

Ethics in international business: the case of the movie the constant gardener

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Facilitator:

The subject of corporate ethics especially in the international businesses is highly contentious. Businesses, companies and organizations have the ultimate role of rewarding their stakeholders by engaging in beneficial activities. However, this is not the case in most of the scenarios where profits for an organization take an upper hand to social responsibility. This contrast in ethical values among local nations, communities and international organizations operating in foreign lands has been the cause for numerous clashes and conflicts. Ethics in international undertakings has become a major concern especially in the current era of globalization. Particularly, employee and human rights and critics have challenged businesses under moral grounds (Hill, 2012). This paper explores the film, *The Constant Gardener* with the intention of describing the concept of ethics in international businesses.

The movie, *The Constant Gardener* depicts a quintessential scenario that highlights ethical dilemmas in international businesses. Initially, the movie emphasizes the importance of rethinking about employees' rights in multinational companies. Justin Quayle the lead character in the movie is a low-level delegate of the British High Commission posted in Kenya and operating on a new assignment. After a conspiracy that involved the murder of his wife Tessa Quayle, Justin is at crossroads regarding the ethical direction of his career. Employment practices in some multinational organizations and companies often cause ethical dilemmas. According to Hill (2012), work conditions may be different between two nations, which highlight the need of considering the working environment evaluating ethics

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in the international businesses. Evidently, conflicts in the code of ethics force Justin to quit his job when the High Commission threatens him concerning his breach on the professional ethics of his work. Justin faces this ethical dilemma because of his decision to investigate the murder of his wife where he discovers a conspiracy involving unethical practices of employment in the High Commission.

International companies and organizations are expected to consider the ethical standards of the international community during their operations in foreign lands (Hill, 2012). In the movie, the rights of Kenyans are disregarded when they are used as testing subjects for a new drug with adverse side effects. Justin unveils the conspiracy when he investigates and discovers that the authority was testing Dypraxa, the new vaccine on the poor Kenyan communities. His wife had discovered the act and died in her quest to safeguard the rights of poor Kenyans. The vaccine as Justin understood later causes massive deaths on its subjects. However, the pharmaceutical company behind the drug keeps the knowledge a secret and pursues the illegal quest to make profits worth millions in the business. This is an example of a malpractice in the code of ethics in international business.

There often economic consequences to such companies when consumers in the local country object the unethical practices from the foreign organizations (Hill, 2012)

Although there a general agreement on the existence of human rights that is universal, these individual rights are still debated. According to the code of ethics in international business, an international organization or company should weigh on the standards of human rights of its host country with those

of the company's country before making any decisions (Hill, 2012).

Businesses should similarly consider the social consequences of their actions according to social responsibility. The decision of the pharmaceutical company had a negative effect to the local communities in Kenya, but a positive short-term economic effect to the company. In summary, The Constant Gardener advocates for multinational companies to take a moral obligation to enhance the welfare of their immediate communities.

Reference

Hill, C. L. (2012). *International Business*. (9th ed.) Irwin: McGraw Hill