

Ethics in the profession

Ética en la profesión

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Abstract:

Ethics is the moral conscience of every human being and serves as a guiding criterion and guideline, as appropriate to each case, when acting. In each profession, a set of principles, norms and requirements are developed in the moral plane, whose purpose is to regulate the behaviors of the subjects that participate in that area. Each professional activity is involved in specific problems, which can hardly be resolved if they have not been analyzed at some time, and it is suggested that it be in the formative stage when that reflection is made, a code of conduct or a code of behavior makes reference always to the good or correct functioning of an organization, or determined organizational practice. Vocation is an impulse, an urgency, an unsatisfied need; the satisfaction of that need is the profession. If a person is satisfied properly, he/she will obtain relaxation of tensions, tranquility and peace. The professional orientation is carried out from different theoretical perspectives. Each theory suggests to carry out the orientation work based on the determination and understanding of certain key factors for professional choice.

Keywords:

Ethics, profession, vocation

Resumen:

La ética se ubica en la conciencia moral de todo ser humano y sirve como criterio guía y pauta, según corresponda a cada caso, al momento de actuar. En cada profesión, se desarrollan un conjunto de principios, normas y exigencias en el plano moral, que tienen por propósito regular los comportamientos de los sujetos que en ese ámbito participa. Cada actividad profesional se ve envuelta en problemáticas específicas, que difícilmente podrán ser resueltas si no se han analizado en algún momento, y se sugiere que sea en la etapa formativa cuando se realice esa reflexión, un código de conducta o un código de comportamiento hace referencia siempre al buen o correcto funcionamiento de una organización, o práctica organizacional determinada. La vocación es un impulso, una urgencia, una necesidad insatisfecha; la satisfacción de esa necesidad es la profesión. La orientación profesional se realiza desde diferentes perspectivas teóricas, cada teoría postula a realizar el trabajo de orientación con base en la determinación y comprensión de ciertos factores clave para la elección profesional.

Palabras Clave:

Ética, profesión, vocación

INTRODUCTION

The Word ethics comes from the Greek ethos “character, temperament, habit, way of being”, it emphasizes in a

behavior acquired through habit, and not by natural disposition.

Ethics is the moral conscience of every human being and serves as a guiding criterion and guideline, as appropriate for each case, when acting. On the other hand, it is understood

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that the ethical behavior, or what is known as rectitude, is not unrelated to the everyday routine and work relationships, or professional work performance.

It is common to associate ethics to moral regulations, duties and obligations that are imposed to govern the behavior. According to this, ethical behavior is limited to comply with moral dictates. However, the starting point is focused on the individual. Each person is placed in certain time and space from where he or she experiments, constitutes and acts in their own world, making decisions according to their own particular interpretations and expectations of creating favorable conditions for their permanence and development (Moreno-Uribe, 2010).

The role of the professional

Professions have become essential for the operation itself of society. The main enterprises of society are by professionals specially trained, whether it is to defend the nation, or teach to kids, diagnose and cure diseases, judge and punish those who violate the law, solve conflicts, administer the industry and businesses, design and build facilities, or help those who for any reason cannot defend themselves (Moreno-Uribe, 2010).

The main characteristic of professional ethics is that it takes into account and updates the sense and reason of being of professions. Some authors, experts in ethics consider that the profession goes beyond the occupation that allows us to gain a wage and social recognition, it is in fact a social practice that gets a real sense of the goodness given to society (Cortina, 2000).

Besides, it must be considered that the dimension of professional ethics is basic, since the professional, besides learning the knowledge and abilities of their profession, they get the commitment and responsibility of providing their services to the society, being recognized as a professional (Hortal, 2002). That is why, the real value of a professional's practice is based on "how he/she contributes to elevate the level of humanization of the social and personal life" (Fernández & Hortal 1994).

In each profession, a set of moral principles, guidelines and demands are developed, whose purpose is to govern the behavior of people who participate in that sector (Zaldivar, 1997). Professional ethics is understood as the moral strength to which our profession relies on.

The ethical professional practice goes beyond complying with obligation or prohibition rules, it is defined as acting based on values. Values are a filter that prevents ethical practice from being imposed as an external coercion by professional associations, because they recognize and identify the professional with those values, giving meaning to his/her practice (Ibarra-Rosales, 2007).

Family introduces the human being to an invisible net in the cell of society, through moral conducts and values, about what is permitted, permissible, and unaccepted, rejectable or even the prohibited. Afterwards, it is entrusted to formal education as social context.

Through life, individuals will have to make decisions regarding the activity they will do their whole life, almost everybody has the need to choose a profession or activity to develop and not only as something to do for a living, but also as a source of personal satisfaction. Ethics, in a professional sense, has to do with the interior of each person, it is implied in the professional practice and it also entails values like: responsibility, honesty, and vocational passion. This regardless to what happens in their personal life, that is, without considering their mood, economic situation, or what happens around them. Their professional responsibility makes them do their job like it was their best moment, whatever it happens (Moreno-Uribe, 2010).

Professional ethics does not directly depend on certain ethical rules or codes of different professional associations. It does not put people in the dilemma of complying or not certain moral rules. This is something that happens naturally (Silva-Camarena, 2002).

When someone acts ethically, it must be understood that professional life has met our personal life and everybody else's, in a deep and natural community sense. A citizen who behaves ethically in his/her profession, will be loyal to it, with commitment and wisdom to face the challenges and demands of community work, because ethical dimension in society has a double commitment: to us and to others, in a way that acting good impacts others (Acevedo et al., 2016).

The commitment to professional activity is acquired as a loyalty to the professional decision itself. When an activity is carried out with no professional ethics or labor ethics it is reduced to a mere activity that only allows making money. No professional activity is fulfilled, generating frustration in some people.

Professional workers contribute to the development of human beings by accepting some basic principles:

1. Every human being has a unique value, which explains the moral consideration to each person.
2. Each individual has the right to self-realization, to a point where it does not interfere with everybody else's right, and has the obligation to contribute to the society's well-being.
3. Professional workers are committed to the principles of social justice.
4. Professional workers must carry out their activities in collaboration with their clients and users, taking care of their interests (Moreno-Uribe, 2010).

This way, professional ethics contributes to preventing professional practice from becoming a narrow and limited practice oriented to performance, but a practice centered in itself to assure actions and executions with a great sense of responsibility (Fernandez & Hortal, 1994).

Importance of ethics.

It can be understood that every profession faces behavioral conducts of a different nature. Each professional activity is involved in specific problems which will hardly be solved if

they are not analyzed at some point, and it is suggested to be the training stage to do it, analyzing if it is really their call to be trained in that discipline (Moreno-Uribe, 2010).

Every profession implies an ethical point of view because of its direct or indirect relation with human beings. In the case of professionals having a direct relation, ethical rules are more evident in their profession, as they must permanently treat people to carry out their profession. Being a professional is having the privilege to transcend by learning and developing skills and attitudes through formal or informal education (Acevedo et al, 2016).

Basic elements in professional life

The first element is finding the relation between theory and practice of their knowledge. The second element is seeing profession as an efficient-based requirement to mediate the relations in society (Moreno-Uribe, 2010).

A conduct code must be considered at this point, making reference to the right use and the right operation of an organization or certain organizational practice. This sector can include from a professional consultancy, to the performance of a multinational Company, going over their employee's obligations and rights. The ethical codes establish the rules and principles that define the direction of the institution and therefore they establish its legal framework, the orientation criteria to what is right or not from the discipline or profession perspective. To achieve that, certain criteria must be considered: try to understand each person from an individual perspective, whether they are patients or suppliers; as well as their surroundings, with the objective of maintaining and defending the values, knowledge and methodology of the profession, recognizing the professional and personal limitations, promoting their usefulness through the right channels; promoting and sharing the opportunities, knowledge, experiences, and ideas in a responsible way with every colleague, professional of other disciplines and volunteers, aiming at getting a mutual benefit (Acevedo, 2016).

It is important to consider that vocation plays an important role in the development of ethics, identifying its conception and definition itself. The word vocation comes from the Latin Word which means "to call", and it is understood as a calling towards an end or destiny (Holland, 1978).

The vocation is the calling to fulfill a need but it is not the fulfillment itself; the fulfillment is the profession. It is an impulse, an emergency, an unsatisfied need. The satisfaction of that need is the profession.

If the man is adequately satisfied, he will get relaxation, calm and peace. Vocation is in the nature of affective inclinations, which lay in the unconscious and are expressed with actions. The second element of vocation is in the world of sociocultural values, the vocational inclinations take humans to a determined sphere of values which will frame and structure the personality of the individual. The representative factor is the object or the activity to which the vocation is oriented (Holland, 1978).

Professional orientation is conducted through different theoretical perspectives. Each theory states to carry out the orientation work based on the determination and understanding of some key factors to choose a profession, like the following:

- a) Personal, psychological, subjective or intrinsic factors and the student's interests. The personality is an intrinsic factor. People with a certain vocation have similar personality and create an environment with their interpersonal characteristics.
- b) Social, objective, and external factors of the student, those in the environment where he/she lives.
- c) Genetic factors and hierarchy of needs determine the vocation (Nervi, 2004).

Some sciences, like pedagogy and psychology, recommend the vocation to be: a personal decision, which must be voluntary and rational, having a wide social information. The individual must be carefully analyzed from a learning, psychological, biological, and social perspective. Besides, the vocation must be oriented within an environment where there is the education and experience of the one participating (Pantoja, 1992).

It is common to associate ethics to moral rules, duties and obligations that are imposed to rule the behavior. According to this vision, the ethical behavior is limited to the compliance of rules dictated by moral. This way of understanding and exercising ethics has some limitations:

- a) Defined as a set of duties and obligations, "ethics is reduced to an automated regulatory compliance where there is no space for freedom or the exercise of responsibility".
- b) Ethics, as a set of prohibitions, becomes negative ethics, since it is presented as coercion, which covers its true essence consisting on ethical values, this is, normative ethics which enhances human condition.

According to this perspective, since professional ethics involves principles and criteria, the adherence to those principles and criteria implies a free decision made by the professional, meaning a free exercise of freedom and independence. Behind its principles there are professional values, so the professional has the possibility of exercising his/her freedom and autonomy to choose and adhere to professional values of his/her own.

Values prevents professional ethics from being imposed as an external coercion by professional associations, as they imply recognizing and identifying the professional with those values that give their professional practice a meaning. It is important to recover our values which are "ways of being and acting which a person or a collectivity judge as the ideal for the individuals and their behavior."

ETHICAL BASIS IN CODES

Ethical basis or ethical foundations can be defined as essential elements on which coexistence is defined, making it possible through people's behavior. They are based on deontology and Human Rights.

Every professional must act correctly when performing their profession; therefore, their conduct will be adjusted to ethical/moral regulations that govern society, which focus on any improper conduct or action that might discredit or damage the profession, identifying the following:

- Respect to human's value and potential capacity.
- No discrimination.
- Respect to self-determination.
- Respect to confidentiality.
- Promotion of a more fair and equitable society.
- Acting according to science and conscience.
- Professional integrity.
- No use of influences.
- Right to information.
- Not accepting cases where the principles of the profession are violated.
- Total dedication.
- Do not receive gifts.
- Termination of the professional relation.
- Termination of the relation between colleagues.
- Responsibilities in the work relation.
- Responsibilities with the association.
- Correction.

The following can also be found:

- Integrity.
- Objectivity.
- Independence.
- Professional competence and care.
- Professional confidentiality and secrecy.
- Compliance to regulations.
- Promotion and collaboration.
- Professional behaviour.

UNETHICAL BEHAVIOR

This type of actions are a serious problem for the scientific integrity and must be solved because of the consequences it has on the scientific community. The three unacceptable conducts that most international documents agree on are: fabrication of data, falsification of data, and plagiarism. There are several and diversified ethically questionable conducts, for example those that refer to topics like publications, graduate students, tutors, etc. (Navia, 2004).

The will is precisely the process of selection and hierarchization of certain motives compared to others. The will is not independent, it is supported by some objective. It must always be "adhered" to some need, giving way to the behavior from an ethical/moral point of view, both in its strength or weakness, as well as in its flexibility or rigor. The willpower is a crucial requirement the individual needs to have ethical values, mainly those related to self-control and spiritual strength.

The motives are the reasons why someone acts in a certain way. From a psychological point of view, it is the cognitive content with an affective load that activates, guides and holds conducts addressed to goals or needs. The objectives are not more than the mental anticipation of a result expected by the action. The way someone plans and pursue his/her objectives is the foundation of many ethical-moral values. To accomplish

good objectives and with appropriate means, they must include (from a moral perspective) the purpose of satisfying individual needs as well everybody else's; they must be reachable goals; the system of objectives and subjective must be in the correct hierarchy; and the individual must have a true affective commitment to them, he or she must be truly motivated.

The meaning of life represents something essential for the individual, it is what he considers a reason to exist. The meaning of life establishes trends that guide the personality, it is above any other trend, and for it to be considered ethically correct it must have a positive influence on the others and offer something good to society, including any other socially useful function to carry out.

Attitudes are a predisposition to an individual's reaction to things, to others, to himself, within a certain context. They are an internal code to process information. The latter is only meaningful when it is used to regulate the conduct. The ethical-moral values are given by attitudes toward objects, processes, or phenomena to fulfill the needs of our species and the social practice. When evaluating attitudes from an ethical point of view, cognitive, affective and conative elements must be analyzed (10). The first two must be evaluated in terms of their closeness to the real meaning of objects, processes or phenomena for the satisfaction of needs. The closeness to the real meaning of objects, processes or phenomena for the satisfaction of needs refers to the idea that some margin of error does not lead to unadaptive attitudes.

Different individuals can have different levels of closeness to an object and be equally adaptive. This wide margin of error regarding closeness will be determined by the demands of moral self-regulation imposed by the context, the characteristics of the objects coexisting with the individual, and his/her actual needs.

The assessment allows the individual to evaluate the meaning of the qualities of objects, processes and phenomena to satisfy his/her needs, as well as everybody else's, when the personality participates in a comprehensive way. The moral values of assessment are expressed when guiding human beings in the world of meanings. This must be a continuous process. This guidance makes it possible for the individual to adapt at a social level.

The self-assessment allows the individual to compare his/her current state with the desired state regarding the development of personal characteristics and goals. The goals must be realistic, and there must be an inclination to correct self-assessment mistakes in a way that the individual can get to know his/her true qualities, both positive and negative; this is nothing more than to be honest with oneself in every aspect of life.

The personality is a set of permanent characteristics that form the psychological personality of a person, his/her character. The relation between character and ethical-moral values is in the fact that an isolated action can be evaluated as valuable or not, from an ethical-moral point of view, if it was freely chosen by someone and it affects (positively or negatively) the human dignity. But to be able to label a person with a value or a fault, it is necessary to identify if it is a permanent characteristic of his/her personality and not a manifestation of an isolated action.

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