Ethical Issues in Social Research

Prof. Ahmadullah Mia, Ph.D. Dean, Faculty of Sciences and Humanities, American World University, Dhaka Campus, Email: amia1941@gmail.com

The aims of social research include broadly understanding and explaining human behaviour and relations, influences of social institutions on behaviour, interactions between individuals’ innate tendencies and social institutions, behaviour changes and conditions that lead to changes, scope of manipulations of the environment for positive social outcome, and impact of social interventions on individuals and groups or communities, etc. Varied methodologies are applied in social studies for theoretical development as well as advancing social inventions contributing to improvement of the living conditions of human population. Forms of studies are planned to suit the purpose. Also, methodology used in a study determines the type of study. Ethical issues in social studies emanate from the debate on the purpose of social studies – whether studies should primarily focus on building knowledge or application for change in the social conditions. Similarly methods applied to investigating into human life as making scientific exploration or influencing social conditions invite ethical controversy. Values that guide social research contain ethical elements, which are unavoidable, like research in any other field. Social research concerned with human being is always likely be plagued by controversy on ethical judgment. The only way to bypass the problem is to give priority consideration to ‘those who the research is meant for’.

The Goals of Bioethics Education

Prof. Darryl Macer, Ph.D., Regional Adviser for Social and Human Sciences in Asia and Pacific, RUSHSAP, UNESCO Bangkok, Email: d.macer@unesco.org

The rationale for Bioethics education is in the Asia-Pacific regional action plan, “Joint Plan of Action for Regional Networking in Bioethics Education Towards Better Bioethics Education”, developed at the UNESCO Asia-Pacific Conference on Bioethics Education in 2006. Please refer to the goals there for a discussion. The International Bioethics Education Network was also launched. The current strategies will be discussed including:

1) Use of on-line teaching materials for bioethics education in different countries. Production of cross cultural materials. Improvement via expert meetings. Adapted and translated in different languages to teach school and university classes about bioethics.

2) A network of teachers in different countries, sharing bioethics curricula for schools, bioethics clubs and other endeavours.

3) Implementation of the joint regional action plan (July 2006)

4) Mapping of bioethics teaching programs in Global Ethics Observatory (GEObs)

5) Sharing of museum displays and over stimuli to enhance classroom interactions

6) Development of moral games and participatory methods

7) Conducting teacher training workshops with UNESCO national commissions and colleges

8) Curriculum review and development

9) UNESCO Core Curriculum on Bioethics and MOUs with pilot institutions

10) Mainstreaming of ethics, integration into professional educational review and training

11) Evaluation of teaching bioethics.