Ethics and Innovation
- A SKMF forum discussion

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The questions for this forum

• Does Ethics hamper or foster innovation?

• How might we resolve the dilemmas between ethics and innovation?

• Might responsible knowledge practices be the answer?
Introduction – Outline

• Innovations and innovation management
• What do we understand by ethical dilemmas?
• Does ethics hamper or foster innovations?
• Ethics and morality and what is the real issue?
• Why does responsibility matter?
• Responsible innovations and knowledge management practices?
Innovation

• Innovation arises out of a need or necessity or even a change in the current mode of serving a societal need / purpose.

• Without innovations, it is not possible to improve our standard of living (please note there is a difference between quality of living vs standard of living) in many ways.

• However, there are many ethical dilemmas that we encounter on innovations.

• Innovations can sometimes overcome ethical concerns and some other times introduce ethical concerns and dilemmas
Ethical dilemmas of innovation – just to name a few

• Embryonic stem cell research
• Nuclear power plant
• Condoms for birth control – family planning – and against sexually transmitted diseases vs Catholic norms
• GM (Genetically modified foods)
Ethical concerns also foster innovations – some examples

• Animal testing
  – Body shop?

• High mortality rates
  – New medicines

• Any others?

• These concerns raise a pertinent question what is an ethical concern or what do we understand ethical and morality.
Ethics and Morality

• In general, what is good is associated with ethics, and what is right is associated with morality.

• John Rawls (1971/1999), however, asserts the priority of right over good, and his theory of justice is a deontological ethic, whereas theories based on the priority of good over right are teleological (e.g. utilitarianism).

Source: Nathan, 2010
Relationship between morality, ethics and ethical theory

Morality → Ethics → Ethical theory → Potential solutions to ethical problems

Ethics rationalizes morality …

… to produce ethical theory …

… that can be applied to any situation.

Reference: Crane and Matten, 2010, Chapter 1
What is the real issue?

• Whether what is right takes precedence over what is good is not really the issue. The real issue is one of responsibility!

• Ethical leadership or moral leadership should be concerned with responsibilities; i.e. we should be concerned with responsible innovations.

Source: Nathan, 2010; Cf. Kymlicka, 1989
Double-sided morality

System of morality
-Objective
(external force)

Law
- objective

Conscience
-Subjective
(Internal force)

Reference: Nathan 2010
How should we go about responsible innovations?

• Deliberation for social justice
  – Engage all stakeholders
  – It is not about what are our values rather it is about how to value; i.e. what kind of actions and attitudes are called for
    • (See Nathan 2010; cf. Scanlon)
Value vs how to value

The more you look at the world, the more you recognise that what one person values may be different to the next.

The more you look at the world, the more you recognise that people value the same things but in different ways.

Courtesy of the pictures: Dr. D. Baumann, UNIL
Are there ethical concerns?
If so, what are they?

Courtesy: Ghusoon Al Jamali, MIB Student, BSL
Moral Imagination

Moral imagination
Concerned with whether one has “a sense of the variety of possibilities and moral consequences of their decisions, the ability to imagine a wide range of possible issues, consequences, and solutions” (Werhane, 1998:76)
- see also Nathan 2010; cf. Maak & Pless 2006
Framework for understanding (un)ethical decision-making

Individual factors
- Personal values
- Personal integrity
- Self-respect vs self-esteem

Conscience
Virtue of personal integrity

Double-sided morality

Recognise moral issue
Make moral judgement
Establish moral intent
Engage in moral behaviour

Situational factors
- Circumstances of (in)justice

MORAL IMAGINATION

Deliberation for (social) justice through stakeholder engagement

laws / system of morality
A few questions
to be considered – Q1

• Should we support Internet censorship or not?
  – Internet is an innovation helps to foster innovations and knowledge transfer and exchange; however, some countries want to censor for political and ethical concerns (such as pornography and child sex abuse etc.)
A few questions to be considered – Q2

• What is the best way to encourage the innovation that results in social progress?
• Who should own intellectual property (IP) when the greater public interest is at stake?
• Should we allow developing economies to copy patents on new drugs for cure? Is that ethical?
A few questions to be considered – Q3

• Should knowledge management practices go beyond legality such as privacy etc., in the cases of new social media?

• In other words, just because it is legal, is it ethical?
  – Legal but not ethical?
  – Illegal but ethical?
  • Which way you will go for?
Final Question:
On SKMF

• Should we manage knowledge for innovations or only manage the flow and exchange of knowledge? What is ethical and why?
THANK YOU FOR YOUR ATTENTION
ANY QUESTIONS?
References


• Scanlon, T.M. 2000. What We Owe to Each Other. USA: First Harvard University Press.