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Chapter Four

Ethics in Higher Education as Tool for Discovering Our Ultimate Destiny

1. INTRODUCTION

The topic of Ethics, though ancient in its origins, has in our time and clime become a novel and compelling subject, both in its theoretical and practical engagements. Globally, issues of ethics are legion. In the media reporting on local and international cases of scandals around the themes of corruption, bad governance, abuse of public trust, value-less lifestyles, unethical behaviour, conflicts of interest and insider dealings, nepotism and mediocrity, it makes common sense to accept the fact that there is better way to conduct the affairs of men and women, namely: The Ethical Way. This conclusion leads the agenda of stakeholders in Education to seriously promote Ethics in citadels of learning and in higher Education.

Education is at the center of every human settlement. It is necessary for character formation for the young. Through education, the realization of meaning and purpose in society is enabled and beneficiaries are empowered to gain more access to opportunities, resources and power. Education if acquired continues to increase the value chain of any nation. This explains why the agenda for Education Reform remains priority for almost every country in the world. Under such transformational situations, there is urgency to adapt the world's educational systems to consciously evolve and transform itself in order to support the critical swifts and transitions happening around the globe. The educational sector is challenged to proffer practical solutions for the challenges that face mankind at this time.

In the ongoing search for 'Promoting Leadership in Thought that leads to Action', the CADMUS Journal on its editorial commentary carried in Volume 2, Issue 5 of October 2015 makes a compelling point which bears repetition in this context. "There is need for multi-dimensional shift in higher education from an over-emphasis on information in an age of information glut to greater emphasis on understanding and organizing principles and relationships between phenomena. There is need to move education from memorization of facts to creative thinking,; from passive to active learning; from fragmented to contextual knowledge. There is need to move education from

mechanistic to organic or ecological conceptions; from abstract to life-centric studies; from discipline-specific to trans-disciplinary perspectives. Finally, there is need to move education from abstract principles to spiritual values and from subject to person-centered and personality-centered education".

The conclusion of this paper is the fundamental idea that education does not happen in isolation but is carried out through societal, environmental and human channels. Through education, the young and future generations receive knowledge and traditions that help them enter into the totality of reality. Therefore, a primary concern of society essentially is to teach the young. Society can only successfully rebuild itself through the younger generation. This is the opposite of what currently happens. But what do we teach the young? Can the teacher give to students what the teacher does not possess? How do we educate ourselves? How does education take place? Is education anything, nothing or something? Does this something stand for a system that educates what is human in humankind, especially the young, leading to recognition of the needs of humanity through all ages by pointing to their source, origin and end?

This realization helps the dialogue around the topic of education generally, and Ethics in Higher Education in particular. Although expressed in different ways in each individual, culture, custom and forms of diversity, the human heart is one and the same for it reflects the same substance.

The education of the heart of man in its originality as creation made it is one that calls for a genuine concern. Unfortunately, the opposite is the case as many modern societies through education destroy the human heart and innocence. This is where the debate must begin, namely, to distinguish the proper aim of Higher education from that which it is not. It is the ethical dimension for ethics after all is the establishment of right and wrong, founded on reason and what is ought, a category of good conscience, sound moral judgment and the free choice of a rational mind.

A university exists to provide multi-disciplinary and multi-dimensional services to the community. As an autonomous institution at the heart of societies differently organized, the Magna Charta Universtitatum states that a university "produces, examines, appraises and hands down culture through research and teaching". To hand down culture is to transmit traditions and adaptable ways of life. Culture in itself is not static but constantly dynamic, containing values, wisdom and knowledge tested over generation. One major component from the above definition is to state that a university is

Knowledge and value Provider. It stands or fails in its ability or inability to deliver on these criteria. Properly stated, education conveys learning and character. If it provides only one aspect, it lacks in wholeness, leading to the failures which many institutions operate and humanity suffers. The point is gradually clear. University teachers produce the global leaders of tomorrow. Fact is that the teachers are leaders of future leaders because they train the young. Teachers therefore bear a grave responsibility in their institutions, alongside parents, the government and the Media with the traditional institutions amongst others, to encourage value-driven leadership through the content, curriculum and methods of training professionals.

2. ETHICS MATTERS

Worldwide, information is multiplying at a phenomenal rate. Globalization has increased the social space, leading to borderless boundaries on the financial, economic, social, ecological, political and cultural dimensions of traditional societies. The world is changing with unprecedented speed and this is observed in virtually all sectors including within the university walls. Following the financial crisis of 2008 and the collapse of institutions and even governments, a phenomenon that started in the United States of America in year 2008, people lost jobs, investments and retirement funds.

An example of the crisis was the collapse of a world class company ENRON, alongside others and many wondered how this could be possible. The deeper meaning in the fall of this company is the fact that any system or governing structure is only as good as the people who administer it. In the case of ENRON, the need for morally informed corporate governance, founded on solid ethical principles, has been quite obvious. Abdicating such leadership in attempting to cover up poor management decisions is something that cannot stand if our society is to be free and virtuous.

Writing in the New York Times in his January 18 Editorial, Paul Krugman made the point that the "Enron debacle was not just the story of a company that failed. It is the story of a system that failed. And the system did not fail through carelessness. It was corrupted". Yet, teachers in Business schools and educational institutions who had over the years turned out first class students and highly successful professionals and excellent specialists wondered at how this could happen with their bright students acting in freedom as 'moral crooks' but lacking in responsibility and virtue! Educational institutions produced them. These institutions are challenged to revisit their educational content, the school curricula and their overall systems which

produce bright managers lacking in integrity and engage in teaching, training and research that links the heart and the mind of the human person in wholeness.

The few and simple questions to ask for the purposes of this paper include the following but is not necessarily exhausted or even in order of priority, namely:

1. What does education consist of, and how does it take place?
2. How can parents, teachers in schools, the responsible agents in the educational system and institutions within the larger society assist the education of youth and leaders of tomorrow with school curricula that contains Ethics and promotes freedom, truth, responsibility, skills, knowledge and virtue?
3. Is there a link between Ethics and Technology and how do we balance technological innovation with social and organizational motivation?
4. Does diversity and difference in contextually independent realities make a unity on global values and virtues impossible?
5. What possibilities exist to strengthen classroom curricula of studies that enhance both character and learning?
6. Is it possible to combine distant-learning education with formation of character in the ongoing available platforms of distant education?
7. How can societies and responsible agents systematically strengthen an ethical culture of integrity?
8. If young students are confronted with corrupt employers in a permissive and corrupt society, what mechanisms of support exist to promote values-driven education of students in their professional life especially in the early years?

At this period of world history, much of humanity stand in trepidation on the crossroads of insecurity, dissatisfaction, anxiety, wars, corruption, meaninglessness, discontent, unhappiness, economic and social upheavals. On the other hand however, the challenges of the present creates great opportunities, chances and hope for humanity on the threshold, using the tools of Education to promote responsible leaderswho govern nations and institutions across cultures and borders. Such leaders shall bedriven by universal values that sustain life and development for all and lead to the much

expected paradigm shift on international discourse towards a world for everybody that is peaceful and sustainable.

3. DEFINING EDUCATION IN CONTEXT

It does seem that many have an opinion about education and for that very fact divergent views that are predicated on personal experience. Several definitions depict varied understandings and points of view around the topic of Education. The English word 'Education' itself is borrowed from the old Latin word 'DUCO' which root means 'to Lead', to guide. Education which is abbreviated from the Latin roots of 'duco' and 'vocation', namely 'educo - educare- educavi- educatum' give vent to wider meanings and understandings which include aspects of: 'leadership, cultured; knowledgeable and learned.

To lead others implies ability to lead with requisite knowledge, methods and ends. In considering the term therefore, the dimension of reasoning and acting emerge in the open discourse concerning the dual but integrated role of educational institutions in preparing the citizenry to become enlightened and civic –minded persons.

From the viewpoint of looking at things from their essence, purpose, last end and primary goals, to educate means to help the human soul to enter into the totality of the real. This gift and ability of humans to think and reason, described as rationality was considered by the Greek philosopher Aristotle over two thousand years ago as unique to humankind. Integral Education makes possible the emergence of all-round persons, equipped upon completion of studies to transform society and positively.

This is the business of a university in the current times. In defining education in the context of society in the twenty first century, 'true education' must be an 'education in criticism'. It is the exercise to question things from their origin, allowing doubt and examination of the problem to come to a balanced conclusion and position. Therefore, 'krinein', 'krisis' which is the original Greek word for 'critique' means to 'take hold of things' and explore their content. This exploration of the content, such as the received 'tradition' is compared with the other realities including the 'longings of the heart'. To criticize helps the inquirer to arrive at the need for the true, the ultimate, the beautiful and the inner standard of judgment which is identical for all humans. It is the search for the Good.

Ethics in Higher education seeks exactly to become a vehicle to make people original and whole in thought and belief. In order to educate, we need to present the past in a suitable form. If young people are not taught about the past and tradition, they shall have a future without guide and may grow up either unbalanced or skeptical. In educating the youth, the past is presented within the context of life where experience speaks for itself. For the purposes of emphasis therefore, education must be critical. The young student must be exposed to the past through the experience that can propose that past and justify it through life experience. This is what ethics in higher education seeks to achieve.

4. CHANGE PROCESS THAT LEADS TO TRANSFORMATION

The challenges facing humanity at this time are many. The questions for humankind in virtually every country revolve often around the contradictions and issues of meaning and meaninglessness, truth and relativity, poverty and wealth, governance and insecurity, economic stability and greed occasioning harm, the crisis of leadership and insurrection in many places challenged by rising radicalism and the use of terror.

Other major challenges are ecological as we face diminishing resources, climate change and environmental degradation unknown in millennia of the existence of humanity. There are overall threats to legacies inherited as tradition as well as value orientation and questions of life byu a new generation of young people, eager to live well and move on, but not knowing how. How can value-orientation and value-driven leadership emerge with the right solutions to the many problems? The answer given by those who know is that Education is the key. It gives a new way especially such education that has foundations on knowledge and character.

Outlines for educational re-orientation mention the urgent need for a new vision for education. Such a new vision is radical in its nature because the topic of education especially for the teacher is referred to as a vocation and not a job. This new vision understands a shift from knowledge to practice and is aimed at self-reliance and sustainable education. This approach conveys the values of responsibility and transformation which prepare students for the position of global citizenship. With such shift, education protects and promotes the dignity of the human person and strives to create equal access to many.

Yet, required performance has barely improved in decades. Mckinsey (2007) in his report on "How the World's best performing school system come out on top" establishes many different ways for the improvement of the school system despite all complexity. He identifies three factors that make schools succeed and excel above others namely: a) getting the right people to become teachers: b) developing the teachers into effective instructors; c) ensuring that the system is able to deliver the best possible instruction for every child.

According to Fullan (2012) the deliberate attempt to use 'change knowledge' to bring about whole-system reform in schools is barely fifteen years old. By change knowledge, he was referring to ideas and strategies that cause the system to move forward in performance, especially when it comes to raising the bar and closing the gap for all students. This model is particularly interesting to study because of the multiple strategies selected by school systems to ensure that they accomplish holistic change. Eight steps are proposed, based on the work of John kotter (2011) that assist and guide the education for change approach and the process that leads to transformation in the sector with ethical challenges.

i. Establish a sense of urgency: This implies an urgent examination of the current realities of the education system. Without Ethics in higher institutions, students with much knowledge emerge but often lacking in character, lack in meaning and solid foundations. It is therefore necessary to build a compelling story using data and align it to economic indicators that reflect national development and quality of life. It must be compelling enough to reflect current and potential crises that can come from in-action. It also grants major opportunities inherent in the current situation of interdisciplinary models of education.
ii. Form a powerful guiding coalition: This is the role of the ICDE and other stakeholders in the education sector to lead the change agenda in Higher education for ethical orientation of students and future leaders.
iii. Create a vision for all stakeholders: the questions to ask include the following; How do we help create a vision that will direct the change effort? What strategies can we develop to achieve our vision for educational progress and systems?

iv. Communicating the vision: These include the strategies for implementation, the monitoring framework and networking. Questions to ask include; What impression does a new teacher bring concerning our educational institution?. How shall this impression change after a period of 6 to 12 months serving the institution?

v. Empower others to act on the vision: The Leadership has potential to identify real and imaginary obstacles to the agenda of transformation and works to find solutions. People at the decision levels can take risks and think outside of the conventional approaches if delegated to do so.

vi. Planning for and creating short term wins: The basic question towards a successful transformation plan is to ask 'How can we measure performance in a visible or verifiable manner?' The next step would e to identify improvements and strategies ranging from interventions in teacher quality, teachers assessment model, students literacy and numeracy gaps, conducive school environment gaps, and gaps in instructional leadership understanding and modeling. Finally we should always seek for ways to reward performance.

vii. Consolidating improvements and producing more change: Here, one builds on the credibility of successes recorded. A framework is established to consider the methodology of moving away from public service longevity model where promotions come based on group mentality and not on personal achievement and professional effort. Benchmarks for rewards shall be established with the change action plan.

viii. Institutionalizing new approaches: How do we overcome the fad mentality as we plan to change and transform the education system? How do we institutionalize the changes and successes we have accomplished so it reflects at all levels of our educational system and processes? How do we recruit the best minds and encourage them to stay within our schools system? How do we create a wow effect at our most rural schools as a measure of our institutional quality? How do we ensure leadership development and succession? These form part of the thinking in the initial and mid-level assessment of performance.

5. QUALITY AND MANAGEMENT OF ETHICS EDUCATION IN HIGHER AND SECONDARY LEARNING

The key factors that may lead to success in this endeavor to establish quality education and proper management of Ethics in institutions of higher learning and even in secondary schools include some of the following factors:

i. Forming and strengthening at the international level, an advocacy think-tank such s the ICDE, the Globethics.net and others that among other education reform thinking shall lobby at all levels of government and educational regulatory institutions for an education model that establishes a curriculum framework that is different from the current smorgasbord approach.
ii. Build a structured collaboration with teacher education systems for hiring new teachers and re-training existing teachers in line with the vision for a result-oriented student centered school system in ethics matters.
iii. Create a mentor teacher support structure for supporting new teachers in the first three years of joining the profession. This structure will also serve as a peer review and support team for experienced teachers not meeting performance expectation based on their student achievement.
iv. Empowering the heads of ethics departments with resources necessary to deal with the obstacles that hinder the change process
v. Build an assessment structure that will measure student overall achievement outside traditional frameworks and review indicators for measuring teacher overall efficacy – using student performance and professional development hours as some indicators. This assessment structure will not be used solely for measuring student or teacher rankings but for making decisions that improve whole school systems.
vi. Continually review curriculum in subjects of Ethics to give room for topics that relate to freedom and responsibility.
vii. Ensure that the students of universities already in early years in the university are made to attend the lectures on an obligatory level as General studies

viii. Ensure methods of reward and punishment by awarding prizes and aiding endowments and scholarships on Ethics Studies

6. CONCLUSION – THE RISK OF ETHICS EDUCATION

In conclusion, it is important to state that the risk of education explores what is our origin as human beings. It takes into consideration the fact 'the unexamined life is not worth living;' to quote the ancient sage, Socrates. Without the fundamental factors of self- critique, of the ethical questioning and practical engagement, of the fundamental factors of tradition – something lived out in the present that proposes and gives its reasons- the youth would remain fragile, doubtful and skeptical. Exposure to life's experiences which is achieved beyond the classroom is risky. But it helps the student to become authentic, standing on one's own feet and daring the current. This is the domain of Ethics in Higher education. It is confrontation with man's real identity and the questions of contradictions of life, yet tackled beyond doubt.

In this quest for the establishment of more ethics concerns and institutions of higher learning, programs for ecological entrepreneurship emerge. The context of a new vision for education which calls for policy shift and mindset from reading and writing to skills acquisition with relevance for daily life and society becomes imperative. Ethics education is opportunity for a new value orientation. Such education ensures the training of both the teacher and student, develops new technologies and conclusively allows a new vision, a new policy, a new market, new resources and a new system. The risk of this kind of education is the emergence of a new humanity of responsible leaders driven by value and virtue and knowledgeable enough to transform their environment and serve entire humanity in a new society yearning for ethical and fair minded leaders.