ADVISORY EXPERT COMMITTEE FOR THE TEACHING OF ETHICS

Report of the Second Meeting

Division of Ethics of Science and Technology
Social and Human Sciences Sector
UNESCO

2006
ADVISORY EXPERT COMMITTEE FOR THE TEACHING OF ETHICS

Second Meeting

Location: UNESCO HQs, Bonvin Building
Room: B. 2.08
1, rue Miollis, 75015 Paris, France

Date: March 16-17, 2006

Participating members of the Advisory Expert Committee:
- Professor Diego Gracia (COMEST)
- Professor Nouzha Guessous-Idrissi (Chairperson of IBC)
- Professor Leonardo de Castro (Vice-chair of IBC)
- Professor Ruben Apressyan (COMEST)
- Professor Amnon Carmi (UNESCO Chair in bioethics)
- Mr. John Williams (World Medical Association)
- Professor D. Balasubramanian (Academy of Sciences for the Developing World)

Secretariat: Division of Ethics of Science and Technology (SHS/EST)
- Mr. Henk ten Have
- Mrs. Simone Scholze
- Mr. Tee Wee Ang

Documents distributed in advance:
- Overview activities Ethics Education Program 2004-2005
- Report Committee meeting, 4 July 2005
- Universal Declaration on Bioethics and Human Rights
- Publications on Core Curriculum in the United Kingdom
- Analysis of teaching programs in GEObs

Opening of the meeting

Mr. ten Have welcomed the participants, acknowledging their contribution to the Advisory Expert Committee. He mentioned that Professor Donald Evans (IBC) was unfortunately not able to attend this second meeting.

In accordance with the programme of the meeting, previously distributed, the main objective of the second meeting, explained Mr. ten Have, was to develop a core curriculum on bioethics, continuing the discussion for setting standards and criteria for ethics teaching programs, aiming at reinforcing and increasing the capacities of Member States in the area of ethics education.

He pointed out that, as the quality of existing programs is extremely heterogeneous, there is a niche for international action, aimed at three goals of setting standards:
- identifying what should be a core curriculum in the area of ethics (starting by bioethics);
- developing standards and criteria for evaluating existing and newly developed teaching programs; and
- providing a system of certification of programs that have been positively assessed.

In the first meeting, it has been agreed that the Expert Committee will work on the drafting of a proposal for a core curriculum in bioethics (on the basis of the Universal Declaration on Bioethics and Human Rights). This proposal will be tested in cooperation with TWAS (Academy of Sciences for the Developing World), and then form the basis for a cooperative project to produce an adequate multimedia program and materials for the core curriculum.

Mr. ten Have gave then a brief overview of the activities of the Ethics Education Programme so far, explaining its context and purpose in the framework of UNESCO SHS/EST work plans for the current biennium. The following activities have been undertaken.

Mapping of experts in ethics teaching
The first step in promoting ethics teaching programs is identifying who are the experts in ethics as well as the experts in ethics teaching. The data concerning these experts are being continuously introduced into the ethics database (GEObs 1). Per March 2006, the number of data in the databases is as follows:
- Database 1: Who's who in ethics
  o Expert entries: 517
  o Mailing list: 178
- Database 2: Institutions, Committees, Societies
  o Expert entries: 142
  o Mailing list: 6

Sampling of teaching programs
In order to facilitate the development of programs, the comparison of programs, and the possible certification of programs, it will be necessary to make a collection of existing teaching programs in ethics. In this way, experiences can be sampled, compared and exchanged. The samples collected are also being introduced into the GEObs 3. For the time being, only English samples are being introduced into the database; in later phases these samples will be translated into other languages. Special registration forms have been developed in order to obtain standardised and comparable data concerning teaching activities, and have been distributed among experts. Five special forms have been designed, according to the various phases of ethics teaching: in graduation programmes, masters, professional training programmes, specializations and doctorate programmes. All program descriptions have been reviewed and revised. The final versions have been subjected to validation. If validated they are inputted into GEObs 3 (www.unesco.org/shs/ethics/geo).

The current status of the program descriptions is:
• in process of inputting into GEObs: 28 programmes
• programs on view in the webpage: 86 programmes

Establishment of documentation centres
When activities in a particular region have started, an important resource for future activities is the availability of adequate information and documentation regarding materials from the region itself, and in the official working language used in that region. It is imperative that the documentation and categorisation of materials will be consistent with
the methods and rules used for the Global Ethics Observatory. In September 2004, the Regional Information and Documentation Centre in Vilnius, that will take care for data and documents in the Russian language, have been established. The database in Paris will take care for data and documents in the English and French languages. This biennium the focus will be to create a documentation center in the Arab region. Furthermore, it will be necessary to increase UNESCO’s presence in Africa and the coordination between HQs and field offices (e.g. Bangkok and Latin America)

**UNESCO Chairs**
There are 5 chairs in bioethics and no chairs in the area of ethics of science and technology so far.

- **UNESCO Chair of Bioethics established in 2001 at Haifa University, Israel**
  Director: Professor Amnon Carmi
- **UNESCO Chair of Bioethics established in 1994 at the University of Buenos Aires, Argentina**
  Director: Dr. Salvador Dario Bergel
- **UNESCO Chair in Bioethics established in 1998 at Egerton University, Kenya**
  Director: Dr. Kimani Wa Njoroge, which is being revitalized
- **UNESCO Chair in Bioethics: “Biojuridica y Bioetica” established in 1999 at the University Feminina del Sagrado Corazon, Peru**
  Director: Professor Maria Dolores Vila-Coro (Spain)
- **UNESCO Chair in Bioethics: Bioethics and Society established in 1999 at the University of Granada, Spain**
  Director: Professor Lorenzo Morillas Cueva

Two new chairs have been approved:
- **UNESCO Chair in Bioethics at the University of Brasilia (Brazil): “Bioetica en el contexto de America Latina”**
- **UNESCO Chair in Bioethics, Ethics and Public Policy Centre, Washington DC., USA**

In process is the following application:
- **UNESCO Chair on Environmental Ethics at the East Siberia State University of Technology (Ulan-Ude, Russian Federation)**

Professor Gracia raised the issue of the criteria for the establishment of a new chair and the use of UNESCO’s name and logo. Mr. ten Have explained that there are very strict rules regarding the use of UNESCO credentials.

He also mentioned that a teachers training course will be organized in cooperation with the UNESCO Chair in Haifa, as a pilot experience for teachers of ethics. The UNESCO National Commission in Israel will financially support this project and cooperation has been established with the UNESCO European Centre for Higher Education (CEPES), in Bucharest, Romania.

Mr. Tee Wee Ang made then an extensive presentation of the operation of GEObs databases 1 (Who’s who in ethics), 2 (Ethics institutions) and 3 (Ethics teaching programmes). The participants expressed their opinion in terms of structure, scope and content of the electronic forms.
Mr. Williams suggested to include an index or thesaurus of possible entries allowing the user to visualize the whole syllabus.

Professor Guessous-Idrissi recommended that, among the keywords of bioethics, in the draft proposal, the item “feminism” should be replaced by “gender”.

**Brainstorm on the core curriculum**

It was confirmed by the Expert Committee that the short-term and feasible objective is to develop a core curriculum with focus on bioethics, based on the normative instruments developed by UNESCO, and in particular the recent Universal Declaration on Bioethics and Human Rights.

It was also agreed that the target public would be medical students at undergraduate level, or at least during the years leading to the awarding of the medical degree. The exact place of the course within the medical programme will depend on the circumstances; the respective institutions (according to the local context) can decide whether the course will be on the program during the first years (the undergraduate or pre-clinical phase) or during the later years (sometimes called the clinical or “master” phase), as long as it is scheduled prior to the medical degree. Since the course should be a mandatory component of the medical curriculum, it should therefore be completed upon the award of the medical degree.

Mr. Williams pondered that it should be clear that the core curriculum is not a tool to be imposed to universities, but it should rather be an international reference.

Professor D. Balasubramanian expressed his concern that the curriculum should consist of a minimum program, easily acceptable by all governments and also by non-governmental organizations and enforcing bodies.

It was mentioned that the core curriculum would become additionally a reference for grants and evaluations of UNESCO Chairs, fellowships, etc. It should be used even as one of the criteria for evaluation of students and programs of bioethics (fundamental issues that students should know at the end of the course), added Professor Apressyan.

Referring to the number of teaching hours, the Expert Committee agreed that at least 32 hours would be necessary, each hour corresponding to one unit. However, the precise number of hours need to be determined as soon as the syllabus or contents have been delineated.

Concerning the methodology and the learning tools to be employed, Professor Carmi recommended, and the group agreed, that besides lectures, seminars and tutorials, clinical cases and moral dilemmas should deserve a special attention. It was suggested that each member might offer cases – not fiction, but real clinical cases. Mr ten Have also said that suggestions of films and narratives to which theoretical explanations could be applied are welcome.

Professor Guessous-Idrissi also pointed out that a certain chronology should be observed: basic issues should precede applied elements, in a sequence. First hours should be devoted to basic concepts of ethics (general and applied ethics) and to what means medical ethics.
As far as the core content was concerned, Professor Gracia recommended that the structure of the curriculum should be organized according to the principles of the Universal Declaration, which is an original approach. The Committee agreed to take into account the 15 principles reflected in the articles of the Universal Declaration on Bioethics and Human Rights (namely, articles 3 to 17).

Each expert selected an article or group of articles and was then invited to make a preliminary exercise to outline the corresponding syllabus, as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Instructor</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>What is ethics?</td>
<td>Prof. Gracia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What is bioethics?</td>
<td>Prof. Gracia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Human Dignity and Human Rights (Article 3)</td>
<td>Prof. Aressyan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Benefit and Harm (Article 4)</td>
<td>Mr. ten Have</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Autonomy and Individual Responsibility (Article 5)</td>
<td>Prof. Aressyan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consent (Article 6)</td>
<td>Prof. Carmi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Persons without the capacity to consent (Article 7)</td>
<td>Prof. Carmi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Respect for Human Vulnerability and Personal Integrity (Article 8)</td>
<td>Mr. ten Have</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Privacy and Confidentiality (Article 9)</td>
<td>Mr. Williams</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Equality, Justice and Equity (Article 10)</td>
<td>Mr. Williams</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Discrimination and Non-Stigmatization (Article 11)</td>
<td>Prof. Guessous-Idrissi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Respect for Cultural Diversity and Pluralism (Article 12)</td>
<td>Prof. Guessous-Idrissi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Solidarity and Cooperation (Article 13)</td>
<td>Mr. ten Have</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Responsibility and Health (Article 14)</td>
<td>Prof. de Castro</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sharing of Benefits (Article 15)</td>
<td>Prof. de Castro</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Protecting Future Generations (Article 16)</td>
<td>Mr. ten Have</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Protection of the Environment, the Biosphere and Biodiversity (Article 17)</td>
<td>Mr. ten Have</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In order to minimally homogenize the basic knowledge of the students and teachers, it was deemed necessary that at least two hours of the core curriculum should be devoted to the theoretical and practical clarification of ethics and bioethics.

During the second day of the meetings, all experts discussed the proposals for the elaboration of each topic (preliminary called "unit"). It is necessary to present ideas and clues to make clear what will be the contents of every unit.

Mr. ten Have insisted on the necessity of pedagogical, supportive material to allow teachers to give lectures or use other teaching tools, based on the information of the core curriculum, on how they can elaborate and develop the subject with their students.
Professor Carmi endorsed this view, adding that the Expert Committee must take into account not only the students but also the teachers. A considerable part of them have no previous contact with philosophy or bioethics.

Professor Apressyan mentioned that in his view the phenomenological approach is more interesting than the analytical, meta-ethical approach. In the proposed course, various philosophical and ethical approaches should be presented.

Professor Gracia pointed out that at some moment it would be important to prepare a teacher’s book. Only in this way, it can be explained what needed to be taught and how it can best be done.

Specific comments, general notes and the respective outcomes of the discussion on the core content have resulted in a work document with a preliminary sketch of the various units identified. This work document will be elaborated in the near future.

Follow-up

Having completed the preliminary draft proposal for a core curriculum, the Expert Committee turned to the follow-up. The Secretariat will incorporate the suggested changes. The report of the meeting will be sent out to the members within the following few weeks. All involved would be invited to send a more detailed version of the respective contributions before the end of May.

It was agreed that three categories of information will be presented in the description of the core curriculum, prepared by the Expert Committee:

a) Content of the core curriculum (the Syllabus)
b) Materials for teachers; and
c) Materials for students.

Professor Carmi said that the group should work with the perspective of having the outcomes universally accepted.

Professor De Castro mentioned that all these materials should be made available by means of online resources. Mr. ten Have agreed with this view, but underlined the importance that the material be institutionalized and integrated in medical schools. The Expert Committee should also have in mind how to provide this information for many countries that have no material and electronic means. How to encourage governments to disseminate and to promote ethics teaching – is an issue that the Expert Committee should keep in mind.

For the forthcoming meetings of the Expert Committee the schedule agreed is the following:

- 30-31 August 2006, Paris: testing the proposal by inviting approximately 20 members of TWAS and other relevant organizations.

Mr. ten Have brought the meeting to a close, by thanking the members of the Committee.