IT ethics in organizations

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Ethics and psychology

- How people handle their own moral problems
- Focus on the process, not the content
- Description, assessment and training of ethical skills
- Focus on possibilities rather than risks and problems

Ethical organization?

- Emotion-based
- Leader-based
- Principle-based
- Skill and process-based
Ethics more difficult in organizations

• Social loafing
• Conformism
• Group polarization
• De-individuation
• Authority obedience
• Groupthink

Ethical competence in organizations

• Processes for construction of ethical codices and guidelines
• Processes for revision of ethical codices
• Dialog groups, support structures, ethical committees etc.
• Special roles, e.g. ethical officers, coordinators
• Continuing education for ethical competence
• Ethical leadership and confidence focusing on organizational and personal development

Ethical codices and competence

• Codices have to be created by people who know how to do this
• Codices demand always interpretation and adaptation. Rules and principles cannot applied automatically
• Ethical codices can work against their goals:
  - They can never be exhaustive and what is missing can be interpreted as being allowed
  - Rules can be used with rigidity, with fanaticism or simply in a wrong way
Types of Ethical Codes

- Marketing, goodwill
- Prescriptions, laws, punishment and reward
- Checklists created by external experts
- Knowledge support in problem solving

Only the last one can work as the others but it has to be created by the users and it has to be continuously adapted.

Construction and use of rules

Knowledge tool based on and used to support ethical skill
Flexible guidelines and critical thoughts in their form and content
All have to get prepared and to participate
Continuously ongoing process

One example

You are the president of a company developing a new personnel administration system for another company where information on its employees will be stored. There are many security levels to choose among but your customer wants the cheapest one which also happens to be the less secure. You are convinced that hackers or even employees will be able to access this information. You have warned your customer but they want to take the risk.
Construction of ethical rules

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Autonomous principle construction</th>
<th>Economy</th>
<th>Work</th>
<th>Law</th>
<th>(cont.)</th>
<th>…</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Organization actions, decisions, functions, etc.</td>
<td>Follow the law but risk for violation of information</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ethics</td>
<td>Create new, safer planning</td>
<td>Good, but difficulties in discussing problems</td>
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<tr>
<td>Employee integrity</td>
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<tr>
<td>Professional</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

An example of a rule...

1. Our actions must always respect the integrity of the employees because it is according to the law, it facilitates internal relations and cooperation, and allows safer planning of business activities.

2. However, there is a risk for lower business flexibility, violation of employees' and others' right of information, and may be difficult to handle internal conflicts openly.

3. If we do not care about the integrity of the employees we could easier adapt and handle difficult business situations, but there is a great risk for internal conflicts, bad image, and difficulties to hire new employees...

(1, 2, 3, 4 All four parts have to be included!)

Computers and ethics

- Information about people or important for people is gathered, processed, stored, disseminated, used
- Connection between people: Internet, e-mail, blogs, communities
- Trade, private and government services, entertainment
Same ethics?

- Yes!
  Philosophy and psychology

- No!
  1) New conflicts and possibilities
  2) Rapid changes
  3) More serious consequences

What is special with IT

- Malleability:
  - IT can be designed as a tool to almost anything
  - IT can be changed syntactically and semantically

- Transformation to information:
  - IT use implies radical changes
  - Real conditions are transformed to information

Ethics for IT

- IT systems give rise to policy vacuum and confusion of valid concepts
- Core values provide the basis for finding and evaluating solutions to moral issues (policies)
Unique features of IT

• Storing
• Malleability
• Complexity
• Quick
• Cheap
• Easy to copy
• Sensitive
• Opaque

Ethical analysis and judgment

• Ethical perspective, basis on general principles
• Concrete description of the case
• Search for available solutions
• Use skills: thinking, conscience, perspective
• Consult other people
• Perform different analyses: Philosophical, role/professional, responsibility, stakeholder, interest
• Conclusions
• Learn for the future

Seminar 1, April 3 10:15-12:00

• Join a group through “Register to group, seminar 1” in Studentportalen.
• Min 3 and max 5 members.
• Describe a moral problem related to the construction or the use of an IT system.
• Make an autonomy analysis of the problem according to Autonomy analysis, and answer to the OLE questionnaire.
• Upload the resulting pdf document no later than April 1 at 23:59.
• Review individually the work of the group with the letter after your group’s, no later than April 2 at 16:00. Answer the questions:
  – What is particularly good/interesting in the solution?
  – What could be improved/added?
  – What did you learn from the solution?
• Prepare a presentation of your project at the seminar. Discuss selected remarks that you have received from your fellow students (you do not need to adjust your presentation due to the tight schedule).
• Participate actively in the seminar.