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# Ethics of the scientific research in the higher education - a methodological perspective

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**Abstract.** In the context of the technique and technological process development, the scientific research must resolve the different problem referring to what things are correct or non to do in the documentation, interpretation and communication of the knowledge, what principles have to be respect in every research activity.

Our paper is a small empirical research. It presents the problems liked by the ethical principles, attitudes and values that must be respect in all activities of research.

Our study starts from the premise that the objectivity in the history research and the critical spirit, historical thinking are developed by the ethics.

The paper proposes some methodological aspects for develop the research in the history field by the ethical principles, attitudes and values Some of them can be used by the students and teachers in the training and teaching activities in the history field.

## 1. Introduction

It is well-known that the universities, as the educational institutions, are oriented towards preparing the students for a specific professional field and, in the same measure, for to be integrated in a socio-cultural and professional space. This is normal up to a point, if we are to think that this is the final step in one's professional training for a specific professional job. But this perspective of understanding of the higher education is not completed, because the students need have the research competences. For example, after graduate the higher educational level, some of the them have a choice to continue the scientifically preoccupations. Other students ought to continue to learn about their profession, to develop themselves the skills, abilities, behaviour that are specifically for their professional occupations. Additionally, sometimes, a part of them desire to change their profession and to become an expert in science domain, to make experiments and analyse the results, to notice and analyse, theoretically, the different aspects of the human activity. For this reason, they need to be able to study, write and show to others own, to make those correctly from the scientific and moral perspectives. More, they have to develop their scientifically activity [1] in a forever changing social and cultural space. In this respect, the students need know what is or isn't allowed, what is correct / incorrect, or just / unjust, good / wrong in the research activity. For all aspects, referring to the system of values, norms and principles, like as the up-mentioned, which determines it to do or not to do something belong to ethics [2].

Unfortunately, in Romanian education system, ethics, as a subject of the higher education, is not good represented in the *Curricula* (the students learn more about the ethics and professional deontology in the Master s degree studies programs).

## 2. Purpose of study

Our paper starts from the premise that learning about the quality of the research activity since the first year of the higher education is very important for student's education. The student understands that, when he / she makes a research activity should respect some rules (norms) that help him / her to appreciate the value of the information and to use it in solving different problems, interpreting a situation. In this way, we think that it is more responsible and pleasant for him / her to know and respect the ethical principles and values in the research activities.

This paper underlines the necessity of the research ethics competences in the higher education and proposes some modalities, methodological aspects and practical solutions, to develop the ethical competences on this educational level. We had selected the best critical ways to apply the norms and principles of research Ethics.

Our notice is determined by the results of the systematically observation during seminars activities with those students.

Foremost, we analyzed the higher education *Curricula* for:

- propose a few scientific units which may contribute more at the development of the ethical competences;
- present some didactical modalities to realize a research activity from the ethics perspective;
- underline a few directions to know and respect the norms and principles of ethics of scientific research activity.

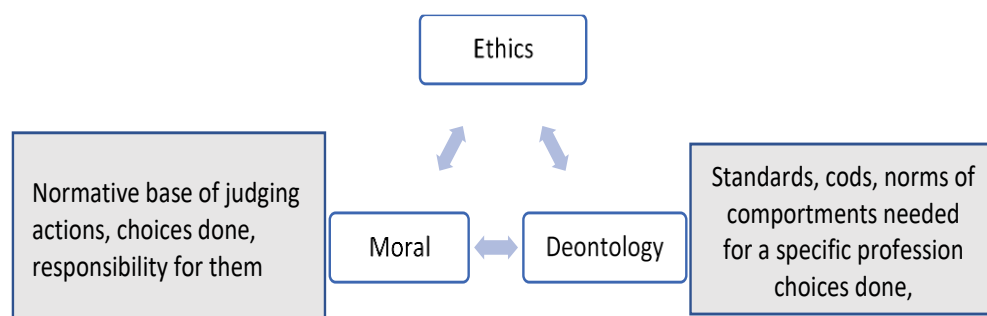
In this way we hope that we can encourage the teachers to give more attention to develop the ethical competences during their didactical activities with the students.

We think that learning about research ethics is more important in nowadays; in the present days society the actual human realities are dominated by the excess technique, large social mobility and approximately unlimited electronic communication. Therefore, the students have to confront themselves with the social and cultural dynamic processes and with an explosion of the information, a situation none of us could have foreseen. As a result, the students have to learn to find, select, verify and use the sources correctly, to analyze them critically, to draw conclusion and to present them to others.

## 3. Discussion. Findings

Generally, ethics in the scientific research is a theoretical preoccupation [3] for appreciating if a scientific activity is good / bad, correct / incorrect, just / unjust, virtuous / unvirtuous, right / wrong according to find information, to use it, to write and promote a scientific work. Ethics is a large and complicate research field [4, pp. 20-36], it is formulated many definitions and theories about it, especially in the last time.

It is known that between the ethics, as a scientific component of a research activity, and moral-civic, as a science of people and society is a good methodological and informational connection [5]. Certainly, the research ethics is in a relation with both moral and deontological fields [6]. The following schema highlights more clearly this aspect:



### **Schema 1.** Ethics, moral and deontology - connections

Obviously, the efficient development of Ethics needs to be accomplished in an interactional environment determined by the elements that belong to moral and deontology with which it is most closely connected.

Regarding the *Schema 1*, we can complete it, mentioning some learning activities, attitudes and values which we had selected from higher education *Curricula*. It is recommended to be used in all activities that intend to develop the ethics competences in the social and humanistic field. Those aspects are the following:

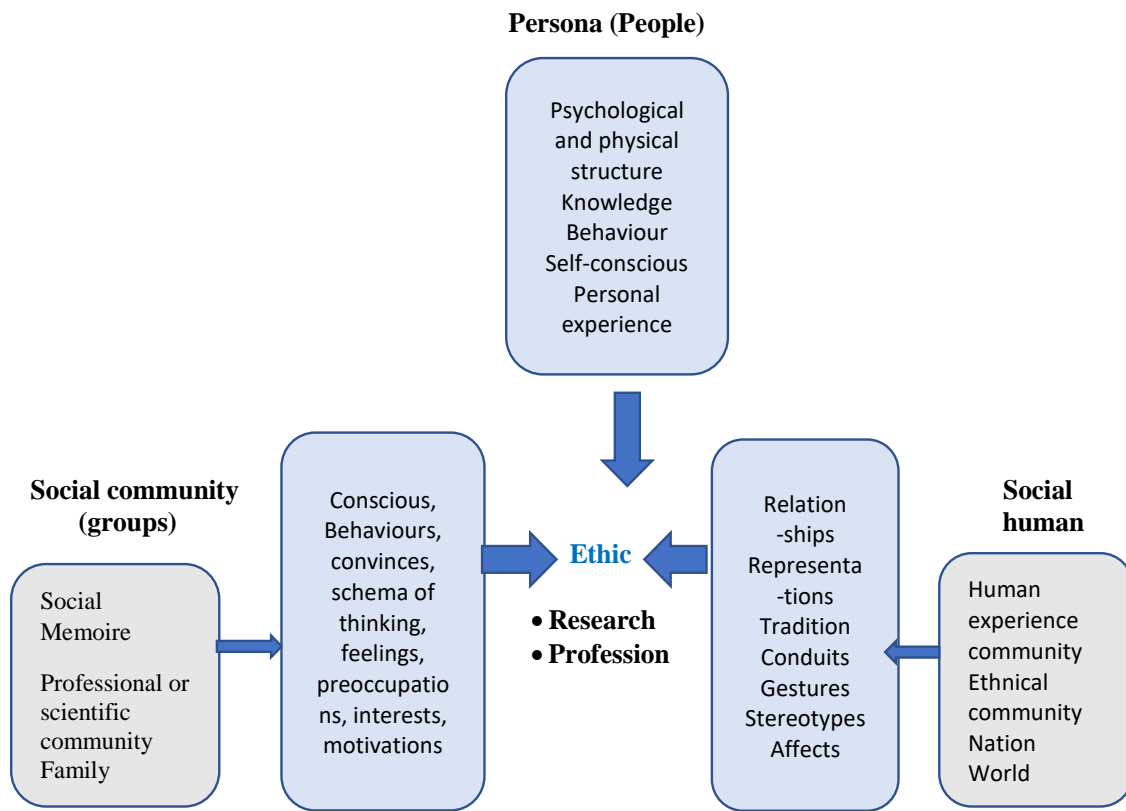
- correctly ideas, beliefs and behaviours in own research activity;
- normative aspects that need to be respect using the scientific source;
- way of thinking, especially critical thinking;
- investigating action: patterns, correctness, sincerity, objectivity, own responsibility;
- receptivity to the new, to other opinion, to dialogue.

As it can be noticed, the ethics in scientific research, especially in the social and humanistic field, implies two components:

- intellectual skills (to prepare a workpaper correctly, objective, sincerely and qualitatively, etc.);
- attitudes towards the research activity (responsibility, interest, correctitude, etc.).

Ethics of a research specialized in a scientific domain including norms, rules, principles, values, attitudes and behaviors that can be judged from the moral and deontological perspectives. If these elements are more oriented towards a professional field it is used frequently the concept of the *Applied Ethics* [7].

Therefore, the ethical norms, principles and rules need to be internalized by each pupil and, in this way, they become values which involve the best research competences. In this respect, we underline that the ethics of the scientific research is developed by the individual, social and cultural influences, also. From this perspective, we propose the following schema that presents the factors that contribute to complete of the ethics of the research, specially of the socio-humanistic field.



**Schema 2.** Dynamic content of the ethics

In the *Schema 2* we can see that the Ethics of the scientific or professional research depends in a large measure by the society and own personality of the people. Starting from this notice the scientists specialized in the ethics field propose some new concepts of ethics like the following:

- *particular ethics* (referring to the influences of the family or the professional community);
- *general ethics* (referring to universal values and attitudes);
- *special ethics* (determinates by each person or a profession / job).

As these general and individual influences could misrepresent the contents of the research ethics, making it like a subjective and imprecision approach [8]. We consider that it is really important to limit them. In this way, we think that the researcher ought to be conscious about these influences and try to respect the norms and principles that make a research to be correctly and efficiently for own activity, theoretical or practical one.

According the needs to respect the norms and principles of the ethics in a research activity, in the next section we propose a methodologic approach. That approach is more useful for all researches in the social and humanistic sciences, in special at the higher education level:

**Table 1.** Research ethics – methodological approach

| Directions of the ethics in science or professional research | Learning activity | Essential question |
|--|-------------------|--------------------|
|--|-------------------|--------------------|

|                                |  |  |
|--------------------------------|--|--|
| Information<br>(Documentation) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To identify the sources that are relevant and important for research</li> <li>• To find the virtual space, the sites to use in activity of documentation</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Are these sources integrity or not?</li> <li>• Is the source used accurate?</li> <li>• Are the sites found created by a scientific community?</li> <li>• What is the aim of these sites?</li> <li>• Is a real source?</li> <li>• What was the intention of author of source?</li> <li>• Where and why was written the source?</li> <li>• What were kept the sources?</li> <li>• What sources shared and what did not share?</li> </ul>                                      |
| Using information /<br>date    | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To keep information founded</li> <li>• To complete the information sheets</li> <li>• To put in value information from the source</li> </ul>                         | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What information need to be registered? Why not?</li> <li>• Why I have to use this source? Why not use it?</li> <li>• What were the conditions which the sources were found?</li> <li>• What I want to demonstrate? Who make it before me?</li> <li>• What are the sources give us / explain the same information?</li> <li>• Is the source evaluated by any specialists? Who are those?</li> <li>• Have I evaluated the value of the source? Who evaluated too?</li> </ul> |
| Preparing a work               | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To formulate the aim of workpaper</li> <li>• To choose the research methodology</li> <li>• To organize information</li> </ul>                                       | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Do you know what means „false“, „plagiarism“?</li> <li>• Do you know what consequences are they?</li> <li>• Do you put the ideas in the proper order?</li> <li>• What information of source I will use? Why?</li> </ul>   |
| Write the research<br>work     | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To report the results of the research activities</li> <li>• To develop ideas, opinions</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Has any limits or errors own research written (paper, study, book, volume)?</li> <li>• What is own contribution to write the paper?</li> <li>• What is idea find in a scientific resource?</li> <li>• Is it mentioned correctly the source / idea?</li> <li>• Did you keep the impartiality</li> </ul>  |

|                            |          |   |   |
|----------------------------|----------|---|---|
|                            |          |   | interpreting the information?   |
|                            |          | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Did you quote correctly?</li> </ul>  |   |
| Present research           | personal | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To share own workpaper</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Had you indicated the author of sources / information used in workpaper?</li> <li>• Did you verify the veracity and relevance of source, before you used it?</li> <li>• Did you use a comparative analysis of sources?</li> </ul>  |
| Working in scientific team | a        | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To collaborate with others in order to construct a discourse and in solving the working tasks</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Do you respect / keep the rules of collaborative working? Do you know the consequences of keeping off those rules?</li> <li>• Have you the same moral values like your team?</li> <li>• Do you draw personal decisions? Has this a good impact in working together activity?</li> <li>• Have you desire to correct your mistakes?</li> </ul> |
| Promote the study (paper)  |          | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To communicate the notices, conclusions of the research</li> </ul>                                       | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Had you respected the right to freedom and equality in the research activity?</li> <li>• Did you relate the opinions without the intention to persuade the others?</li> <li>• Did you show the problems of the research which have not been solved?</li> </ul>   |

**Table 1** Research ethics – methodological approach

#### 4. Conclusion

Knowing how is correct to find, choose and use the information, the students realize a valuable scientific researches product.

Learning about the ethic norms, values and principles, the students learn how they can make a qualitative and correct scientific research. They need to know what is or not allowed to do for find out the information, analyze and interpret of them, report the results and communicate the notices, conclusions.

They learn what means to make a valuable research activity, how they must respect to make not mistakes (errors) in documentation, preparing and communicating their scientific activity. Addition, ethics makes, the higher education to become more responsible and pleasant.

For those reasons, we could notice that the ethical principles and values of the scientific research must be formed and developed in the higher educational system.

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