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## Ethics education in times of inequities

### Abstract

The paper focus on the topics concerning the ethics education in times of inequities in different fields of education: engineering education, medicine education, as well as the role of ethics education in general.

**Keywords:** ethics education, inequities, globalization.

Third International Conference on Education in Ethics “*Ethics education in times of inequities*” was organized by the International Association for Education in Ethics (IAEE) in association with the 11<sup>th</sup> Brazilian Congress of Bioethics in the city of Rio de Janeiro - Curitiba in Brazil on 16-18 September 2015.

The aims of IAEE was to enhance and expand the teaching of ethics at national, regional and international levels, to exchange and analyse experiences with the teaching of ethics in various educational settings, to promote the development of knowledge and methods of ethics education, and to function as a global centre of contact for experts in this field, and to promote contacts between members from countries around the world. Presenters from Australia, Brazil, Canada, China, Israel, Italy, Kyrgyz, Nigeria, Panama, Portugal, Slovakia, South Africa, Saudi Arabia, Singapore, Sweden, Turkey, USA, Uzbekistan, Vietnam, etc. took part at the conference. The program of the conference included plenary sessions as well as parallel sessions.

*Teaching ethics (nearly) naked: minimalist design principles for effective education slides* was presented by Cline (Canada). He stated that in recent years, educators have voiced concerns about the ubiquity of presentation software in the classroom. Cline explored some effective ways to use presentation tools to enhance ethics

teaching and learning rather than abandoning them altogether. He focused on slide design and two of the more widely used presentation software programs for PCs and MACs, *Power-point* and *Keynote*. He began by looking at some common misconceptions about the effective use of presentation slides in education. Using his own slides as examples, he shared some of the bad presentation habits he has fallen into over the years and explained what strategies he had recently adopted to break them. Then he concluded by describing some easy - to - implement principles of visual design that anyone can incorporate into their teaching practice. Drawing on adult learning theory on information processing, this session was designed as a peer - to- peer faculty development session. By the end of this session, attendees were able to classify their own teaching slides into one of three categories and, based on this classification, try out some simple design tips to improve the visual quality - and teaching effectiveness - of their slides.

*Values education in engineering formation in Brazil* was the topic of Adinolfi's (Brazil) presentation. He stated that engineers have to be prepared to make ethical evaluations and judgements, what requires values education. However, the question How the moral discussion occurs in engineering curricula was asked? His work investigated values education in engineering curricula in Brazilian universities in the State of Sao Paulo. It resulted from a qualitative research driven in engineering curricula and syllabuses about values formation contents and electronic surveys with course coordinators. The search in syllabuses and curricula showed that values education is no usual in engineering formation: from the 88 engineering courses analysed, just 13 have some kind of ethical content in curricula. The survey's lack of answers also pointed to a gap on the ethics theme. Engineering projects are permeated with uncertainty, not just technical, and preparation is required to make choices that take into account the social, cultural, economic and environmental contexts. Without proper preparation, it can be expected that decision making becomes more impoverished.

*Study on research integrity education for university students* stressed Gong (China). His questionnaire covered topics within the general information of students, everyday concerns of research, the knowledge of scientific norms, attitudes towards scientific misconduct, opinions on the importance of the research integrity and related preventive measures. The results of 1082 valid questionnaires showed that students do not focus on research misconduct and do not have a good understanding of the norms of research. The author's study suggested that the existence of universal education in the integrity of scientific research are not wide enough and the effects of education on research integrity is unsatisfied. He suggested that universities in China should give for students more opportunities to understand scientific research and promote courses to avoid research misconduct.

The paper of Verges (Panama) *Academic responsibility and students' vulnerability* started with question What is the responsibility of the professors to humanize medicine? Questions and alternatives for discussion were presented. The aim of his contribution was discussion about values and responsibility of educators for answer to the cognitive vulnerability and humanistic deficiencies of students. The

philosophical perspective was honesty, responsibility and justice. The implications of the paper were integration of the academic program and permanent formation of professors from a social and personal developmental perspective. He concluded that it is necessary to monitor the needs and difficulties of students early from their first year at university. According to him until socio-economic level is important, the greatest problem is cultural and capacity to express their values. Medical professors must understand that education is not only transmission of skills and knowledge but formation in ethics and human rights too.

*Ethics of social consequences as a model of ethical education* was the paper of Gluchman (Slovakia). The author stated that ethics of social consequences offers a possibility for ethical education and development of critical ethical thinking: on the one hand. It emphasized basic values accepted by the moral of the society, i.e. humanity, human dignity, moral right for life, justice, responsibility, duty and tolerance. On the other hand, in the process of ethical thinking it required to regard future or past consequences emerging from people's thinking, decision-making and acting. The aim was to create a model of ethical rational thinking on the basis of strictly stated criteria, which form sufficient conditions for free decision-making and acting of the moral agent, his higher responsibility, which should be determined by the effort to achieve positive social consequences emerging from their behaviour and acting or at least to achieve predominance of the positive over negative social consequences. Gluchmanova (Slovakia) focused the *Ethical and moral education in Slovakia - past and present*. In her contribution she demonstrated the application of ethical and moral aspects of the educational process in Slovakia in the past and at present, when in the country many changes have taken place in several areas of social life, including education.

*The role and use of case studies in ethics education – design, application and assessment in a South African university context* was declared by Hoffmann (South Africa). According to the author effective ethics education requires that educators have a high-level awareness and application of educational principles and methods in order to create optimal contexts for learners to internalise ethical skills in their personal and professional lives. He stressed that case studies are one of the most widely used educational instruments to illustrate various ethics principles, to facilitate the development of insight in different ethical perspectives and ethical decision-making, and to assess the application of ethical principles. The paper aims was to achieve the following outcomes: to discuss and illustrate the various sources of material that can be used to design context-relevant case studies; to discuss the application of various case study formats in ethics education programmes; and to discuss the integral role of case studies in the formative and summative assessment of ethics education content. Well-designed, context-based and context-relevant case studies according to the author can significantly contribute to raise learners' ethical self-awareness, ethical sensitivity, ethical issue recognition, ethical decision-making and the application of ethical principles.

Ha T. Tran (Vietnam) asked the question in his contribution *Is education sending the right message?* His paper investigated the effect of higher education on stu-

dents' compassion. As a method a cross-sectional survey of 1143 students from 2 Vietnamese universities was conducted. He stated that compassion decreases after four years of study at both universities. While this is still not indicative of a negative causation between higher education and compassion, the fact that graduates exiting the university are equipped with more knowledge, thus, more power, but lower morality, means that the university has not done enough to teach compassion. In conclusion he stated that the study reveals an urgency of ethical education in higher education, at least in the case of Vietnam, since knowledge without ethics is even more dangerous than no knowledge at all.

*Can ethics education solve inequities?* was the topic of Castro's (Singapore) presentation. He stated that one way to interpret the conference theme is to take it to suggest a need for ethics education to contribute to minimizing social inequities. This objective called to mind three types of inequities that ethics education can help minimize: 1. access to ethics education itself; 2. access to the fruits and benefits of expensive modern research and biotechnology; and 3. inappropriate content or flawed methodology in ethics education. This paper explored three areas in which effective bioethics education could serve as a tool to deal with societal inequities. It took up three illustrative case studies and explains how related bioethics education could be effective. It makes the point that bioethics can serve as a tool to deal with inequities by going beyond analysis and taking up an educational role. Through the case studies, the paper illustrated how inequities could arise and proposed ways of avoiding or mitigating the effects of such inequities. Most of the inequities are likely to arise in resource-challenged contexts. However, the author stated that they can also arise in resource-rich countries where access to opportunities could be distorted.

*Ethics educator course – what works and what does not* was presented by Nortjé (South Africa). The author shared best practices examples of what works in the South African tertiary education context. Furthermore, the presentation highlighted some of the more prominent challenges that an ethics educator course may pose, including its extrapolation to similar international contexts. Lastly, the presentation offered guidelines on the development of the educator's moral ideals and virtues in order to ultimately enrich their specific ethics modules or programmes. This closely linked to learners' moral development, critical reflection of moral issues and the internalisation of bioethics principles.

*Priorities in the teaching of ethics in a globalized world* was the topic of Pegoraro (Italy) presentation. He stated that globalization has created the favourable conditions for social, economic and cultural integration in today's world. The development of information and communication technologies, that facilitate connecting people in different countries, has certainly made possible an overall interconnection among national and regional realities and made easier for people, goods and services to move across borders. Therefore, new priorities arise also in the teaching of ethics and bioethics in a globalized world. "Global conscience": first of all, people have the necessity of providing moral knowledge, skills and attitudes, developing consciences to have a new ethical awareness, enabling first to recognize

and then to face the challenge posed by the globalized world. “Universal values”: second, people must spread universal values, particularly anthropological values such as human dignity aiming at these be recognized in every country (mainly in those countries where human life is threatened, and systematic violation of fundamental rights is permitted). “Common responsibility”: third, rethink and propose again responsibility in seeking a sustainable and integral development. Common (or global) responsibility must take into account both promotion of human beings dignity and preservation of creation, showing how respect for human life, justice, peace and respect for the environment are absolutely interconnected themes.

The other presented papers in the sessions on ethics education worldwide focused on athletics and ethics, bioethics, biotechnology ethics, business ethics, communication ethics, education ethics, engineering ethics, environmental ethics, ethics and biological sciences, ethics and law, medical and dental ethics, nursing ethics, pharmacy ethics, philosophical ethics, religious ethics, social sciences and ethics at all. The IAEE will start a new journal *The International Journal of Ethics Education* in 2016 and all conference contributions will be published there.