

Minutes of the First Meeting The COMEST Working Group on The Teaching of Ethics

Paris 26th January 2003

Those present:

Jens Erik Fenstad (chair of COMEST), Dagfinn Føllesdal (chair of the working group and the meeting), Anne Fagot-Largeault, Sergey Petrowich Kapitza, Jaroslava Moserova, Yoichiro Murakami, Hu Qiheng, Zhai XiaoMe, Teresa Fuentes, Melissa Anderson, Lillian Eriksen (referent).

For a list of contact addresses see appendix 1.

Purpose:

The meeting was held according to the mandate of the working group of UNESCO to give the necessary advice on how to integrate an awareness of and competence in ethics and responsibility of science in the training of every young scientist.

“The work group should (i) give a survey of existing programs; (ii) analyse their structure and content, (iii) on this basis give detailed curriculum advice on how to integrate “science ethics, as well as training in history, philosophy and cultural impact of science” in science as required by the Declaration (paragraph 41)”.

The specific purpose of the meeting was to gather information and ideas as well as to discuss the content and structure of the project: *The teaching of ethics*.

Mr. Fenstad the chair of COMEST, opened the meeting recalling what has been done so far in UNESCO on the theme ethics in education. Mr. Føllesdal, chair of the working group continued by underlining the need for concrete proposals on how ethics can be taught both as an integrated part and as double competence at the Universities. Today students often lack ability to deal with ethical issues. The courses should therefore give training in how to sort the good ethical standpoints from bad ones. The courses must be ensured high quality. About the implementation he mentioned that it is important to create courses that can be arranged at relatively low cost. Examples of this are courses on the Internet and courses on videotapes, which can be easily and inexpensively distributed. He also mentioned the financial aspect and that COMEST should ask UNESCO to explore the possibilities for financing the effort to make course material widely available.

Summary

The meeting concluded with agreeing on the following structure for the project.

Structure:

- Introduction
- Background

- Examples of existing initiatives
- Description of themes
- Ethics courses
 - Three levels:
 - Elementary: Introduction course to new students at the Universities
 - Advanced: Part of the PHD courses
 - Professional: Teachers of ethics
- Ways of arranging the courses and education material
- Implementation
- Finances

Appendix 2: Addresses of selected academic centres giving courses on research ethics.

Content

1. Introduction and background to the paper

There were several proposals on the content of the introduction and background part of the paper. The group agreed that the paper should mention:

- The mandate of the COMEST and the working group recalling the World Conference on Science in Budapest in 1999. At this conference an agreement was made on the importance of ethics in science. As a result of this, the working group should not spend much time on arguing why ethics in education is important, but refer to the Declaration § 41 and the Framework of action §71.
- The importance of ethics in education. What makes ethics especially important today?
- The importance of making the students interested in ethics at an early stage.
- The problem of reluctant countries and identifying the arguments used against ethics in education (Anne Fagout-Largout will look at this).
- Comments on science being rational and not value free.
- The scientific community has developed from being mainly a closed system where the scientist did the ethical evaluation, if any, and quality control themselves to an open system where the customers often are working outside of the scientific community. In this system the social responsibility should be considered in a different view from the one in the closed system.
- What the working group mean by science.
- Good examples on terms of ethics (for example Rothblat).
- The importance of social involvement, social responsibility and awareness of ethical issues and dilemmas.
- Regional differences. The courses should take into consideration that ethical problems differ in different parts of the world. People from the West should be careful to automatically transfer their own problems and solutions to the rest of the world.
- Intellectual property rights.
- The important role of professional organisations as engineers, dentist, medicine and stock exchange.
- Those who opt for ethics are often not those who mostly need it.
- SCRES work on the codes of ethics.

Themes

The group agreed that the courses should contain some common topics before the course goes into depth on the ethics of one subject. The paper should have a short description of these themes:

- Globalisation and international ethics of science.
- Ethics in economics.
- Risk- how to require consent?
- Precautionary principle
- Justice
- Law and ethics: Ethics is more than applying the law. Being aware that laws is not enough for ethical behaviour
- Sustainable development

The courses in ethics

The working group agreed that one of the aims of the courses in ethics is to create an awareness of ethical issues. After the courses the students should be able to recognize and analyse ethical issues with an aim to reaching decisions on how to act ethically. The group should go into the following questions:

- Diverse models on how to organize ethics courses.
- How to take cultural knowledge and traditional knowledge into consideration.
- How to include teaching in ethics in laboratory- and fieldwork.
- Production and use of films and literature that can stimulate to ethical thinking.
- Provide Courses for home studies.
- Courses on the Internet.

The courses should be held at three different levels:

1. *Elementary course* that all students ought to have. These courses should be directed towards their later profession.
2. More advanced courses that are part of the PhD courses
3. *Education of teachers of ethics*

These courses should contain three parts:

- a) Introduction to ethics: Different kinds of ethics: Various versions of consequentialism, ethics of duty, virtue ethics.
- b) General themes of ethics as mentioned above.
- c) In depth studies on the ethical dilemmas relevant to the different subjects of study.

Implementation

The working group should make recommendations to the UNESCO conference on education. This could be:

- Recommend UNESCO to earmark positions in ethics at government level to safeguard the implementation of the courses.

- Recommend UNESCO to contact responsible persons/institutions in each country to follow up the teaching of ethics.
- Recommend UNESCO to develop teaching material with cases of ethical dilemmas from science and to make a textbook in ethics that can be translated into different languages.
- Recommend UNESCO to offer scholarships to enable students from developing countries to study ethics at first-class universities.
- The standards of the courses should be at a high international level. In particular, it is important that the instructors as far as possible have documented their competence by publications in top ethics journals, and that the participants are required to hand in written work which is given back with comments by the instructor.
- The curricula should be composed through cooperation between specialists on ethics and specialists on different scientific fields.
- There could be held regional conferences to create interest and to discuss the content of the courses regarding to the different subject.
- UNESCO may make use of courses in ethics at a selection of good universities.

Finances and support

- To be able to implement the courses in ethics it is necessary with support from the governments, without this it will not be possible to implement the ethics courses.
- It was proposed that the group should ask the World Bank to contribute with financing the courses in developing countries.
- Support from UNESCO and the UN- system is necessary.

To find out

- The best practises, different versions of the curriculum.
- What has been done on ethics in education by the Council of Europe and other international and regional organizations?
- About the intensive courses in ethics held various places in the world, for example at the Catholic University in Nijmegen in the Netherlands.
- How Harvard teaches business ethics.

Meetings

It was agreed that the next meeting would be held in Beijing the 10th-12th of May.

Assignments of tasks

The participants of the meeting will give proposals on the reports content and on “best cases of teaching ethics”.

Final Agenda

The Secretary of the committee will, in cooperation with the Chair, work out a draft for a report based on the discussion at our first meeting and send it to the members of the committee for comments and proposals. The first such draft will be sent out in mid-March. After some rounds of this, the report should be put into close to final form before the end of

April, so that the second and final meeting of the committee in Beijing on May 10-12 can be devoted to polishing this final draft.

Lillian Eriksen

Date: 19.02.03

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Appendix 2: Addresses of selected academic centres and teaching programs

(Tentative and very incomplete, more will be added, and thereafter some of the best centres and programs selected and included in our final list.)

- allAfrica.com
<http://allafrica.com/education/bydate/?n=30>
- Association for Practical and Professional Ethics
<http://php.indiana.edu/~appe/home.html>
- Center for the Study of Ethics in the Professions, Illionis Institute of Technology
<http://www.iit.edu/departments/csep/PublicWWW/codes/>
- COMESTS
<http://allafrica.com/education/bydate/?n=30>
- Commission on Public Ethics
http://216.239.35.120/translate_c?hl=en&u=http://www.presidencia.gov.br/etica/&prev=/search%3Fq%3DBrazilian%2Bdepartment%2Bof%2Beducation%26num%3D100%26hl%3Den%26lr%3D%26ie%3DUTF-8%26sa%3DG
- CORDIS, The European Commission Community Research
<http://www.cordis.lu/fp5/home.html>
- Ethica- Ethics and Health: An International and Comparative Arena
<http://www.hf.uib.no/i/Filosofisk/ethica/default.html>
- Eubios Ethics Institute:
<http://www.biol.tsukuba.ac.jp/~macer/index.html>
- EUROPEAN ETHICS NETWORK
<http://www.kuleuven.ac.be/een/Contents/schotsmans.html>

- Global Ethics Institute in New Zealand and Japan
http://www.iit.edu/departments/csep/perspective/persp_v20_spring01_4.html
- International Network for Engineers and scientists for global responsibility (INES)
<http://www.inesglobal.com/>
- IUBS, International Union of Biological Sciences
<http://www.iubs.org/>
- Kennedy Institute of Ethics
<http://www.georgetown.edu/research/kie/>
- List of Study Opportunities in Practical and Professional Ethics in the US 2002
<http://php.indiana.edu/~appe/study.html>
- SEAHEN - South East Asian Health Ethics Network
<http://www.hf.uib.no/i/Filosofisk/seahen/>
- Scientists for global responsibility
<http://www.sgr.org.uk/>
- SOCRATES Thematic Network for Agriculture
“Teaching animal and bioethics in agricultural and veterinary higher education in Europe” <http://www.ensaia.u-nancy.fr/bioethics/workshop/toc.html>
- The online ethics center for Engineering and Science, Codes of Ethics and Conduct
<http://onlineethics.org/codes/>
- The Research Ethics Service Project, The University of New Mexico
<http://hsc.unm.edu/resp/>
- UiO Ethics Program at the University of Oslo
<http://www.uio.no/etikkprogrammet/>
- United Nations University, Biolac
<http://www.biolac.unu.edu/English/homenglish.htm>
- Standards for Ethics and Responsibility in Science:
An analysis and evaluation of their content, background and function
<http://www.icsu.org/Library/Reviews/SCRES/Standards%20for%20Ethics%20and%20Responsibility%20in%20Science.pdf>