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ABSTRACT
Ethics and social responsibility are the subject of both curriculum materials and research in adult and vocational education. State academic standards and curriculum frameworks address citizenship and personal social responsibility. Ethical and legal issues for specific occupations are addressed in curricula issued by states, professional associations, and educational institutions. Research studies examine the ethical inclinations and decision making of secondary and postsecondary students, as well as the effects of ethics instruction. Methods and resources used in ethics instruction include case studies, heroes as a model for ethical behavior, and a combination of critical thinking and ethics instruction. Service learning projects are recommended for developing social responsibility. Web sites offer resources for ethics instruction. The adult and vocational education literature reflect ethical issues for educators. A long list of ethical issues arises in the use of technology and the Internet, including power, access, control, intellectual property rights, privacy, equity, free speech, and access for minors. The ongoing debate over the mission of adult education presents many ethical dilemmas. (Annotations are provided for 21 resources and 3 Web sites.) (YLB)
Ethics: The Role of Adult and Vocational Education Trends and Issues Alert No. 24

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Ethics: The Role of Adult and Vocational Education

Concerns about increasing antisocial behavior and declining civility have heightened discussions about ethics, including cheating in school and business, ethical dilemmas in teaching and the ethics of technology and Internet use. This Alert investigates the trends and issues involved in teaching social responsibility in adult and vocational education.

Ethics and social responsibility are the subject of both curriculum materials and research. State academic standards and curriculum frameworks address citizenship (Oklahoma Department of Vocational and Technical Education 1996) and personal and social responsibility (Orange County Public Schools 1999). Ethical and legal issues for specific occupations are addressed in curricula issued by states, professional associations, and educational institutions (Loock and Schmitt 2000; Lucky et al. 1993; Massachusetts Career Development Institute 1997). Legal and ethical issues are addressed in training materials for current workers (Westinghouse Electric Corporation 1996). Research studies examine the ethical treatment of students (Lee 1995), particularly in business education (Brown 1996; Cole and Smith 1995), as well as the effects of ethics instruction (Griffin and Anderson 1997).

A variety of methods and resources are used in ethics instruction, including case studies (McAlister-Kizzier 1999), heroes as a model for ethical behavior (Apostolou and Apostolou 1997), and a combination of ethical thinking and ethics instruction (Veugelers 1996). Service learning projects (Paulius 1999) are also recommended for developing social responsibility. Websites offer various resources for ethics instruction, primarily in business: popular and professional literature related to ethics, case studies, working papers, and hyperlinks to other websites (Center for Accounting Ethics, Center for Applied Ethics, Wharton Ethics Program).

The adult and vocational education literature also reflects ethical issues for educators. A long list of ethical issues arises in the use of technology and the Internet: power, access, control, intellectual property rights, privacy, equity, free speech, and access for minors (Bosher and Wilson 1998; Holt 1998; Zieghan 1998). Adult educators are aware of the ethical dilemma involved in ongoing debate over the mission of adult education (Baptiste 1999; Kincheloe 1999): Should adult education serve the individual or society? Social change or status quo? How can teachers, planners, and administrators reconcile the ethic of increasing access and empowerment with other interests they must serve (Lawler 1996; Wilson and Cervero 1996)—the institutions that employ them, the corporate clients who purchase their services, the faculty peers who provide training services?

Resources


Lifelong learning and learning society discourses distract attention from more significant ethical issues in adult education, such as educating for responsible change and forging a civic agenda. Adult education should emphasize access to information, self-improvement, critical theory and pedagogy, and critical consciousness.


Bosher and Wilson discuss ethical implications of disciplinary surveillance in Web courses and how it violates principles of adult education; presents a model to determine levels of disciplinary surveillance.


Ethical dilemmas in 5 areas were rated by 75 business education and 153 business administration students. All showed greater disapproval of fraud, coercive power, and deceit in business practices. Administration students were more tolerant of influence dealing and self-interest in business than business education students were.


A survey of 537 college senior business majors and 158 businesspersons revealed that both groups perceived a gap between the ethical response and the typical businessperson's response to 10 situations. Ethics instruction did not have a significant effect on students' responses.

Holt, M. E. "Ethical Considerations in Internet-Based Adult Education." New Directions for Adult and Continuing Education no. 78 (Summer 1998): 63-69.

Power, access, control, privacy, and equity are some of the ethical concerns involved in teaching and learning on the Internet. The potential for harm cannot be ignored or underestimated.

Kinckeloe discusses how the power of business and management in the modernist economy heightens the need for citizenship education and renewed attention to ethical principles differentiating "good work" and "bad work."

Issues of race and gender are often overlooked in ethical dilemmas. Adult educators must be aware of core professional values, thoughtfully analyze their biases, and acknowledge hidden privileges.


Study suggested that ethics instruction may increase students' ethical awareness and inclinations toward various academic behaviors and that case studies were an effective teaching method.


State academic standards and accompanying materials address practicing a code of ethics for information systems, responding to unethical behavior, defining ethics, and discussing social and ethical standards.


The first in a series of three modules covers legal and ethical issues (beneficence, autonomy, confidentiality, fidelity), written records as legal documents, and consent forms.


Contains a code of ethics and unit on ethical and legal issues and patients' bill of rights; enumerates patient rights, ethical standards for safe, high-quality patient care, and legal ramifications of unethical actions.


Chapter 3 contains 74 case studies representing 12 business subject areas, including ethics; 10 case studies address ethical issues. A detailed index classifies cases by subject areas, learning competency, industry type, and grade level.


Materials for a six-unit course on responsible citizenship for secondary vocational education students.


Guide to citizenship instruction for immigrants, including Florida's curriculum framework for citizenship education.


Students in a course on the consumer in U.S. society participated in service-learning projects; pre- and posttest data showed improvement in student awareness of community needs, expectations of continued participation in job-related service, emotional satisfaction, and understanding of course concepts, issues, and themes.


Illustrates how teachers can combine teaching critical thinking and stimulating the development of specific values by teaching cognitive strategies, stimulating specific values as part of the pedagogical task, and showing respect for students' opinions.


Module for a U.S. Department of Energy agency includes a section on ethical issues—interactions with suppliers, conflict of interests, personal services, untimely marketing, business meals, gifts, entertainment, reimbursement, kickbacks, financial reporting, illegal payments, antitrust, timesheet reporting.


All who are affected by a program should be at the planning table, but, in reality, those with the most power will construct programs according to their interests. Planners must be ethically responsible for the consequences of their work and foster substantive involvement.


Examined evidence of reflection and transformative thinking on issues of social justice in an online course; results suggest that Mezirow's range of kinds of reflection were all present, each student had a reflective style, and transformation around issues of race was compromised by frustration with the concept of white identity.

**Websites**

Center for Accounting Ethics (University of Waterloo, Ontario) is designed to enhance the teaching of ethics and the research of ethical issues in accounting. <http://arts.uwaterloo.ca/ACCT/ethics/index2.html>

Centre for Applied Ethics (University of British Columbia, Vancouver) studies a diverse range of topics including health care practices, business and professional procedures, new information technologies, and environmental issues; provides a variety of resources including an online newsletter, working papers, Web links, and applied ethics. <http://www.ethics.ubc.ca/>

Wharton Ethics Program (Wharton School, University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia) has Wharton ethics cases and extensive links to other ethics institutes and programs. <http://itider.wharton.upenn.edu/~ethics/>

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