Framework for Ethics

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Inter-Disciplinary Ethics Applied
A Centre for Excellence in Teaching and Learning

Perspectives

- Professional responsibilities
- Corporate Responsibilities
- Individual ethics

Frameworks

- Stakeholder
- Decision Makers
- Non-empirical questions

Qualifications/Concerns

- These are a starting points, not the end point
- Possible concern: a little knowledge is a dangerous thing
- No substitute for careful thinking about the particular case

Frameworks

Stakeholders

Who decides?

Identifying non-empirical questions

Stakeholders

Stakeholders

- Who are the people or groups of people who might be affected by your decision (stakeholders)?
- For each stakeholder, how can you try to ensure that they are fairly treated?
- How will you weigh competing considerations – conflicts between stakeholders?

Key stakeholders

- You
- Your company
  - Share holders
  - Employees
- Competing companies (+ employees/shareholders etc.)
- Local community
- Wildlife
- Environment
- Future Generations

- Any thoughts/questions?

Decision Makers

Risk-benefit analysis

- A mathematical approach (aiming to be rational and objective)
- Identify and quantify risks and benefits
- Do the benefits outweigh the risks

- A rational/objective approach
  - Justify the risks taken

Another Perspective

Risk – 3 roles

- Not just a consideration of the costs and the benefits.
- But also:
  - Whose decision is it?
  - Who gets the benefit?
  - Who gets the risk/cost?

(Based on work of Jonathan Wolff and Hermansson and Hansson)

Different options

	Decide	Benefit	Cost
1. -	a	a	a
2. -	a	b	b
3. -	a	a	b
4. -	a	b	a
5. -	a	b	c
6. -	(abc)	(abc)	(abc)

Example

	Decide	Benefit	Cost
1. -	a	a	a

- Patient deciding whether or not to take a particular medicine (not funded by NHS)
  - The patient makes the decision
  - The patient receives the benefit (if there are any)
  - The patient suffers the consequences (if there are any bad side effects etc.)

Example

	Decide	Benefit	Cost
1. -	a	a	a

- Patient deciding whether or not to take a particular medicine (not funded by NHS)
- Note – may still be ethical issues
  - E.g. Was the patient well informed

Example

	Decide	Benefit	Cost
1. -	a	b	b

- This time the doctor makes the decision, without consulting the patient
  - The doctor makes the decision
  - The patient receives the benefit (if there are any)
  - The patient suffers the consequences (if there are any bad side effects etc.)

Note

- Risk-benefit analysis makes no distinction between the two cases above

Exercise

- Which two of these options has the most potential to be problematic?

Different options

	Decide	Benefit	Cost
1. -	a	a	a
2. -	a	b	b
3. -	a	a	b
4. -	a	b	a
5. -	a	b	c
6. -	(abc)	(abc)	(abc)

Different options

	Decide	Benefit	Cost
1. -	a	a	a
2. -	a	b	b
3. -	a	a	b
4. -	a	b	a
5. -	a	b	c
6. -	(abc)	(abc)	(abc)

Exercise

- Which of these options look less likely to be problematic?

Different options

	Decide	Benefit	Cost
1. -	a	a	a
2. -	a	b	b
3. -	a	a	b
4. -	a	b	a
5. -	a	b	c
6. -	(abc)	(abc)	(abc)

Different options

	Decide	Benefit	Cost
1. -	a	a	a
2. -	a	b	b
3. -	a	a	b
4. -	a	b	a
5. -	a	b	c
6. -	(abc)	(abc)	(abc)

Optional Reading

- Jonathan Wolff on risk
- http://discovery.ucl.ac.uk/1359912/1/1359912.pdf

Combining with stakeholder approach

- Identify the stakeholders
- Who might benefit
- Who might be harmed (or disadvantaged)
- Who makes the decision
- Or, with a bit more nuance
  - Who has a say in the decision?
  - What information do they have?
  - Who has a decision imposed on them?
  - Who has risks imposed on them?
- Is there an alternative way to make the decision (e.g. to involve/consult the stakeholders?)

Non-empirical Questions

Empirical

- Definition:
  - derived from or guided by experience or experiment.
    - http://dictionary.reference.com/

Electric Car

Empirical Scientific

- Do electric cars have lower carbon emissions?
- What other impacts will electric cars have on the environment?
- Are there better alternatives?

Empirical Non-scientific

- Will people buy electric cars?
- What are people's transport preferences?
- Will the move to electric vehicles disadvantage some people more than others?

Non-empirical Non-scientific

- What should we care about, in the environment?
- How do we distinguish between needs and desires?
- Would this be justified?
- What counts as better?

Nuclear Energy

Empirical Scientific

- What are the risks involved?
- Are the natural resources needed available?
- How much energy can it produce?
- How much energy can we get without nuclear energy?

Empirical Non-scientific

- Will people accept nuclear power?
- What are the financial costs of nuclear power? Is it profitable?
- Will the use of nuclear energy lead to proliferation of nuclear weapons?

Non-empirical Non-scientific

- What level of risk can be justified?
- To what extent do we have obligations to future generations?
- Is it permissible to avoid risks if this imposes risks on others?
- What should we care about in the environment?

Non-empirical Questions

Empirical

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  - derived from or guided by experience or experiment.
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Assessment

Assessment

- Identify key stakeholders
- Who makes the decision
  - Who has a say in the decision
  - Who has a decision imposed on them
  - Etc.
- Identify key non-empirical questions

The End

Example

		Decide	Benefit	Cost
1.	-	a	a	a
2.	-	a	b	b
3.	-	a	a	b
4.	-	a	b	a
5.	-	a	b	c
6.	-	(abc) (abc)	(abc)	