

Chapter 11

Status of Information Ethics Teaching at the School of Information Sciences, Moi University, Kenya

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of the chapter is to present the status of information ethics teaching at the School of Information Sciences, Moi University, Kenya with particular reference to the Bachelor of Science (BSc.) Information Sciences Degree programme. The chapter is based on review of literature and content analysis of the present BSc. Information Sciences curriculum at Moi University. The content provided in the chapter includes an attempt to define the terms “ethics” and “information ethics,” and the role of ethics in development by highlighting various conferences held on ethics and development. Other issues covered include background information about the School of Information Sciences, Moi University and the status of information ethics teaching, curriculum content for information ethics. Conclusion and suggestions for further research are provided.

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INTRODUCTION

According to Debeljoh (2006:23-45) nobody can avoid facing up ethical dilemmas in daily life. Examples include:

- Must I always keep my promises under every circumstance?
- How can one tell the difference between what is good and bad?
- Is it always wrong to lie?

The author further points out that ethics are the science that aims at clarifying, from the rational and philosophical point of view, the nature of man's moral life. Ethics is a science which transmits a body of knowledge and relates to other sciences and fields of knowledge which deal with human behavior such as psychology, sociology, law, economics, anthropology and metaphysics (Debeljoh 2006). According to Kiruki (2004:135), the term ethics is based in three but related ways signifying:

- The general pattern or way of life, for example, christian ethics.
- A set of rules of conduct of moral code, for example, professional ethics.
- Inquiry about ways of life and rules of conduct, for example, moral philosophy.

Information professionals in a library environment face a number of ethical problems as pointed out by Ndwandwe, Ocholla and Dube (2009:75-88), citing Fallis (2007). These include:

- Should they install internet filters on all computers?
- Should they tell law enforcement officers investigating potential terrorists what a particular person has checked out?
- Should they add books donated by a terrorist organization to the library collection?
- Should they include holocaust denial literature in the library collection?

- Should they charge for specialized information services?

Recent conferences have been held in Kenya on ethics and national development. Strathmore University Kenya has organized seven (7) conferences whose themes were on ethics and national development (Strathmore University 2010). For example, The Strathmore University 7th Annual Conference was held on 26th and 29th October, 2010 and the theme was "ethics and sustainable development". The themes for the previous six (6) conferences were: Business and Ethics (2003), law and Jurisprudence in national building (2004), politics and the Common Good (2005), media and the Common Good (2006), governance and Democracy (2008), and leadership and Ethics (2009) (Strathmore University 2010).

This chapter has the following objectives:

- Attempt to define the concept "information ethics" and highlight the various conferences on information ethics;
- Provide background information about the School of Information Sciences, Moi University, Kenya and the present the status of information ethics teaching;
- Attempt to present areas that should encompass curriculum on information ethics; and
- Provide suggestions for further research and direction

Background: Information Ethics

According to Africa Information Ethics Portal (2010), the Tswane Declaration of Information Ethics Africa (2007) understood information ethics to be a field of critical reflection on moral values and practices with regard to the production, storage, distribution and access to knowledge as well as to all kinds of processes, systems and media of information and communication". Further, The Tswane (2007) Declaration further resolved

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