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## THE POSSIBILITY OF INTRODUCING BIOETHICAL EDUCATION TO HIGH SCHOOLS AND FACULTIES IN NORTH MACEDONIA

### Abstract

Bioethics is a very important and complex contemporary field of thinking and activity. Knocking strong on our doors, various problems of health, environmental pollution, violence, conflicts, human indolence, criminal deeds, as well as bad behaviors of all different kinds, come to the core of humankind. All these problems require a serious and rapid human action. That is why it is very important to introduce bioethical education to all people. This paper is dealing with the issue of implementing ethical and bioethical education in the North Macedonian school system. It offers a brief review of the activities in this field so far, and it attempts to contextualize some theoretical approaches for ethical and bioethical education. The main thesis is that at the basic level ethical and bioethical education should be organized as moral education, but at the level of secondary school and faculty teaching the approach should be through critical thinking as the most appropriate for that age.

**Key words:** bioethics, education, ethics, secondary school, faculty

## **Introduction**

Today Bioethics is a very important and complex field of thinking and activity. Even though it is a young science, it is on top of human's necessities and visions. Every day some new questions enter in the center of bioethical mind, issues and discussions above all. Meanwhile, a lot of efforts are invested in debates whether bioethics is and must be bounded primarily on the medical sphere (medicine, vet, nursery, pharmacy, biological investigations treating human lives...) or it is more correct to treat bioethics as a broader, large discipline, like some modern practical ethics, in general. These questions, which cause scientific arguments, cannot be solved empirically - each one stands still in this debate for the moment! That's why good faith and collaboration of all experts who have a duty to promote bioethics and its benefits are more than needed.

At the same time, knowing this, the bioethical education cannot wait for the definitive settlement of the scientific dissertation and the scientific purity of bioethics or the specific status of bioethics as professional or general science and practice, meaning whether the nature of bioethics is primarily biological or ethical. Knocking strong at our doors, many problems of health, environment pollution, violence, conflicts, human indolence, criminal deeds, as well as bad behaviors of different kinds come to the core of the humankind. All of those problems require serious and fast human action. That's why it is very important to introduce bioethical education to all people!

In reality, the bioethical praxis and theory started the same time as the development of ethical education, which included all young people (as well as older, if possible!). It is so because a bioethical theme is a matter not only for philosophers and specialists, but also concerns every human - even all living and non-living beings on Earth - so everyone must be educated in this new and complicated area, which is both spiritual and technical.

## **The development of the idea and practice of possible (bio)ethical education in high schools and faculties in North Macedonia**

Since 1998, there has been a campaign for including the ethical education in Republic of North Macedonia. For at least 12 years in a row prof. Kiril Temkov wrote and published in major journals and other kind of media an open call to the Ministry of Education and Science to include first Ethics, and then Bioethics as an educational subject in all level of educational processes, or at least to allow realization of the experimental ethical and bioethical education

("Недостиг на милост за нашите млади", <http://star.vest.com.mk/default.asp?id=89470&idg=5&idb=1358&rubrika=Po%7Bta>. Accessed: July 16, 2017).

After years of struggle with the Ministry and Bureau of education, this process has been made, not only with the explanation on the meaning of these sciences, their essential need, the necessity of educating the young in these areas, the content of these kinds of education..., but as well as like **practical pedagogical activity** in different schools and on different educational levels - from kindergarten to Master studies where bioethical education mainly was introduced as a part from ethical education.

In other words, in 1998 there was an action of introducing Ethical education at all levels of education. The initiator of the process – prof. Kiril Temkov, developed a program for experimental ethical and also bioethical education in Macedonian high schools in four towns. Educational aims were to explore the possibilities of understanding and communication by young generations between 15-19 years with ethical-bioethical problems and values. In two of them (specialized biotechnical schools), in Agriculture-Veterinary High School in Drachevo, Skopje and in Agriculture-Forestry School in Kavadarci, teachers Marija Taseva and dr. Jovan Lozanovski were teaching Bioethics for the first time at the high school level.

All questions of ethical education in these two schools had bioethical perspectives - understanding the position of human beings in the world and the proposed bioethical value system and moral norms. The program was composed of special lectures like notion of Bioethics, history of Bioethics, especially ideas of Bioethics, the developed system of human thinking, evaluation and activity under dimensions of Bioethics etc. This pedagogical experiment had a sense of bioethical education with general orientation, as well as with contents of lessons, examples and knowledge.

Even more, in the high school in Drachevo, a Centre for researches in ethical and bioethical education of youth was founded with an intention to grow up in an Institute for this kind of education. But, the political passion of changing the principals in the schools and discharging the useful spiritual and educative initiatives brought to the discontinuance of the work of the Centre for which a special 4 years program for continuous bioethical education on high school students was established, but unfortunately, only a 2-year course with one group was realized. A chance for bioethical education in high schools as well as for using extended experience in this field in science and the other level of education

was stopped. At the same time, an effort for organizing this kind of experimental ethical teaching in Skopje, in the biggest biotechnical high school, was stopped by the Ministry of education which didn't allow it, so we had experience only with two years of education.

Still, the good thing is that the former school master, Jovan Lozanovski finished his dissertation on methods of ethical education, as first PhD on this matter in North Macedonia. His results after the dissertation were published in prof. Kiril Temkov's book "Good, Better, The Best" (Ethics and Youth), where methods of ethical-bioethical education in high schools were explained and also the educational programs for this experimental education were analyzed, which later on were a ground for the programs for ethical education in II and in III class (10 and 11 grade) in Gymnasium in North Macedonia.

On the level of higher education, the activity for launching the ethical education in North Macedonia, gave the biggest contribution in the process of propagating the idea for Bioethics. At first, in education of young teachers of philosophy there was an introduction on bioethical questions in their study of Ethics and the History of Ethics and then a special course of Ecological ethics in basic studies. A few years ago, at the Faculty of philosophy under the name "Foundations of Bioethics", it became an elective subject (studiska programa, [http://www.fzf.ukim.edu.mk/ddtest21/public/uploads/files/00programinovi/Prilog\\_br\\_4\\_st\\_diska\\_rograma\\_-\\_filozofija.pdf](http://www.fzf.ukim.edu.mk/ddtest21/public/uploads/files/00programinovi/Prilog_br_4_st_diska_rograma_-_filozofija.pdf). Accessed: July 16, 2017.).

Also, there was a proposal for Bioethics to be a special subject in Master studies of Philosophy, an idea that had its partial realization finally in 2012 ([http://ukim.edu.mk/mk\\_content.php?meni=163&glavno=40](http://ukim.edu.mk/mk_content.php?meni=163&glavno=40). Accessed: July 16, 2017), at the same time when I pushed through the Faculty of Law the program of Bioethics that was and still is an elective course for all students of this faculty on Master program. Now, starting from last year's new program in Master studies of Philosophy, Bioethics is finally not only a subject but also a special program into the master studies of philosophy as a specialization.

Meanwhile, in 1998, Faculty of Philosophy referred to all faculties the letter of prof. Temkov for the necessity of introducing the ethical education to students and for promoting the bioethical research and course, as well as developing of ethics on science (as two special tasks from UNESCO, with goals to participate in international link for both fields). A few years later, there was a proposal to the Faculty of Agriculture and to the Forestry to introduce Bioethics as a subject in their basic studies, but it ended with no answer and sense for this

matter. Parallel, the new programs and education in Ethics for students of Psychology, Pedagogy, Journalism, Faculty of Arts and other sciences Bioethics, in time, became main content, but not a subject ([http://www.ukim.edu.mk/dokumenti\\_m/312\\_Filzoofski\\_lista-%D0%BD%D0%B0%D1%98%D0%BD%D0%BE%D0%B2%D0%B0\\_web.pdf](http://www.ukim.edu.mk/dokumenti_m/312_Filzoofski_lista-%D0%BD%D0%B0%D1%98%D0%BD%D0%BE%D0%B2%D0%B0_web.pdf). Accessed: July 16, 2017).

In this context, one of the main ideas for introducing bioethical thinking is the effort to put Bioethics in the field of scientific development as a subject of Master and PHD studies in all fields, as part of Ethics of science which have to be obligatory for every kind of post-studies. This project was presented at a round table concerning this matter on St. Cyril and Methodius University in Skopje in June 2007 (materials are edited under title “Ethics in contemporary science”). Since then, Bioethics is a 30% from the core content of the obligatory course “Ethics of scientific research” on a doctoral school ([http://www.ukim.edu.mk/dokumenti\\_m/262\\_Lista\\_na\\_predloznei\\_predmeti\\_genericki\\_znaenja .pdf](http://www.ukim.edu.mk/dokumenti_m/262_Lista_na_predloznei_predmeti_genericki_znaenja.pdf). Accessed: July 16, 2017).

### **Additional forms of spreading ethical and bioethical education for young people**

Since the time when experimental course for ethics and bioethics were made, a lot of materials were published and disseminated. First of all, the materials from prof. Temkov regarding the experimental teaching, then monographies, proceedings, thematic blocks, articles etc.

In this context, a series of lessons was made with the first bioethical texts and lessons in North Macedonia for the experimental ethical-bioethical education, published also in a weekly magazine. Later on, this was a base for the book “Good, Better, The Best” (Ethics and youth), first edited in large format as a private edition, translated into Serbian and after that edited in North Macedonia in the same form in 2007. In this book prof. Temkov wrote lessons on Bioethics, Ecological Ethics, Ethics of Health and Ethics of Addictions, included in the experimental teaching of Ethics in primary school – in the 6<sup>th</sup> class (2000), in the second class (2003/2004) and in work with 5-6 years children in value education in the kindergarten (2004).

There are also the texts and books: “Love and Care” (Ethics for the Youngest) and “Ethics for Children”, where definition of Bioethics, survey of development, fields and values of Bioethics, moral norms in Bioethics, future tendencies in Bioethics were built.

After that, in his book “Ethics today”, he wrote special parts “Bioethics” and “Addictions and Drugs” and revealed how the status of ethics today is changed – from ethics of virtue in ethics on being of humanity and nature. Especially introduced and expounded were Bioethics, Ecological ethics, Ethics on health, Ethics on infective diseases and Ethics of addictions, especially drugs because today, the most important bioethical dimensions are included in moral aspects on personal, social, domestic, economical and political ethics like values and task.

In this context there were “Ethical dictionary for Youth”, “Ecological basic textbook”, and many more, as well as new school books for high school on ethical education: “Ethics for II class” and “Ethics for III class” Gymnasium. In all of these books for young people, Bioethics is presented as the most significant ethical problem today. This is something new, because Bioethics mainly concentrates on specialized activity and education of specialists for particular professions (medicine, biology...), and it is “not a part of wide base on comprehensive education with a mission to build a wide bioethical consciousness in everybody” (Temkov, 1998: 152-170).

In the series “Ethicians”, which were first published in the magazine “Start” (2003-2004) and later on as a book “Ethicians – 100 most important philosophers of moral: From Zarathustra to Bioethics”, between the most important ethical thinkers in human history the ideas of Albert Schweitzer, Pavao Vuk-Pavlovic, Rachele Carson, Peter Singer and others old and new ethicists with bioethical meaning were introduced.

In 2004 the Ethical Centre was founded in Skopje, where the first seminar for students was dedicated to the problems of drugs, and later on about other important bioethical issues.

There is the legacy of MA thesis: “Ethical education in class teaching” by Ljubica Topuzovska, “Ethical education in high schools in North Macedonia” by Jovan Lozanovski, “Ethics as a subject in prime schools” by Ilinka Torbovska-Smilevska..., and doctoral dissertations: “Forms and methods of ethical education in class teaching” by Ljubica Topuzoska, “Forms, methods and means in teaching ethics in high schools” by Jovan Lozanovski..., in which the urgent need and forms on bioethical education as a part of the ethical education were presented.

Finally, for achieving this level of treatment, beside the efforts of prof. Temkov and the associates for opening the doors for Bioethics in the academic

world in North Macedonia, there is also the realization of the thematic block “Bioethics: Occurrence, Challenges and Opportunities”, edited by me in the scientific journal “Philosophy” from 2011. In addition, there is the Proceedings from the first international interdisciplinary conference “Bioethics – The sign of a new era: Bioethics, media, law and medicine”, that I organized with the Faculty of Law and the Centre for integrative bioethics from Kumanovo, the same year in Ohrid, North Macedonia. So, the ground was prepared for further actions of involving and implementing Bioethics in educational system in North Macedonia.

In addition, as a result of my idea and effort for continuous spreading of the knowledge and main idea of Bioethics, a Centre for integrative bioethics was opened last year at the Faculty of Philosophy in Skopje in which, for now, we have 11 enthusiastic professors working on the promotion and implementation of the Bioethics. As a result of this, we had already 4 public debates and lectures realized with domestic and foreign lecturers on urgent issues and problems. Already, we have signed cooperation with several centers like this one from the region, and at the moment we seek cooperation with UNESCO, as their new unit for bioethics from our country. We also work on providing translation of key books from Bioethics, as well as and on having the most important names from Europe, such as prof. Hans Martin Sas, then Peter Singer..., as a guest lecturers. Meanwhile, we also realized the second international conference “Bioethics - the Sign of the New Age” in Ohrid, in cooperation with the Center for Integrative Bioethics, University of Osijek, Republic of North Macedonia. Croatia, an activity that was part of the so-called Week of Bioethics in North Macedonia, and together with the colleague of mine, prof. Risto Solunchev, we were guests on the World Day of Bioethics on October 19 in Athens, at the National University of Athens, as invited lecturers, to celebrate this big and important event.

## **Conclusion**

To conclude, the manifestations of Bioethics together with its theoretical explications have the same importance as practical ethics. In the future, the Ethics might become Bioethics, because the meaning of the biological factors for living is too important (life, nature, man as basic categories on bioethics), especially in the epoch when they are violated and endangered from various sites and as well as from people’s bad behavior. That is why we are engaging in ethical education as a new kind of ethical-pedagogical activity that we want

to involve in all levels of education, so we can be prepared to understand and to implement the new intentions of human living which are expressed through syntagma and reality of Bioethics.

As a conclusion we would like to offer a few arguments why pupils/students should be introduced with bioethical ideas and how that should be done.

First, Bioethics as such is more comprehensive, broader than to say so, that of so far ethics, because bioethics in its scope has ideas, contents and practices that haven't been subject of traditional ethics so far. Biomedical sciences, and medical practice as such are facing us with new and so far unknown challenges. Also, bio ecology, as a biological science opens new frontiers for ecosophia and ecological activism, i.e. ecology.

Second, and most important, bioethics makes an essential shift in ethical perspective - from previous anthropocentrism to biocentrism, something very important in today's capitalistic age and consumeristic way of life. Accepting this new "centrism" is crucial for saving the planet.

And, finally, the main question is how it must be done? How bioethics should be taught at university high schools and faculties? What is the most appropriate approach?

We think that if ethical education is allowed to be organized at the elementary school level as moral education, or moral upbringing, that is something that should be avoided in higher classes. In elementary school pupils should adopt values, but in high school and especially at university level students should re-examine values. Moral training is unacceptable for university courses of ethics and bioethics classes. Thus, this kind of education should be organized only through the critical thinking approach. Le Grand (2001: 51) in his book *Moral Education today* claims that "teaching morals means creating moral conscience". But creating moral consciences cannot be learned, memorized, but can be incited or created by encouraging, motivating moral thinking. So, critical thinking in bioethical education is the essential approach in teaching ethics. Incitement/ Encouraging of moral consciences through critical thinking is just the right way of creating a morally responsible individual. As a South Korean researcher in his paper "Reconceptualizing Critical Thinking for Moral Education in Culturally Plural Societies" (Kwak, 2008) claims, the critical thinking approach in moral education leads to a fight against uncritical acceptance of moral habits, thoughts and views formed in their character from early childhood. Thus, bioethical

Education should encourage reflection on moral issues. Only this way bioethical education can lead toward moral autonomy based on rational justification.

Unfortunately, we must say that so far ethical and bioethical approach in our schools and faculties is not based on critical thinking approach, neither in contents nor in methods.

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## MOGUĆNOST UVOĐENJA BIOETIČKOG OBRAZOVANJA U SREDNJE ŠKOLE I NA FAKULTETE U SJEVERNOJ MAKEDONIJI

### Sažetak

Danas je bioetika vrlo važno i složeno polje mišljenja i aktivnosti. Prijete nam mnogi problemi vezani za zdravlje, zagađenost okoliša, nasilje, sukobe, ljudski nemar, kriminalna djela, kao i štetna ponašanja drugačijih vrsta i sežu sve do srži ljudske vrste. Svi ovi problemi traže ozbiljan i brzi ljudski odgovor. Iz ovoga je razloga vrlo važno uvesti bioetičko obrazovanje za sve ljude. Ovaj rad se bavi problemom implementacije etičkog i bioetičkog obrazovanja u makedonski školski sustav. Nudi kratak pregled dosadašnjih aktivnosti u ovom polju i pokušava staviti u kontekst neke teoretske pristupe za etičko i bioetičko obrazovanje. Glavna teza jest da bi se osnovna razina etičkog i bioetičkog obrazovanja trebali organizirati kao moralno obrazovanje, ali na razini srednjoškolskog i fakultetskog obrazovanja, jer pristup bi trebao biti kritičko mišljenje, a koje je najprimjerenije za tu dob.

**Ključne riječi:** bioetika, obrazovanje, etika, srednja škola, fakultet