

## **"Business Ethics and Social Responsibility in a Global Perspective"**

BESR Seminar Convened by Masayuki Ida, Amos Nascimento, and Joseph Eldridge  
American University (Washington, DC, USA) – July 28-29, 2011

### **Introduction**

“Business Ethics and Social Responsibility” (BESR) is a new theme for discussion, research, and activities in a global context, a theme that has gained renewed attention after the BP oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico in 2010. This seminar will address this theme by bringing together universities affiliated with the International Association of Methodist-related Schools, Colleges, and Universities (IAMSCU) and putting them into conversation with other universities as well as businesses interested in partnering with higher education institutions promoting BESR. This event is the result of two previous streams successfully developed with the support of IAMSCU: a discussion on technology initiated during the IAMSCU conference in 2005 and a series of events on business ethics, starting with iBiZ in 2007.

### **Past Story**

The IAMSCU 2005 conference in Australia marked the beginning of a series of discussions on ethics and technology, when many IAMSCU-related universities began to cooperate on this topic. Aoyama Gakuin University became more directly involved in IAMSCU, the Universidade Metodista de Sao Paulo developed an online education program related to corporate practices, Duke University began to cooperate on social projects in Central America, UNIMEP Press launched publications on corporate social responsibility, American University started a partnership with Brazil, distance education was initiated in Africa through the Methodist Global Fund for Education and Leadership Development (MGFELD), and many other similar initiatives emerged in different countries.

When Masayuki Ida made a keynote speech at the IAMSCU conference in Adelaide in 2005, he felt the need for the combination of technology and globalization as a core issue for IAMSCU. Building on this process, Aoyama Gakuin Business School, where Masayuki is a professor, has had a series of iBiZ (Internet Business) conferences as a part of its research projects. First, it organized a two-day event (iBiZ2007) in Malaysia with universities in Asia. At the iBiZ2007, Masayuki realized the importance of a business ethics session in such types of conferences, and thought an academic conference hosted by IAMSCU should address such theme. Thus, he proposed a new approach on this subject to IAMSCU, went to Nashville after the conference, and discussed with Amos Nascimento and Wanda Bigham whether they could join to organize a series of initiatives on this topic. As a result of the above developments we had iBiZ2008 as a pre-conference of the IAMSCU board meeting in Hawaii in Feb 2008. This

event was hosted by Aoyama Gakuin, COGEIME, and IAMSCU. A report with the results of this workshop was presented to the IAMSCU board of directors and the creation of two working groups within IAMSCU was approved, which were to be lead by Masayuki Ida and Amos Nascimento: Working Group on Technology and a Working Group on Ethics.

Based on the success of this first initiative, in July 2008 these two groups sponsored a session on “Ethics and Technology” as part of the IAMSCU conference in Rosario, Argentina. In January 2009 Aoyama Gakuin had a small workshop, iBiZ2009, in Tokyo, Japan, in which Ted Brown and Wanda Bigham were guest speakers. COGEIME published the proceedings of iBiZ2008 in 2009 and expressed its support for the organization of iBiZ2010 in Brazil.

During 2010, Amos Nascimento and Masayuki Ida kept communicating and meeting in order to discuss how to continue these activities. They concluded that new events should focus on “Business Ethics and Social Responsibility” (BESR). Since these events started a new series, they concluded the iBiZ series and introduced a more appropriate name (“Business Ethics and Social Responsibility”) that better reflects recent events and concerns in the business and politica communities as well as in civil society. This concept expands and substitutes the idea of “Corporate Social Responsibility,” which is an established concept, but it simply focuses on legal guidelines and does not clearly integrate the ethical dimensions in it. With the belief that schools, colleges, and universities related to IAMSCU have almost three centuries of tradition in this area, highlight ethics and responsible business practices as part of their mission, create new venues to educate citizens and form principled leaders, and cooperate with business in a way that is compatible with the ethical principles and values, we hope that IAMSCU and global educational organizations will join and support this initiative. The BESR seminar in Washington, DC will serve as the first in a series of events that will develop research on BESR and create a global network cooperating in this field. To implement these goals, two program proposals were made for 2011:

Program 1: BESR Meeting in Rio de Janeiro on Feb 5, 2011 (BESR-Rio)

After consulting with the IAMSCU President and receiving his support to promote a series of BESR events, we took advantage of the IAMSCU board of directors meeting in Rio de Janeiro to have an initial workshop to discuss these ideas on February 5, 2011. This workshop was meant to provide a first approximation among scholars working in this field and a preparation for a successful conference (BESR-2011) in Washington, DC in July 2011. This preparatory workshop was open to interested people, included some experts on this theme, involved business leaders working in partnership with Methodist-related universities, and prepared the agenda for future research and activities. Based on this initial success, we continued the preparation for the seminar.

Agenda of the BESR-Rio program:

- Prof. Dagmar Castro (Methodist University of São Paulo): BESR in Brazil
- Prof. Masayuki Ida: BESR in Asia and Japan
- Prof. Amos Nascimento: BESR in Latin America
- Prof. Harry Thomason/Ed Bell: BESR in England: The partnership of business and universities [Videoconference]

Program 2: BESR Seminar in Washington, DC – July 28 or 29 (BESR-2011)

Following the positive experience at IAMSCU 2008 in Rosario, Argentina, we proposed the organization of a session on BESR at the IAMSCU Conference in Washington, DC in 2011. As a follow-up on the BESR-Rio meeting in February, we planned to organize a session on BESR connected to the IAMSCU conference. We initially suggested a session within the IAMSCU program, but as interest in the program grew, we decided to have a two-day seminar after the conclusion of the IAMSCU Conference. Thus, the program will start in the afternoon of July 28<sup>th</sup> and continue on for the whole day on July 29<sup>th</sup>. Based on previous consultations, call for proposals, and proposals made by scholars, businesses, and partners working on BESR, we have defined the following program (subject to change):

Agenda of the BESR-Washington program:

**- July 28 at American University - Washington, DC, USA**

- 02:00pm: Opening by the IAMSCU President (T. Brown, USA)
- 02:10pm: Welcome by American University (J. Elridge, USA)
- 02:20pm: *BESR: A research project within IAMSCU* (M. Ida, Japan/A. Nascimento, Brazil)
- 02:30pm: *Session 1: BESR in North America* (panel with experts from US and Canada)
- 03:45pm: Break
- 04:00pm: *Session 2: BESR in Latin America* (experts from Argentina, Brazil, and Mexico)
- 05:15pm: Conclusion
- 06:00pm: Reception at the GBCS House

**- July 29 at American University**

- 09:00am: Opening
- 09:15am: News and Announcements
- 09:30am: *Session 3: BESR in Asia* (Universities in Japan, Korea, and China)
- 10:45am: Break
- 11:00am: *Session 4: BESR in Africa* (African Universities and the MGFELD)
- 12:15pm: Lunch
- 02:00pm: *Session 5: BESR in Europe* (experts from England, Spain and Germany)

03:15pm: Break

03:30pm: *Session 6: Global trends in BESR*

04:45pm: *BESR Network within IAMSCU: A working in progress*

05:30pm: Conclusion

Logistic aspects:

- Dates: 07/28 and 07/29/2011.
- Location: American University and the General Board of Church & Society.
- Publication: COGEIME and GBHEM will sponsor the publication of the proceedings.  
(Texts will be published in English, Japanese, Portuguese and Spanish)
- Support institutional support by IAMSCU and the participating universities.
- Costs: The seminar is free and open to the public.