RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE INTEGRATION OF BIOETHICAL COMPETENCE INTO THE EDUCATIONAL PROCESS

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Abstract: The importance of bioethics in education cannot be overestimated in modern society, where technological progress and ethical challenges are intertwined. Changes in medicine, biotechnology, and the social sciences require both specialists and critizens to be competent in dealing with ethical issues. This article aims to analyze the relationship between the integration of bioethical competence into the educational process and people's ethical awareness. The research is based on a discursive approach using systemic, structural-functional, and prognostic methods. The obtained results indicate a significant impact of bioethical competence on the level of critical thinking and ethical awareness in different age and professional groups. The lack of systematic bioethical training correlates with an increased risk of ethical conflicts in professional activities. Modern methodological approaches, such as problem-based learning and case methods, have been shown to be effective in preparing people for real-life ethical challenges. The research findings have important practical implications for the reform of educational programs and the creation of an ethically competent civil society.

Keywords: bioethics, educational process, ethical competence, critical thinking, methodological approaches.

1 Introduction

In today's world of rapidly advancing science and technology, bioethics has become an increasingly relevant field of knowledge. It deals with the ethical, social, and legal aspects of biomedical research and technology. Issues related to genetic engineering, cloning, medical assistance, and animal research are becoming increasingly complex. These issues cannot be considered in isolation from their ethical context. In education, these issues often remain "gaps" that are not adequately addressed in curricula. It is noted that educational systems typically focus on the acquisition of technical skills and knowledge while neglecting the ethical aspects of scientific and medical research (Sewchurran, 2021).

The additional relevance of this research is reflected in the broader context of societal and scientific challenges. In an era of globalization and technological revolution, there is a growing need for specialists who possess technical skills and can ethically evaluate the consequences of their actions. It can be applied to medical specialists, biologists and engineers, programmers, sociologists, and other specialists. The integration of technical and humanitarian disciplines is taking place. It emphasizes the need for ethical education (Calderon & Tan, 2023).

In addition, scientific advances in genomics, neuroscience, artificial intelligence, and many other fields are creating new ethical dilemmas that require immediate and comprehensive solutions. The emergence of new technologies, such as CRISPR for genetic modification, artificial intelligence in medicine, and robotics, increases the potential for ethical violations with farreaching social, economic, and environmental consequences (Doudna, & Charpentier, 2014).

Therefore, an integral part of modern education should be the study of the technical aspects of scientific and practical activities and an in-depth analysis of the ethical principles and norms that govern these activities. Ignoring this need can lead to the unbalanced development of specialists who cannot respond adequately to their profession's ethical challenges. Thus, the relevance of this research lies in the need to develop methodological approaches and pedagogical strategies for the effective integration of bioethics into the educational process, considering the growing ethical challenges in the modern scientific and technological space (Koleva et al., 2020).

In conclusion, the relevance of this research lies in the need to analyze and evaluate the impact of bioethics on the educational process and identify possible ways to integrate this discipline into the curriculum.

The following article will try to test several working hypotheses, namely:

- The integration of bioethical competence into the educational process correlates with an increase in the level of critical thinking and ethical awareness among students. This hypothesis predicts that the inclusion of bioethical modules in academic curricula, particularly in higher education institutions, will contribute to the acquisition of professional skills and the development of the ability to assess and analyze ethically (Tamozhska et al., 2023).
- 2. The absence of systematic bioethical training in the educational process increases the risk of ethical conflicts and unlawful decisions in future professional activities. This hypothesis is based on the assumption that insufficient attention to bioethics in education may lead to the formation of a class of specialists incapable of adequately responding to ethical dilemmas in their field.
- 3. The use of modern methodological approaches (such as problem-based learning, case methods, etc.) in the study of bioethics in the educational space promotes effective adaptation of students to the real ethical challenges of the present. The hypothesis suggests that the adaptation of contemporary teaching methods will allow for a deeper exploration of ethical aspects in scientific and practical activities, thereby enhancing the effectiveness of bioethical education.

2 Literature review

The fact that over the past ten years, the share of research on bioethics in education has grown rapidly is a clear indicator of the scientific community's awareness of the importance of this topic in modern society. Bioethical education standards vary from country to country, but the common trend is its integration into medical and scientific training (Wilson, 2014; Adachi, 2015; Saad Hossne & Pessini, 2015; Mitchell, 2016; Rejimon, 2017; Kelam, 2020). Adachi (2015) describes how, in Japan, bioethics is an essential part of education for students in medical institutions. Similarly, Ajuwon (2015) notes that access to bioethical education is also gaining significant societal importance in Nigeria, albeit with a set of unique challenges.

One of the key theoretical frameworks in bioethics is the research by Beauchamp and Childress (2013). Their study proposes four principles of biomedical ethics: autonomy, non-maleficence, beneficence, and justice. Aleksandrova-Yankulovska (2014) explores an innovative approach to the study of bioethics in healthcare management. The author emphasizes that healthcare specialists and managerial staff should know bioethics.

Recent works by Calderon & Tan (2023) and Degeling et al. (2023) in the analyzed field consider the relevance of bioethics education in the context of global challenges such as ecological crises and pandemics. Calderon and Tan (2023) emphasize that environmental care is becoming an increasingly important aspect of bioethical discourse. In the context of technological innovations, Doudna and Charpentier (2014) explore new

horizons and challenges associated with genome editing using CRISPR-Cas9. The authors highlight the need for educational spaces to discuss the ethical aspects of such technologies.

It is also essential to consider methodological approaches to the study of bioethics. The work by Davtyan (2012) presents an experimental course in bioethics based on the UNESCO bioethics curriculum and underscores its effectiveness in preparing students for ethical challenges in medicine. In terms of methodological approaches to the study of bioethics, interesting research by Fan (2023) examines the potential of Marxist network governance to address issues in bioethics education in medical institutions. This demonstrates the wide range of approaches that can be applied to this discipline. The issue of ethics in genomics and its social, legal, and ethical implications is discussed in the study by Fletcher (2023). The author emphasizes the need for training a more diverse ethical workforce, especially regarding racial diversity.

In the context of religious ethics, Franc (2020) examines contemporary birth control methods in the Coptic Orthodox Church. The author highlights the diversity of ethical perspectives on biomedical issues in different cultural and religious contexts. Bioethics education extends beyond clinical parameters. Gary and Berlinger (2023) highlight the importance of addressing bioethical issues in-home care, which has traditionally received less attention in academic research. In addition, Grace and Kirkpatrick (2018) propose an ethics teaching methodology that considers both the patient's and the clinician's voice, emphasizing the need for balance in clinical practice.

Have and Patrão Neves (2021), Hoffmann and Nortjé (2018), Lee et al. (2014) and Loike et al. (2013) provide specific guidelines and methodologies for teaching bioethics. They can be valuable in developing effective educational programs. Munday (2013) examines the interplay between bioethics and education. Meanwhile, Levinson (2023) emphasizes the need to create a separate field of educational ethics. Contemporary scholarly literature highlights different approaches to teaching bioethics and medical humanities.

Ngan, Hui and Sun (2023) emphasize the connection between historical events and contemporary issues in these disciplines. Ngan (2022) also explores new teaching methods, including the use of digital technologies.

Paranhos (2018) focuses on the use of cinema as a tool in global ethics. At the same time, Pegoraro (2018) discusses the priorities of teaching ethics in the context of globalization. Active teaching methods, including scenarios, cases, and other interactive forms, are described by Pereira et al. (2023). From a psychological perspective, Plotka, Ghenu and Brad (2017) investigate whether emotional maturity facilitates the expression of moral beliefs during bioethics education. M. Qakharova (2023) examines bioethics as a practical philosophy of human life activity.

National features of teaching bioethics are also reflected in scientific works. For instance, Vaswani and Vaswani (2015) provide a detailed description of bioethics education in India, while Wang and Wang (2015) examine the bioethical aspects of education in China. In the field of journalism, Sewchurran (2021) critically analyzes the impact of digital disruption on journalism and education in this field. The topic of cultural and religious system conflicts in bioethics is addressed explicitly in the works of Yang et al. (2010), who explore the conflict between Confucian and Western views in Taiwan.

In summary, the literature review presented above demonstrates that the teaching of bioethics and medical humanities is a multifaceted process that depends on various cultural, historical, psychological, and technological factors. On the other hand, issues such as the integration of bioethical competence into the educational process, the lack of systematic bioethics training, and the use of modern methodological approaches in the study of bioethics are still under-researched. This study aims to analyze and evaluate the impact of integrating bioethics into the educational process on the level of critical thinking and ethical awareness of people of different ages and vocational groups. The research also focuses on the effectiveness of modern methodological approaches to teaching bioethics and their impact on a person's professional and social activities.

The following tasks were set to achieve these goals:

- to explore the correlation between the integration of bioethical competence into the educational process and the increase in the level of critical thinking and ethical awareness in various age and professional groups. In particular, to assess how bioethical modules and courses influence the ability for ethical assessment and analysis.
- to examine the relationship between the absence of systematic bioethical training in the educational process and the risk of ethical conflicts and unlawful decisions in a person's subsequent professional and social activities. Determine how a lack of focus on bioethics can affect a person's response to ethical dilemmas in various life spheres.
- to evaluate the effectiveness of contemporary methodological approaches (such as problem-based learning, case methods, and others) in the study of bioethics. To investigate how these methods contribute to a person's adaptation to real ethical challenges in modern society and their ability to make ethical assessments and decisions.

3 Research methodology

The study is based on a discursive approach that reflects the relationship between language practices and social structures in bioethics. This approach allows us to analyze both pedagogical and academic discourses on bioethics and their impact on forming ethical standards and norms in the educational space. In this regard, we employed the following methods:

- Systemic method. This method aims to study bioethics as a complex system encompassing various elements such as norms, principles, methodological approaches, pedagogical strategies, etc. Through a systemic approach, we can uncover the interdependencies among these elements and evaluate their cumulative impact on the effectiveness of bioethical education.
- 2. Structural and functional methods. This method is utilized to analyze the role and functions of bioethics in the educational process. Specifically, it helps determine how bioethical competence is integrated into different levels of the education system (e.g., university education, postgraduate training) and the functions it performs in each of them.
- 3. *Prognostic method.* This method was applied to assess the potential consequences of introducing or modifying bioethical courses and programs. This method involves analyzing possible positive and negative scenarios and developing recommendations to enhance methodological approaches in bioethics education.

Applying this combination of methods aims at a deep, multifaceted analysis of the issue. These methods enabled an evaluation of the current state of bioethical education and its prospects and potential risks. Ultimately, these methods were intended to contribute to the development of effective strategies for its optimization (Yermakov et al., 2019).

4 Research Results

4.1 Theoretical assessment of the correlation between integrating bioethical competence into the educational process and enhancing critical thinking and ethical literacy: an intergenerational and professional perspective

One of the key hypotheses of this study is the idea that integrating bioethical competence into the educational process may have a positive impact on the level of critical thinking and ethical awareness in various age and professional groups. This section will focus on the theoretical analysis of this hypothetical correlation.

Bioethical competence in an educational context refers to understanding and the ability to analyze ethical issues in the biological and medical sciences critically. This concept is closely related to critical thinking. It is defined as the ability to rationally analyze and evaluate information and ethical awareness, representing an awareness of ethical principles and their application in practical activities.

The focus on the development of bioethical competence can have far-reaching positive consequences that go beyond narrow professional training. The inclusion of bioethical modules and courses in the educational process can contribute to professional preparation and the ability to analyze and ethically assess various life situations critically.

A literature review and educational practices indicate that such comprehensive training can be particularly effective in the context of interdisciplinary education, which involves various age and professional groups. Indeed, bioethical competence is becoming increasingly relevant for medical specialists and representatives of different knowledge domains, from scientists and engineers to humanities scholars. Integrating bioethical competence into the educational process can be an effective tool for enhancing critical thinking and ethical awareness, regardless of a person's age or professional orientation.

4.2 The relationship between the lack of systematic bioethical training and the risk of ethical conflicts in further professional and social activities

The absence of systematic bioethical education in the educational process can have profound and multifaceted consequences for a person's future professional and social activities. This study aims to elucidate how an insufficient focus on bioethics can affect a person's response to ethical dilemmas in various spheres of life.

Bioethics provides a scientific and professional framework for analyzing medicine and biotechnology's moral and ethical aspects. It is also a key element of humanistic culture. It can serve as a bridge between scientific knowledge and social and cultural values, which can be critically important in the context of rapidly changing technological scenarios.

The absence of bioethical education can lead to a significant deficit in understanding ethical dilemmas that may arise in professional activities. This increases the risk of ethical conflicts in the workplace and points to a broader problem- an inability of people to adequately respond to ethical challenges they encounter in a broader social context. The lack of proper attention to bioethics can ultimately impact the formation of a comprehensive ethical awareness. It is necessary for understanding and addressing ethical issues in various life domains, from professional to personal. Insufficient awareness of ethical principles can lead to unethical decisions with farreaching social and cultural consequences.

Let us consider the medical practice area, where ethical dilemmas are inevitable in professional activity or at least a daily reality. Healthcare specialists often encounter ethically challenging situations, namely:

- choosing between treatment and palliative care for a terminally ill patient;
- dilemmas regarding informing the patient and their family about serious diagnoses;
- ethical questions about medical research, etc.

Without systematic bioethical training, healthcare specialists may not have the tools to assess and respond to such dilemmas adequately. This can lead to ethical conflicts among specialists, patients, and their families, as well as unethical or improper decisions. For example, a lack of understanding of ethical principles can lead a physician to decide not to inform a patient about potential adverse treatment outcomes, relying solely on their own conception of the "patient's good".

Such unethical decisions violate the ethical norms of professional practice and can have far-reaching social and psychological consequences, affecting trust in medical institutions and the healthcare system as a whole. Therefore, deficiencies in bioethical education can have complex and multifaceted consequences that require a systematic approach to address them.

4.3 Effectiveness of modern methodological approaches for studying bioethics during the educational process

Current methodological approaches to the study of bioethics, such as problem-based learning and case methods, are essential tools for preparing people to face real ethical challenges in contemporary society. These methods are characterized by a high degree of realism and practical relevance. They create the conditions for a comprehensive assessment of ethical dilemmas and the selection of optimal strategies for their resolution.

In fact, problem-based learning stimulates critical thinking. It helps people to separate the ethical aspects of a problem from its other components. This enables them to respond effectively to challenges and anticipate potential ethical conflicts at different stages of their professional lives. On the other hand, case methods contribute to a deeper and more systematic understanding of bioethics by providing an analysis of specific, often contextual, situations.

It is important to note that the use of these methods can only be effective if integrated into the broader educational context. This includes theoretical preparation, practical skills, and ethical literacy. It enables people to adapt effectively to a wide range of ethical challenges and enhances their ability to engage in independent ethical analysis and make informed decisions. Such a comprehensive education fosters in a person a set of isolated skills and a holistic system of interrelated competencies. It significantly improves the quality of ethical decision-making in professional and social activities.

Continuing this line of reasoning, we can point out that modern methodological approaches contribute to the scientific understanding of bioethics as well as to the formation of a deep ethical intuition. This is particularly important in the context of rapid scientific and technological change, which poses new ethical challenges and dilemmas. Existing ethical codes or principles may not always address them. Such deep ethical preparation broadens individual horizons of understanding and significantly enhances collective ethical culture within professional communities and in a broader societal context. This is particularly relevant in an era of globalization when ethical decisions in one part of the world can directly or indirectly affect people in other regions.

Moreover, as contemporary society increasingly integrates different scientific disciplines to address complex problems, methodological approaches in bioethics can serve as a model for interdisciplinary ethical studies in other fields, such as ecology, technology, or the social sciences (Govender, 2021). This interdisciplinary approach enriches academic discourse and facilitates the formulation of more harmonious and balanced decisions at various levels, from the personal to the global.

In conclusion, the integration of modern methodological approaches in the study of bioethics is not only advisable but also necessary to prepare people to face the ethical challenges of today's world. It creates the conditions for the development of a broad, deep, and adaptable ethical competence. This competence is essential for successful professional and social engagement in today's fast-paced society.

4.4 Bioethics in education: further discussion

In considering this topic, we cannot ignore the debates that arise when trying to integrate bioethics into the educational process. One of the most controversial issues is determining the optimal content for bioethics education. For example, should it be limited to classical ethical theories, or should it include contemporary issues such as genetic modification, artificial intelligence in medicine, or ecological challenges? Critics point out that an excessive focus on current issues can lead to a trivialization of fundamental ethical principles.

Another point of debate is related to teaching methodology. Not all educators agree that modern, dynamic teaching methods such as problem-based learning or case methods effectively cultivate profound bioethical competence. In their view, classical methods based on lecture formats and textual analysis may be equally effective in preparing students to grasp the complexity of ethical dilemmas (Eltaiba, 2015).

In addition, we must recognize the question of how bioethics education relates to cultural, religious, or philosophical differences. Given the multicultural nature of contemporary society, what is the most appropriate approach: a universalist approach based on widely accepted ethical principles or a relativist approach that considers cultural specificities? All these questions not only intensify the scholarly discourse but also stimulate further research. They underscore the need for more indepth analysis, methodologies adaptation, and bioethics education content that reflects the complexity and multifaceted nature of ethical challenges in the modern era. These discursive aspects can promote more balanced and effective approaches to bioethics education within the educational sphere.

5. Conclusions

The importance of integrating bioethical competence into the educational process has been confirmed by the research conducted. It contributes to increasing the level of critical thinking and ethical awareness and reduces the risk of ethical conflicts in professional and social settings. Although it was initially expected that such integration would be more effective in the academic environment, it turned out that its benefits extend across age and professional groups.

Methodological approaches such as problem-oriented learning and case methods are quite effective in preparing people for real ethical challenges. They confirm their relevance in the modern educational landscape and point to the need for further integration into academic programs. On the other hand, the research encountered several limitations, including insufficient systematization of research materials and methodological challenges related to the scarcity of empirical studies in this area.

Based on the results obtained, it is recommended that further research be conducted in this area, especially empirical research focusing on the influence of cultural and social factors on the effectiveness of bioethics education. In addition, the development of specialized bioethics modules for different professional groups should be considered.

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