

The responsibility of education in the construction of humanity and an ethical attitude

Susana Pinto,¹ Marta Assunção,¹ Helena José²

¹PhD Student in Nursing at the Institute of Health Sciences, Universidade Católica Portuguesa, Porto. Professor at Multiperfil Higher Institute of Health, Luanda, Angola

²PhD in Nursing. Researcher at UICISA. Professor at Multiperfil Higher Institute of Health, Luanda, Angola

Correspondence: Susana Pinto, Specialist Nurse, Master in Nursing and PhD Student in Nursing at the Institute of Health Sciences, Universidade Católica Portuguesa, Porto. Professor at Multiperfil Higher Institute of Health, Luanda, Angola, Email suipinto@gmail.com

Received: February 27, 2018 | **Published:** March 13, 2018

Copyright© 2018 Pinto et al. This is an open access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution License, which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original author and source are credited.

Abstract

Introduction: In the education, the professor is the mediator and the person responsible for the educative process, is of great importance, as the ethical way in which he conducts his activities will promote the construction of an ethical attitude. The construction of an ethical attitude implies the respect towards the other, respecting their dignity. It's through this respecting and the humanity that each person builds himself and cares for the other.

Purpose: This paper aimed to reflect upon the responsibility that education has in the construction of humanity and of an ethical attitude on students.

Methodology: Narrative review around three main concepts: education, ethics and humanity. Documents published from 2012 to 2017, in Portuguese and English language and critical reflection about the concepts.

Results: The society humanization and the humanization of nursing care results the construction of values, the transfer of knowledge and the ethical attitude. The education has a responsibility in a formation of health professionals. So, it's important to reflect about the responsibility and the example of the teacher, the values and behavior construction, the ethical behavior and the Humanity actions. Just so it's possible to respect the human dignity.

Conclusion: It is only possible to have healthcare professional with ethical attitudes if the educational system and professors themselves teach and train values and citizenship. This construction assumed as a responsibility of building and educating an ethical attitude and humanity.

Keywords: education, ethics, humanism

Introduction

Education is inherent to the cycle of life. Education cannot only be school and institutionalized teaching. Education starts at home, through parenting or tutoring and, throughout life, there are several figures that influence or mediate this process. While you don't always teach, you always transmit something, either it is values, culture, ways of thinking and of course, knowledge. In this line of thought and looking backward to adult education, it would be expectable that for some, education translates only into knowledge as values and everything else is already incorporated in each person. For others, this idea does not make sense as education is not merely about the transfer of knowledge, but rather something connected to behaviors and attitudes centered in culture, as well as ideas of liberty and citizenship, related to critical consciousness.¹ Therefore, the professor, as the mediator and the person responsible for the educative process, is of great importance, as the ethical way in which he conducts his activities will promote the construction of an ethical attitude.

The construction of an ethical attitude is the daily challenge that each

one must face and that is inherent in the respect towards the other. Having respect for someone else implies respecting their dignity. Human dignity is inherent to each person and must be recognized by all individuals. This recognition means respecting others wholly, their body, their beliefs, their religious convictions, their social relations and their life journey.

It means paying attention to others and respecting their choices, even when that person finds itself debilitated by disease and approaching death; above all, it means to respect their rights and to make sure that these are upheld.² This should be the focus when educating health professionals. Especially because respect and protection of a person and its dignity is contemplated on the state Constitutions, as the right to personal integrity.

Based on what was previously mentioned, education inevitably implies a process of transformation and development of the human being in multiple dimensions throughout life.

Purpose

Reflect upon the responsibility that education has in the construction of humanity and of an ethical attitude on students.

Methodology

Two revisions of the literature were made to understand the state of the art on the main concepts, given that, the three concepts (education, ethics and humanity) did not converge. Research was conducted on electronic databases, on documents published from 2012 to 2017. One of the literature reviews was made with the descriptor of humanity and in the Portuguese language. 13 articles, master's and doctoral thesis were selected. These documents were analyzed and allowed for a summarization of the central aspects of care in humanity. The other review was conducted both in English and Portuguese and the used descriptors were *educação e ética/education and ethics*, resulting in 5 articles: 3 in Portuguese and 2 in English. The articles were analyzed given the main objective and the main ideas were summarized.

Results

The educative process must be orientated by critical consciousness, by the ideals of freedom and autonomy and have a symbiosis between ethics, citizenship and social responsibility. Therefore, the responsibility of the school goes much further than the mere transfer of knowledge in the current globalized world. Given this, education must be practical and based on ethical values, so that it can insert itself in the ethical dimension of human existence. Only through the constant interaction with society, culture, politics and the collective construction of students, can you guide them to have their own perspective of a humanized society. That is, through the construction of values, the transfer of knowledge and the ethical attitude of teachers can you advance the humanization of society¹ and, in this specific situation, the humanization of nursing care.

Education must allow a preoccupation with the deconstruction of values that currently privilege and prioritize individual interests in detriment of empathy and solidarity.¹ Thus, we ask: how can a healthcare professional who lives this way guarantee the basic principles of bioethics? How can he privilege the autonomy, individuality and human dignity of those he cares for? How can he respect the principles of beneficence and maleficence, in detriment of himself and his closed ones? How can he guarantee justice in the exercise of his job, even when he believes in the lack of social justice? It is then essential, indispensable even, that education is worried about transmitting these values and helping others by example, individually building an ethical attitude with those he educates.¹ These principles intend to be a guiding light in the ethical practice of healthcare and, consequently, must be transmitted.

The use of these principles should not hamper scientific advancement, instead this advancement should be made in a way that does not impair the Human Being, respecting his will and not causing him any harm.²

In addition to the construction of an ethical attitude, health education must also promote the construction of humanity. Humanity is essential to the construction of the human being and is guided by the respect towards people and the promotion of their dignity in a

constant equilibrium between technology and humanism. How? Through dignifying gestures that, although natural, need to be learned, grounded and reflected upon. In humanity, as in education, the contribution that each one makes promotes the other, building a collective, a humanity, through detailed appreciation and in the harmony between the body and mind of the caretaker and the person who receives care. Care in humanity promotes the appreciation of life, autonomy, liberty, citizenship and the signs that identify Men: verticality, gaze, word, smile, touch and clothing. In that concern with others, humanity, respect and human dignity (ethical attitude) is built and learnt throughout life.³ Yet, learning throughout life denotes a previous condition of ethical education as a continuous process as well. Therefore, education must promote, mandatorily, a greater capacity for reflection, teaching decision making, strengthening consciousness and judgement, developing an ethical behavior and promoting an ethical sensibility to identify, analyze and solve others' problems, with an emphasis on the dignity of the human being.

Conclusion

Education is deeply connected with the existence of the other, consequently, it is necessary to teach and respect the other. In addition to the transmutation of students, education has the responsibility to inspire reflection upon moral and ethical behaviors, promote autonomy and commitment of each person towards the other. Each educator makes a commitment to humanity in building a better society.¹

This way, ethics and education are a continuous and transcendent process to learn or teach codes of ethics, norms or principles. Individual skills, as well as personal and cultural values, are essential requirements of teaching ethics in an ethical way.⁴

It is only possible to have healthcare professional with ethical attitudes if the educational system and professors themselves teach and train values and citizenship. It is unquestionable that each educational institution has the responsibility of building and educating an ethical attitude and humanity.

Recommendations

It is recommended that health education concerns itself with the code of ethics of students and future professionals. It is necessary to teach ethics, although ethically, with responsibility and examples of citizenship, based on ethical principles. It is also recommended the organization of seminars in the education institutions about this issue, as well as focus groups, the appreciation for life and respect for human dignity in academia.

Only through this attitude can educational institutions keep themselves alive and recreate the meaning of embodying, training and promoting citizenship.¹

Funding

No funding was received.

Competing interests

The authors declare that they have no competing interests.

References

1. Bassalobre J. Ética, responsabilidade social e formação de educadores. *Educação em Revista*. 2013;29(1):311–317.
2. Oguisso T, Zoboli E. Ética e bioética: desafios para a enfermagem e a saúde. *São Paulo: Manole*. 2006.
3. Simões M, Salgueiro N, Rodrigues M. Cuidar em humanidade: estudo aplicado em cuidados continuados. *Revista de Enfermagem Referência*. 2012;3(6):81–93.
4. Avcı E. A normative analysis to determine the goals of ethics education through utilizing three approaches: rational moral education, ethical acculturation, and learning throughout life. *International Journal of Ethics Education*. 2017;2(2):125–145.