

Ethics education: global, inspiring and challenging

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You are reading the first issue of a brand-new journal on ethics education. It is the official journal of a recently established professional organization, the International Association for Education in Ethics (IAEE). The journal is unique in three dimensions: it is focused explicitly on ethics education, it has a global scope, and it covers all areas of applied ethics. The aim of the journal is to provide a global platform for exchange of research data, theories, experiences, reports and opinions on ethics education in a broad range of areas of applied ethics. The journal is particularly interested in contributions about teaching programs in developing countries, with detailed information concerning the content of teaching programs, the objectives of the programs, the teaching methods and approaches to evaluate the impact of ethics education. It will also address general issues in regard to ethics education such as policy, implementation, international trends, and philosophy of education. Providing a scholarly mechanism for exchange of experiences the journal aims to contribute to enhancing the quality of ethics education around the world.

A special journal for ethics education

Interest for ethics education is growing. Over the last decade, an increasing number of scholarly contributions have been published in major areas of ethics education. However, only a few special journals in ethics education exist, so that the majority of publications have appeared in other journals. Two categories of journals are particularly interested in publishing about ethics education. First, education journals, for example *Academic Medicine*, *Medical Education*, *Journal for Dental Education*, *BMC Medical Education*, *The Medical Teacher*, *Educational Philosophy and Theory*) regularly publish articles, notably on bioethics teaching but the scope of these publications is limited to the healthcare professions and is not specifically focused on ethics education. Second, ethics journals (e.g. *American Journal of Bioethics*, *Ethical Perspectives*,

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Journal of Religious Ethics, *Cambridge Quarterly of Healthcare Ethics*, *Business & Professional Ethics Journal*, *Journal of Medical Ethics*, *Ethics & the Environment*, *Nursing Ethics*, *Medicine Health Care and Philosophy*, *Science and Engineering Ethics*) publish about ethics education although education is not their main focus. The journals are usually specialized in one area of applied ethics, so it is difficult to compare experiences in ethics teaching in various disciplines such as business ethics education, bioethics education and environmental ethics education.

The *International Journal of Ethics Education* will have an explicit focus on ethics education. It will have an encompassing perspective, not only focusing on one area of applied ethics but encouraging critical interaction between different areas with the common denominator of teaching ethics. Creating a separate publication platform for ethics education will create an attractive alternative to the above journals in education and ethics in general.

Recently, specialized ethics education journals have been created. Some of these journals are specialized in a particular area, notably business ethics teaching. One of the successful journals is the *Journal of Business Ethics Education*. But this is of course mainly covering one area of applied ethics. Three existing journals have a more general scope. The *Journal of Moral Education* is the oldest journal in this area, published since 42 years in 3 issues and since 1981 in 4 issues per year. Although it has a broad editorial board, the majority of experts are from the UK and USA. The focus of the journal is on philosophical and psychological dimensions of moral education, rather than on ethics education. Few publications are addressing practical issues related to teaching ethics and to specific professional groups. *Teaching Ethics* is a journal affiliated with the Society for Ethics across the Curriculum. It exists since 14 years and publishes 2 issues yearly. Many articles published have a more general and theoretical scope, covering a range of academic disciplines. Almost all publications, however, exclusively discuss experiences in educational settings within the U.S. Global outreach is limited. This is also reflected in the Editorial Team that with one exception consists of American experts (like the sponsoring institutions). *Ethics and Education* is the official journal of the International Network of Philosophers of Education. It has started 9 years ago, with 2 issues annually (since 2010 increased to 3 issues per year). Many articles have a very general scope and the exchange of practical experiences concerning actual programs and courses is rather limited. The Editorial Board has mostly European experts, with an additional expert from the USA, Hong Kong and Japan. The global outreach is limited.

This brief overview of the three specialized existing journals illustrates that the new *International Journal of Ethics Education* will not overlap with existing journals. It will only compete in regard with a specific type of manuscripts that are addressing general and reflective dimensions of ethics education in a broad sense. The new journal will differ from the existing ones in two aspects: (1) it will have a global outreach, covering experiences with ethics education around the globe, and (2) it will present a platform for exchange of theoretical and practical experiences with teaching ethics in various educational settings.

Broad and global scope

The scope of the journal is broad. It will present a platform for exchange of theoretical and practical experiences with teaching ethics in various educational settings. It will

cover education in the major areas of applied ethics such as bioethics, business ethics, engineering ethics, environmental ethics, law and ethics, medical ethics, nursing ethics, science ethics, social sciences and ethics. The journal will also provide a forum for interdisciplinary studies from diverse cultural and religious context. Exchanging educational experiences in one area of applied ethics can encourage ethics education in another area of ethics.

The broad scope of the journal is reflected in the Editorial Board. It includes experts from a variety of countries (Brazil, Canada, China, Egypt, France, Hong Kong, India, Ireland, Italy, Malaysia, Norway, Singapore, South Africa, Trinidad, Turkey, U.S.A., and Zimbabwe). The Board members also represent expertise in wide range of areas of applied ethics, from bioethics, business ethics, clinical ethics, education ethics, environmental ethics, global ethics, legal ethics, medical ethics, nursing ethics, pharmacy ethics, religious ethics, research ethics, science ethics, to technology ethics. This expertise can help to attract submissions from many areas, and not only from the most developed ones such as bioethics and business ethics, so that comparative possibilities for analysis will be offered that will benefit ethics teaching in many professional educational programs.

The primary target groups of the journal are professionals and scholars who are involved in the practice of ethics education in various disciplines and at various levels of professional training, from undergraduate to graduate and postgraduate courses. These professionals and scholars can be academic experts whose fulltime job is ethics education, but more often they will be professional experts (for example, in medicine, law or science) who are occasionally involved in ethics education.

The journal is also of interest to other persons who are engaged in ethics education, such as curriculum designers in professional education and academic policy-makers. Finally, ethics institutes, centers and departments involved in ethics education, as well as scientific societies, academies and associations will benefit from and contribute to the journal.

Improving ethics education

The launch of this journal is a consequence of the Ethics Education Program started in 2004 by UNESCO (the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization). This organization is the only one in the United Nations system with a mandate in the area of education. It also has an active program in the area of ethics of science and technology. The Ethics Education Program aims at the integration of ethics into scientific education in all Member States. It has been built up in several steps. The first step is focused on providing information. Policy-makers at governmental level, but also in universities and academies of science do not often have adequate information about what exist and what is lacking in the field of ethics education. It is therefore necessary to identify existing ethics programs as well as expertise, and to exchange experiences. In order to establish a database of ethics teaching programs, standardized forms have been developed to describe teaching programs, so that the substance of each program can be examined and various programs analyzed and compared. Within a group of countries, experts are identified who actually are teaching within a university setting. The experts are invited to take part in a regional meeting; in advance they are

invited to provide data on their programs and to return the descriptive forms so that existing programs can be discussed during the meeting. Often, it is the first time that experts have insight in the programs taught by their colleagues in the same and neighboring countries. In the meeting information can be clarified, difficulties identified and problems discussed with colleagues. With the empirical data obtained and clarified, it is easier to subsequently explore what will be necessary for the future, and how international collaboration can help to promote ethics teaching. Regional expert meetings have been organized in Budapest (October 2004), Moscow (January 2005), Split (November 2005), Muscat (November 2006), Istanbul (March 2007), Marrakesh (June 2008), Abidjan (December 2008), Dakar (March 2009) and Kinshasa (July 2009). Currently, 235 teaching programs have been validated and entered into the UNESCO Global Ethics Observatory database, covering 43 countries, mainly from Central and Eastern Europe, the Arab region and Africa. The advantage of this database is that detailed information concerning each teaching program is available in comparative format (<http://www.unesco.org/shs/ethics/geo/user/>). One common finding has been the vulnerability of ethics teaching programs. Often, the programs are taught by enthusiastic teachers but there is no firm institutional basis, nor any systematic effort to create a future generation of ethics teachers.

As a second step, an ethics teacher training course has been set up to remedy these problems and to make sure that a new generation of professionals and scientists will be encouraged to teach ethics in a professional manner. This ethics teacher training has taken place in Romania (2006), Kenya (2007), Slovak Republic (2007), Saudi Arabia (2007), Belarus (2008), Croatia (2010, 2011, 2014), and Serbia (2011). The focus of the courses is on didactic skills required for ethics teaching rather than on content issues of ethics.

The third step in the Ethics Education Program has been the development of a proposal for a core curriculum in the specific area of bioethics, on the basis of the *Universal Declaration on Bioethics and Human Rights*, adopted by all Member States of UNESCO in 2005. Because there is consensus on the fundamental principles of bioethics in the Declaration, this can be considered as a basis for what should be minimally included in a bioethics course. An Advisory Expert Committee on the Teaching of Ethics, composed of members of the International Bioethics Committee and the World Commission on the Ethics of Scientific Knowledge as well as representatives of the UNESCO Chairs in Bioethics, the Academy of Sciences for the Developing World (TWAS) and the World Medical Association (WMA) has developed the proposal with teaching units related to the principles of the Declaration. For each unit, the possible objectives and contents are described, and proposals for teaching materials, resources and assessment methods are provided. The proposal has taken into account the recommendations of a consultation meeting with 30 experts, mainly from developing countries. The proposal has also been tested in a number of universities all over the world (Argentina, Armenia, Belarus, Israel, Japan, Moldova and the Russian Federation). Based on these experiences, the proposal has recently been revised. It is currently in translation into Arabic, French, Russian and Spanish. The core bioethics course can assist scholars who want to establish teaching programs in bioethics in various cultures and regions. Also books with cases from various countries are available to be used in the units of the course. Similar effort could be undertaken in other areas of applied ethics, for example environmental ethics. UNESCO is

furthermore the only UN organization with the possibility to establish University Chairs that can help to implement its program in a specific country or region. UNESCO chairs in bioethics are currently located in Argentina, Brazil, Israel, Kenya, Mexico, Portugal, Spain and USA. Regional Documentation Centres are also an important resource for future activities since they will make information and documentation from the region itself available and distribute information materials from other regions and UNESCO. Centres have been established in Vilnius University (Lithuania), Egerton University (Kenya) and the Academy of Sciences in Cairo (Egypt). A new centre will soon be established in Logroño, Spain by the organizers of the upcoming fourth international IAEE conference (“Ethics education and intercultural encounter”; <http://4iaee.cibir.es/>).

A global platform for exchanging expertise

The proliferation of ethics education in many countries and in many professional areas has resulted in a vast body of literature that is growing daily. What impresses is enormous variety and heterogeneity. Controversies exist concerning the objectives of ethics teaching. What should this teaching aim to achieve? The UNESCO Global Ethics Observatory indicates that most programs focus on providing knowledge and information as well as identifying the moral relevancy of salient issues. Some programs also aim at skills, for example analysis and reasoning, understanding and explaining, and justification and argumentation. Influencing attitudes is less common. In bioethics education for example it is controversial whether ethics teaching should aim at improved decision-making or at better health professionals.

Controversies furthermore exist concerning methods. What is the best way to teach ethics? Didactic approaches range from plenary lectures, small-group discussions, case analysis, writing exercises, movie-triggered debates and role-playing. It is also not clear whether ethics teaching can best be offered in stand-alone courses or integrated in other courses, or perhaps both. How to evaluate ethics teaching is also controversial. There is agreement that educational programs need to be assessed, otherwise it is not demonstrable what students have learned and how programs can be improved. However, in practice many programs are not evaluated and students are not assessed. The point is that without proper assessment studies it is not known which teaching methods are preferable.

One conclusion is that a global platform to exchange experiences in ethics teaching is lacking. This was also obvious from the UNESCO Ethics Education Program. In many countries there are enthusiastic teachers of ethics in many disciplines but they usually work in isolation. It will be helpful if detailed information about syllabi and teaching experiences would be available. The UNESCO database is currently the only comparative database but it provides information for a limited number of countries. This lack of cooperation is resulting in absence of coordination or strategic planning. There is also a serious lack of qualified teachers. In general there is almost no faculty development in ethics education. There are only few efforts to teach the teachers and to create the next generation of ethics instructors. Resources for ethics education (teaching materials, funding for library resources, program examples) are generally insufficient for teaching. Many medical schools for example are inadequately resourced for

teaching medical ethics. Finally, the quality of teaching programs is difficult to identify. Since detailed information is generally not available and assessment studies scarce, there are no criteria to compare and evaluate the quality of ethics education.

In order to address these questions, a professional organization for ethics education has been created. In April 2011 the International Association for Education in Ethics (IAEE) was officially established. At the initiative of UNESCO, a group of international scholars in ethics education created this global platform for exchange of experiences in the teaching of ethics. The Secretariat is established at the Center for Healthcare Ethics, Duquesne University, Pittsburgh, USA (www.ethicsassociation.org). The goals of IAEE are to exchange and analyze experiences with the teaching of ethics in various educational settings, to promote the development of knowledge and methods of ethics education, to function as a global centre of contact for experts in this field, to promote contacts between members from countries around the world and to enhance and expand the teaching of ethics at national, regional and international levels. The IAEE is organizing international conferences and other scholarly meetings. International conferences have taken place in Pittsburgh, USA (2012), Ankara, Turkey (2014) and Curitiba, Brazil (2015). The next conferences are scheduled for Spain (May 2016), India (2017) and South Africa (2018). Conferences will feature keynote lectures from experts and parallel sessions regarding a wide variety of fields. These fields of study include: bioethics, medical ethics, nursing ethics, pharmacy ethics, dental ethics, science ethics, engineering ethics, philosophical ethics, religious ethics and business ethics. Beginning in 2016, the IAEE will publish this journal. Subscription to the journal will be included in the IAEE membership fee.

This issue

A wide range of contributions from different parts of the world and from different disciplines is presented in this issue. Diego Gracia will elaborate his ideas and suggestions for the future of ethics teaching. Subsequent issues of this journal will address the same topic of future development for various areas of ethics teaching, relating to the environment, business, and science. We invite readers to submit their reflections and proposals for other areas of applied ethics teaching. Following this first article, are contributions from India, China, Ghana, Canada, the Netherlands, and Brazil. This issue will inaugurate a special section on leaders in ethics education. The editor will conduct a series of interviews with experienced scholars in ethics education from across the world. They are invited to reflect on their long experience with ethics teaching, as well as to offer recommendations for addressing challenges and for new approaches in the future. The series will open with an interview with Godfrey Tangwa, bioethicist from Cameroon.