

Chapter 16

GOTOPS: Code of Technoethics Governance

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ABSTRACT

Information Systems Technology (IST) has an increasingly central role in today's globalised information society. In this regard, it is imperative to recognise the impossibility of a technological life without ethics. As typical components for an ethics program, the authors use Codes of Ethics/Conduct/Practices (CE/CC/CP) as some professions (physicians, lawyers, etc.) have adopted them. The codes are instrumental in developing sound relations with various stakeholders to reduce the number of legal proceedings and contingencies, negotiate conflicts of interest, and ensure the fulfillment of the law. In view of this, the codes should be dynamic and not static documents, used for the advancement in easy reading, understanding, and structure. This will be instrumental for their followers to more easily consult and understand them, and find guidelines for their key ethical problems and concerns. This paper proposes the voluntary GOTOPS code of the techno ethics governance, that is, ethical problems raised by IST.

INTRODUCTION

Human potentials are the most important resources nowadays (Galenic, 2010) and with the support of IST any person could connect and interact with another one, in any place in the world, and improve your work. However, the globalisation raised ethical concerns that only a deep and joint interdisciplinary reflection can lessen by searching for and suggesting paths that promote awareness

and consequently socially responsible ethical practices (Campos & Amaral, 2007a, 2007b).

In this globalised information society, one still has to add the real scenario, of all the other dimensions – social, environmental and economic (*triple bottom line*) – supported by the IST. Therefore, besides the image and reputation of all professionals of other business areas and IST users - that need IST for the development of his profession – one has to point out the image, repu-

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tation, and responsibility of the IST Professionals (ISTP) to guarantee technological sustainability (Johnson, 2005).

The management of any business area requires a set of activities that cover planning, implementation and control through formal and informal means. At the same time, every business management should include common typical techniques and instruments of ethics management (statements of values, CE/CC/CP, ethics committees, Social Responsibility (SR) programmes, among others) whose main role is the management of the ethical behaviour of the collaborators, the management of relations with the stakeholders and the evaluation of the ethical performance of an organization. Amongst the instruments mentioned, to be pointed out are the CE/CC/CP as they are statements that explicitly outline the desired and expected conduct and practice of the professionals from the ethical point of view within an organisation or profession (Campos, 2007a). This practice is already quite common in many European countries and the USA (Campos & Amaral, 2006c).

The confirmation of the importance of ethics in the field of the IST – here called “Technoethics”; the awareness of the many concerns and ethical dilemmas that emerged with globalisation; the recognition of the need for technoethical management and the urgency for ethical leadership on the part of the respective relevant authority are unquestionable findings that led us to the themes of the CE/CC/CP as the first instrument necessary for technoethical management. In line with this confirmation – the need of ethics for the technological civilisation - the objective of the present work is the presentation of a voluntary code of Technoethical Governance for Sustainable Portuguese Organisations (GOTOPS) that was created and that fully includes ethical problems raised by development and utilization of the IST. So, this study pursues the importance of the CE/CC/CP for IST. As it presents the first code for ISTP in Portugal, which until now was nonexistent; its approach is innovative.

RESEARCH APPROACH

The elaboration and implementation of a code is not an ad-hoc process (Campos & Amaral, 2007a, 2007b) but a development process (process of tasks) that undergoes the articulation of possible mechanisms for the construction and sustainability of the code and for the renovation of the energies that led to its development. In this context, once the integrated process of the tasks was constructed, the approach followed consisted of proceeding with the implementation of this process to construct and support the GOTOPS code in an interactive and user-friendly way, resulting in a uniform, dynamic and interactive code, and the first in Portugal of technoethics governance for a sustainable organisation, business and IST. Thus, the GOTOPS code referred to aims at promoting the responsibility and sustainability of Portuguese organisations through the involvement of its top governance bodies (Abramo, 2000; Berleur et al., 2004; Birkett & Barbera, 1999; Brown, 2003; Campos, 2005; Driscoll & Hoffman, 2000; Initiative, 1998; Navran, 2003; Richard et al., 2002; Webley, 2001).

Work Carried Out

The construction of the GOTOPS code was an integrated process of tasks (already developed and validated) supported by: (1) the comparative analysis of the CE/CC/CP already constructed and validated in the IST area [Campos & Amaral, 2006c]; (2) the DIORCODES model (**D**irectives of **O**rientation for **C**ODES) for the development process of a code (Campos & Amaral, 2007a); (3) the set of ten guidelines for writing a code and by the PROECO prototype (Prototype for Structure of a Code) that provides the structure (form and content) of a code (Campos & Amaral, 2007b) and (4) by the SSIGOTOPS system (Sustainability and Interactive Support of the GOTOPS code) of automatic support (Campos & Amaral, 2009a) – included in the points that follow.

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