

TEACHING NOTE

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What's Ethical?

Dilemmas of Career

Guidance Practitioners

Competence: Ethical Practice

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Definition of Ethics

“Ethical practice: This involves knowledge of codes of practice and ethical guidelines, thinking how to apply standards in day-to-day behaviours, and awareness of

legislation.” *Professionalising career guidance – Practitioner competences and qualification routes in Europe*. Cedefop (2009).

Summary

Ethics is an important concept in the provision of guidance services. Often in the course of their work guidance practitioners come across situations that challenge their own values, attitudes and perceptions. An understanding of ethics (sometimes referred to as moral philosophy) is important in terms of building the competencies of practitioners to address situations that give rise to questions of values. Ethics is the study of or inquiry of values, about ideas of right and wrong, good and bad, what should or should not be done. Ethics questions the assumptions that

underpin values and beliefs, which in turn guide practice. The focus is on why we believe some actions are bad and others good.

The first part of the case-study is written in an interview style. The practitioner is interviewing both his/her shadow-side (based on Jungian Therapy)¹ and a “Code of Ethics” for guidance practitioners. The nature of ethics requires the subject to be presented initially in a more abstract scenario. This is the purpose of the case study

¹ In Jungian psychology the *shadow* or “*shadow aspect*” may refer to (1) the entirety of the unconscious, i.e., everything of which a person is not fully conscious (2) an unconscious aspect of the personality which the conscious ego does not recognize in itself. Because one tends to reject or remain ignorant of the least desirable aspects of one’s personality, the shadow is largely negative. There are, however, positive aspects which may also remain hidden in one’s shadow (especially in people with low self-esteem). (Jung, C.G. (1938). “Psychology and Religion.” In CW 11: Psychology and Religion: West and East. P.131) According to Jung, the shadow, in being instinctive and irrational is prone to projection turning a personal inferiority into a perceived moral deficiency in someone else. Jung writes that if these projections are unrecognized “The projection-making factor then has a free hand and can realize its object--if it has one-or bring about some other situation characteristic of its power.” Jung, C.G. (1951). (“Phenomenology of the Self” In The Portable Jung. P.147).

starting with a conversation between a guidance practitioner and code of ethics and their shadow side. The conversation highlights the complexities that can arise when

working with values. In the second part of the case study the practitioners are asked to consider two short scenarios that give rise to questions of values and attitudes.

Teaching Objectives

The aim of this case study is to:

- › Engage the guidance practitioner in a discussion on ethics, code of ethics, their own values, attitudes and prejudices.
- › To give the guidance practitioner an understanding that talking about values means to reflect on concepts that are not specifically defined.
- › To give the guidance practitioner an understanding that their attitudes towards people and situations can shape the manner in which they respond to clients.

Target Group

Guidance Practitioners

Teaching Approach

The teaching approach asks the practitioners to both individually reflect on the case study and to discuss within a group/class setting.

The discussion will be facilitated by the use of questions to guide thinking and discussion.

Based on the information in the interview style case study, in part one, the guidance practitioners reflect at a more general level on their own values and attitudes in the context of their work with clients.

The practitioners will then consider the short case studies in part two. The participants will be asked first:

- › To identify the values, the issues and the challenges for the individuals involved
- › To discuss options to address the issues raised by the case study.
- › The practitioners will be asked to record their reflections on flip charts or some other method.
- › Another option is to ask the practitioners to role play the different actors in the case study.
- › The practitioners will be encouraged to question and challenge one another as they respond to the case study.
- › The main points will be summarised at the end of the session.

Background Analysis

The first part of the case study gives rise to a discussion on values (the application of values are sometimes subjective judgments), and on their Code of Ethics (tend to represent a set of rules; it is a form of limitation, order and demand). The “shadow side” on the other hand stands for the non-rational, emotional side. It nourishes our attitudes but does so in a hidden way like the part of an iceberg that is below the water.

The second part of the case study (the short concrete scenarios) is relevant to an understanding of values as they apply to a more real context. The perspective of personal values is important in these case studies. From these case studies ethical issues arise like responsibility (and its limits); limits of competence; conflict of loyalty (towards the client, the organization, and personal values).

The case study as such may be somewhat exaggerated, but it exemplifies situations where people are inclined to naturally develop value judgments about each other, sometimes unaware they are doing so. It is human to make judgments based on our values, whether it embraces expressions of sympathy, interest, concern or condemnation. In the context of guidance practitioners working with clients it is important that they are aware of how the shadow side can subconsciously shape our attitudes to situations and people.

Some Questions to Assist Discussion

CASE STUDY: PART ONE

- › How do you look at and judge people you meet and deal with?
- › Is there a difference between ethics and a code of ethics? What tensions do you see between them?
- › What do you associate with ethics and the shadow side of a person?
- › The current Law may require reporting of fraud however, can you tell what ethical dilemma Mary faces in scenario two?
- › What is the right thing for both Mary and Joe to do?
- › Can a compromise be arrived at given the competing values?

CASE STUDY: PART TWO

- › Is Joe acting outside of his competence level because he is not a mental health expert, does this compromise his values?
- › Would Joe be right to place Anne on the scheme and as a result achieve a placement? He would then no longer have to deal with her and her mental issues?
- › Should Joe compromise his personal values and place the client on the scheme in order to reach the targets?
- › Can you identify with either Mary or Joe?

Testing Experience

City of Tampere, Employment Services Unit, May 2013:

The case study was interesting and short scenarios inspired a good conversation. The main objective of the workshop was to engage the guidance practitioners in a discussion on ethics, their own values and attitudes as well as prejudices. This objective was achieved very well. The testing workshop was compact and intensive, time-

frame was good (3 hours) and teaching methods worked well. Although the topic is present in guidance practitioners' daily work, participants admitted that they do not think about it consciously very often. One practitioner said that today I realized how considerably values, attitudes and prejudices impact you in the reality!

Appendix A: Guide Project: Case Study Ethics Key Concepts Summary

INTRODUCTION

This is a background note to the case study and is intended to provide a very brief overview of ethics. The aim is to provide the tutor with some understanding of the key concepts that assist us to acquire an understanding of ethics. The object of providing this background note is to enable the tutor to focus the case study discussion on the ethical aspects of the case.

FREEDOM AND ETHICS

Nobody is completely free. Everyone acts within physical, emotional, social, legal or political constraints. Such constraints still leave scope for freedom of the "will". We act according to the values and principles we hold. Laws may limit our actual freedom of action. Freedom of the will may be limited by the unconscious acceptance of our society's values. All ethical choices therefore take place within a set of personal and social conditions. At times ethical discussion maybe abstract and general, but its application to life needs to be concrete and specific.

WHAT ARE VALUES?

Values reflect beliefs that particular conduct or objectives are preferable to alternative conduct or objectives. Thus certain ways of behaviour are in preference to others. Values deal not so much with what is but with what ought to be. They express ideal moral goals or positions. Values influence our behaviour. We develop our values through contact with existing values around us. We internalise our values either consciously or unconsciously. This is done by our contact with others, through our families,

the education system, church, media, work place, community we live in, etc. Values are used as a standard to influence the values, attitudes and actions of others e.g. children, work-groups or peers. We judge the action/behaviour of others against the values that we believe in.

EXAMPLES OF VALUES

Instrumental: Honesty, courage, fairness, trust, etc. Instrumental values are central principles that guide the manner of our conduct, how we judge others and ourselves and how others judge us.

Terminal values: Terminal values relate to objectives. For example a belief that everyone should be treated equally, a belief in an end to war or an end to unemployment, a belief in our family. They are guiding principles in our lives.

ETHICS

Ethics refers to the set of rules, principles, or way of thinking that guide or claim authority to guide the actions of a particular group. The word ethics is also used to describe the field of study of reasoning about how we "ought" to act. Normative ethics is discussion on how we "ought" to act, do, and behave, our treatment of others or to take part in debate about subjects such as the distribution of wealth, killing, treatment of children, vegetarianism, the environment, etc. is to engage in normative ethical arguments. But what do we mean by normative? Normative or "norms" refers to- values, rules, standards or principles that should guide our decisions about what we "ought" to

do. In ethics that are two main questions to be considered: what kinds of things are ultimately good? How do we decide what actions are right? Ethics refers to standards of behaviour that tell us how human beings ought to act in the many situations in which they find themselves-as friends, parents, children, citizens, businesspeople, teachers, professionals, and so on.

MOTIVE FOR ETHICAL ACTION

The main motive for an ethical action is influenced by a sense of right. One acts ethically because it is right to do so. Other motives might be out of kindness, pity or courage.

IT IS HELPFUL TO IDENTIFY WHAT ETHICS IS NOT

- › **Ethics is not the same as feelings.** Feelings provide important information for our ethical choices. Some people have highly developed habits that make them feel bad when they do something wrong, but many people feel good even though they are doing something wrong. And often our feelings will tell us it is uncomfortable to do the right thing if it is hard.
- › **Ethics is not religion.** Many people are not religious, but ethics applies to everyone. Most religions do advocate high ethical standards but sometimes do not address all the types of problems we face, sometimes religion is used to justify unethical actions.
- › **Ethics is not following the law.** A good system of law does incorporate many ethical standards, but law can deviate from what is ethical. Law can become ethically corrupt. Law can be a function of power alone and designed to serve the interests of narrow groups. Law may have a difficult time designing or enforcing standards in some important areas, and may be slow to address new problems.
- › **Ethics is not following culturally accepted norms.** Some cultures are quite ethical, but others become corrupt -or blind to certain ethical concerns. For example "When in Rome, do as the Romans do" is not a satisfactory ethical standard.
- › **Ethics is not science.** Social and natural science can provide important data to help us make better ethical choices. But science alone does not tell us what we ought to do. Science may provide an explanation for what humans are like. But ethics provides reasons for how humans ought to act. And just because something is scientifically or technologically possible, it may not be ethical to do it.

Points to Note

- › Ethical dilemmas tend to be complex and sometimes it is difficulty of finding agreement on a given action being ethical
- › The difficulty of finding an example that fits the pure theory.
- › The motive and the action may not be the same. If an action is seen to be ethical, the motive may not be (It may be driven by self-interest only).

THE GUIDE

PROJECT

GUIDE was realized by MetropolisNet and its network. This network is made up of organisations working in metropolitan areas to promote social inclusion, employment and urban development.

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