4: The National Integrity System, analysis and results of a case study. Introduction by Juan Lozano Ramírez, January 2002, p. 6]

zens that can provide the social control required to prevent corruption. Attending university has the potential to encourage young people to participate in responsible social activities, as well as the capacity to stimulate public debates around the topics of ethics in public affairs.

## How did the *Cátedra* programme arise?

In the latter part of 2001, Shell and *Transparencia por Colombia* shared a vision to promote ethical standards in the business sector. On the one hand, Shell expressed its interest in financing an education initiative in values for young people, so that high standards of social responsibility would form the framework of their professional performance as business leaders. On the other hand, *Transparencia por Colombia*, through its work with business, identified a need to strengthen ethics in the sector, and a demand to base anti-corruption solutions on the ethical education of future professionals.

The early stage of this initiative consisted of a survey carried out at seven Colombian universities<sup>3</sup>, to identify different methods students used for ethical formation, and to explore if any projects of the kind proposed already existed. At the same time, pilot tests of the *Cátedra* were completed with students from two universities.

## Partners in ethics

"I had some prejudices about ethics and moral talk ... but I realised that the *Cátedra* does not belong to this category of teaching. I found myself with a group of students like myself, who want a better country, and who want to fight the problems that destroy our community. The *Cátedra* approaches ethics from an interesting angle: Through workshops, role plays and debates, and not through the boring traditional teaching methods."

*Ricardo Ojeda Arias*

*Student of Business Administration at the University de los Andes*

The next step focused on project design, based on a scheme of alliances between *Transparencia por Colombia*, private firms like Shell, and those universities interested. It was proposed to create space for inter-university reflection,

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3 University of the Andes, CESA - College of Higher Management Studies, Javeriana Pontifical University Bogotá, University of Medellín, Universidad Externado de Colombia, University of Rosario and Northern University of Barranquilla

to enable ethical formation from a practical and participative approach, in which students, teachers and professionals could raise questions and analyse ethical dilemmas. In addition to Shell, the Santander Bank and HOCOL provided resources for starting up the project and collaborated in the initial project discussions.

In the first semester of 2002, *Transparencia por Colombia* began introducing activities with three universities – the *Politécnico Grancolombiano*, the University of the Andes and the College of Higher Management Studies (CESA). The second semester of 2002 saw six more universities<sup>4</sup> join up and now there are currently 15 universities enrolled across the cities of Bogotá and Cartagena.

### What is the *Cátedra* doing today?

The main aim of the *Cátedra* is to contribute to the ethical formation of university students as future leaders of public and private organisations, so that they can act in the interest of the public good and fight against corruption in future.

The structure of the *Cátedra* is as follows:

- i) The Management Committee consists of rectors and board members from member universities, an executive from a national or multinational firm (that are members of *Transparencia por Colombia*) and two members of the Management Board of *Transparencia por Colombia*. The committee meets every three months to give policy guidance, set goals and evaluate the progress of the project.
- ii) One full-time staff in permanent charge of the project.
- iii) Six-monthly meetings occur with teachers from the universities involved to plan and evaluate the activities.
- iv) Agreements with the universities involved with the *Cátedra* clarify commitments, both academic and in the provision of financial and in kind resources.
- v) Some 50 teachers are currently enrolled with the *Cátedra*, using their own material in courses. These committed teachers also contribute to developing further material.

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<sup>4</sup> La Sabana University, Javeriana Pontifical University Bogotá, EAN - Business Administration School, San Martín University Foundation, Bolívar Technological University Corporation (Cartagena), Javeriana Pontifical University Cali.



Audience at plenary

To achieve its aim, the *Cátedra* works through the following four components:

### 1. Inter-university plenaries

"The participation in the plenaries of the *Cátedra* in Cartagena put me in direct contact with the various actors of the Foncolpuertos case that was mentioned in my book. I had many reservations and even fear to participate in the plenary. However, I found the debate to be very moving, because I realised that we are still able to discuss a difficult topic such as corruption in a civilised and democratic manner ... until this moment, I had thought that there is no more space for this in Colombia."

*Felipe Lozano Puche*  
*Panellist in the plenary "Culture of Greed:*  
*The Foncolpuertos case"*

These plenaries are open to the general public and have attracted a number of high-quality speakers. They bring together leaders of public and private organisations, university academics and students, to reflect on the values and ethical challenges experienced by businesses and the public sector.

The plenaries seek to motivate the students to understand the need for developing moral judgement and to understand the concept of common public good.

So far, 29 plenaries have been held, attended by more than 6,000 students. Topics include corruption in public contracting; corruption in Latin America and the responsibility of large companies; corruption in private contracting; how to manage ethics in organisations; social responsibility in companies in a society in conflict; social responsibility in the communications media; and the role of interest groups in the formation of laws.

## **2. Case analysis seminars**

The *Cátedra* has developed its teaching material in the form of case studies. So far, eight case studies were constructed in collaboration with IESO, the Social Enterprises Initiative, of the University of the Andes.

The material is to be used by teachers in their regular courses. The case studies expose the dilemma of integrity and encourage students to find their own solutions. In class, students identify ethical problems and conflicts of interest, and how to approach them in a practical way. They are encouraged to take decisions with integrity and to guarantee the public interest over private interests.

Each case is accompanied by guidance notes for teachers and a bibliography of national and international writers to support the case analysis. In addition, teachers enrolled in the *Cátedra* receive training for the use of case study material.

## **3. Values in Action workshops**

These workshops use a role-play methodology to stimulate reflection about values from different perspectives. Values are exposed and confronted with necessary day-to-day decision-making in students' professional and personal lives. Students gain an understanding of various interest groups to consider when facing ethical challenges in organisations and in personal life. An additional topic covered is the management of relationships. So far, 160 Values in Action workshops have been held, moderated by *Transparencia por Colombia*.

## **4. Exchange of teachers' experiences in teaching ethics**

The *Cátedra* supports teacher exchanges between the member universities to strengthen teamwork on the initiative, and to provide a space for reflection.

10 teacher exchanges have so far taken place. These sessions are also used as a feedback mechanism to the *Cátedra* team, by providing a platform where teachers can assess the different components of the *Cátedra*.

## Results and recommendations

The *Cátedra* has been operating without interruptions for nearly three years, and has, through its various components, reached more than 6,000 students. Many observers feel that the *Cátedra* proves attractive to audiences because of the variety of components involved (case analysis seminars, workshops, plenaries) and for the work and commitment from teachers. *Cátedra* has also been successful in creating new links, e.g. between public and private universities.

For the first 2005 semester, the *Cátedra* plans to evaluate the programme design, achievements and modifications necessary. After this evaluation, the *Cátedra* will extend its programme to additional regions and adapt the activities as appropriate to regional differences.

The following factors have been crucial for the development of the *Cátedra*:

- Working in alliance with other institutions from the very beginning of the design of the project has produced greater achievements.
- The establishment of agreements has formalised the alliance with each of the actors, in terms of academic commitments and of the provision of resources for the development of the project.
- Linking both public and private universities and adapting the project and its components to regional differences.
- The commitment and motivation of teachers using *Cátedra* components.
- The participation of supportive student leaders.
- The effective selection of interesting topics of public interest that encouraged debate in the plenaries and the development of case studies.

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