"ETHICS BY MOVIE". AN ALTERNATIVE ETHICS TRAINING METHOD FOR FUTURE PROFESSIONALS. A PILOT STUDY AMONG ROMANIAN STUDENTS

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"Ethics by Movie". An Alternative Ethics Training Method for Future Professionals. A Pilot Study among Romanian Students

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Abstract

The paper presents the results of an empirical research that explored the opinion of Romanian students from four different professional Master's Degree programs, on the impact of applying the method that we have called "Ethics by Movie" (creating the students' own video scenarios on an ethical topic in teams) on substantiating ethical knowledge, ethical attitude and ethical behavior. The final sample consisted of 395 respondents. The students appreciate several advantages of the above mentioned teaching and learning method ("an ideal practice for understanding a theoretical concept", "an interactive method of learning" that helped them "to acquire ethical concepts more easily or to reflect more deeply on the importance which must be given to ethical behavior, on the consequences of unethical behavior", etc). Our study might prove to be useful due to the fact that it revives attention to a complementary teaching method that can contribute to increasing awareness of the ethical issues around us, to learning ethical concepts in a more substantiated manner, to the need to solve the ethical dilemmas related to the fact that we must be solidarity in the fight against unethical actions and that, through everything we do, we can send out own ethical message. Also, strength of this method is that it could be successfully used in teaching ethics in different academic fields (social, economical, medical and including in IT and technical sciences).

Keywords: teaching ethics, students' own video scenarios, learning method, leadership, learning environment.

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Introduction

Organizational ethics courses (business ethics, public administration ethics) have been gradually introduced in European higher education curricula, particularly after 1996, when "the efforts [made in this regard] were at the beginning; there was no general acceptance and no integration into the curriculum", according to Enderle (Van Liedekerke & Demuijnck, 2012: 234). However, "the penetration increased dramatically" in Central European countries (as in the case of Poland's academic offer in the field), as well as in Eastern European ones. There is currently sporadic or very little information available about methods of teaching business ethics/organizational or research ethics in Romanian universities. Such information is organized locally and, due to the language barrier involved, is very difficult to follow (Van Liedekerke & Demuijnck, 2012: 221). Nonetheless, teaching ethics (i.e. business ethics, public administration ethics, bioethics, etc.) is included in the curricula of Romanian universities, even though the various studies and research carried out by international bodies on this subject do not mention or identify it. Granted, there is no database to provide an overview of this situation, of the issues addressed and the methods used.

On the one hand, the concern for this topic has its origin in the attempt to align the academic curricula to international standards amid the intense collaboration between universities in various countries in Western Europe and the USA, to increase student, researcher and teacher exchange programs, to join prestigious university networks and to express the desire to occupy better places in the world academic rankings. On the other hand, the problems specific to the various fields in which specialists are trained raise many ethical dilemmas. For this purpose, there is an interest in developing solid professional or transverse skills which are necessary to effectively prevent or solve such problems. Last but not least, the major corruption problems manifested in most of the professional sectors have raised the alarm and have drawn greater attention to training future professionals, managers and employees.

At the academic level, all Romanian universities were required, as of 2005, to adopt a University Code of Ethics (Order no. 4492/2005 promoting professional ethics in universities).The abidance by this procedure was monitored by institutional accreditation bodies. This issue is relevant due to the fact that both professors and researchers are impelled to introduce elements in full compliance with the institutional mission in their projects. In this context, a still very little explored area of research on the exchange of best practices and joint projects has thus emerged, which could bring professors, practitioners and students together in joint inter- and transdisciplinary projects for disseminating theoretical concepts, practical experience and methods that can be used in teaching and defending ethical principles and their benefits within professions, organizations (regardless of domain) and in the society.

One of the major aims of this article is to provide an overview of the most common methods used in teaching ethics (especially in business ethics) found in literature, focusing all the while on experiential learning. Another main aim is that of presenting the results of a pilot exploratory, longitudinal study, conducted over a period 4 academic years (2011-2015), on a sample of 395 respondents, on the creation, by Romanian Master's Degree students, of their own video scenarios on ethics, as a practical learning method (among others) within business ethics/ public administration ethics courses.

Concerns in teaching ethics

The theoretical research conducted by Williams and Dewett (2005) demonstrates that business ethics can (and deserves to) be taught, despite many opinions to the contrary (or "stakeholders' concerns"). The two authors draw attention to three main objectives in teaching business ethics, which they further analyze and argue (producing evidence from the literature) based on their positive impact on students: improving awareness and sensitivity to the ethical consequences of their actions; promoting moral development; promoting the ability to manage complex ethical decision-making situations. On this basis, Williams and Dewett formulate and discuss six premises: identity-relevance of ethical examples used in the educational context; student involvement in selecting and researching ethical issues is positively associated with student awareness and moral sensitivity; the use of formal objectives of students' moral development in the educational context is positively associated with their moral development; the training according to ethical (theories) models is positively associated with their subsequent capacity to solve complex ethical issues; ethical education and training is positively associated with the perception of being well-trained to manage ethical decisions; the practical relevance (regarding future employment on the labor market) of ethical education is positively associated with the subsequent perception of the value of education in business ethics.

The initiative to identify the aims of ethical education is not an easy one. However, a broad response to what ought to be obtained from courses in ethics is that they "should make it clear that there are ethical problems in personal and civic life, that the manner in which they are understood and addressed can make a difference in that life, and that there are better and worse ways of trying to deal with them" (Callahan, 1980: 64-69). The most important aims in teaching ethics, according to Callahan, are: the stimulation of moral imagination, the recognition of ethical issues, the creation of a sense of moral obligation, the development of analytical skills, tolerance and reduction of disagreement and ambiguity.

A wide range of "targeted goals" is identified in the literature on teaching business ethics (Felton and Sims, 2005): to help students understand the key

values enabling them to analyze various business situations and to make ethical decisions and to behave ethically; to broaden their understanding of ethics and its complexity; to realize that ethics is not a singular or abstract course, that it targets all business decisions and that it affects a wide range of stakeholders; to broaden their cultural perspectives, given the fact that ethics is born out of and reflects cultural values; to address the increased number, importance and interest of stakeholders in management; to make students aware of the long-term impact [ethical responsibility] of management decisions ("the second and third generation of consequences"); to create a level of comfort for students in order to discuss ethical issues in management and other environments; to increase the students' awareness of their ethical and leadership responsibilities as managers; to develop students' awareness of the fact that a responsible manager has to invest on a continuous basis in improving their ethical sensitivity and responsibilities. Evidently, no single recipe exists for teaching business ethics due to the fact that planning a course with such specificity is influenced by "institutional objectives, students' needs, specific business factors, social economic factors, and other similar factors." The approach must be inductive, the learning environment must be interactive in order to facilitate the free expression of opinions, debates, the search for alternatives, the exchange of ideas, and, last but not least, it has to be provocative. The professor must create "a learning community".

The objectives formulated by Brinkman and Sims (2001, in Sims, 2002: 20) are more general, the final objective targeting the relationship between students, the school and the course taught: the students must know themselves, know their own moral values and their limitations; they must learn to identify the moral aspects characteristic to a situation, to share their moral understanding, to manage moral issues and conflicts; to acquire moral courage; to acquire a critical stance towards the school's educational curriculum and its courses.

Teaching ethics. New paths to the same destination

It is possible to fulfil these objectives by using appropriate teaching models and strategies, adapted according to circumstantial factors. Felton and Sims highlight the fact that the approach must be adapted according to the level of studies. For students enrolled in a Master's Degree program, a more complex approach is recommended, as they have already gained a significant work experience, and the purpose is for them to understand the types of moral issues in their professional fields, to become acquainted with the moral ideals specific to such fields and to understand the relationship between their professional activity and the values and needs of the society at large (Felton & Sims, 2005: 388). Furthermore, for students enrolled in a Bachelor's Degree program, the course ought to be designed in such a way so as to "help students manage the moral problems with which they are

confronted in their daily business activities", while at MBA (Master's) level, the focus should be on teaching managers to "evaluate the moral status of politicians and to better manage the employees in a difficult moral environment" (Gold, 2005: 3).

Teaching ethics is addressed to adult students (especially to MBA level students) who have a certain style of learning to which the academic methods must be carefully and responsibly adapted. Adult education must take into consideration the fact that adults (LeNoue, Hall & Eighmy, 2011): develop their willingness to learn if they experience needs and interests in situations specific to their lives; are usually autonomous individuals who are capable of identifying and planning their personal learning needs, carrying out and evaluating their learning activities; feel the need to self-direct according to their own learning processes; the professor must act as a facilitator involved in a mutual process of [academic] investigation, rather than as a sender of knowledge; networking and collaborating with others bring a major contribution to their learning process; they learn throughout their lives and become involved in many informal learning projects outside the formal educational system offered by specific institutions and programs; due to the individual learning differences manifested especially after advancing in age, the need to ensure their education according to their own learning style, time, pace; integrate life experience and what they have previously learned in current learning projects. In the current context, regardless of the type of course (online, mixed, face to face), the professors must access and valorize communication technologies that "enable students and the faculty to engage in basic cooperation and collaboration learning [processes] even if they are separated in time and space" (Le-Noue, Hall & Eighmy, 2011: 5).

In a comprehensive critical analysis, bringing arguments for and against ethics teaching, supported by opinions existing in the literature, McDonald and Donleavy (1995: 850) recommend taking into consideration alternative teaching models, different from the traditional ones, "the aim of ethical training being that of promoting the individual's ability to think and to act independently". In support of this idea, the authors also presented "innovative means" or "creative methodologies" of teaching that can be used by trainers: presenting biographies, actions, achievements of a morally noteworthy person who "demonstrates something universal in their moral choices"; using video materials; applying role-play techniques; presenting chronicles from current newspapers depicting local happenings from local life or local cases.

The methods used in teaching ethics-related subjects or specific ethical issues differ from one field to another, many of which are still being approached "traditionally". It is important to know and to analyse them in order to observe best practices to improve current approaches. For example, in the medical field, in which many moral issues must be considered, teaching ethics focuses mainly on formal lectures, conferences on ethical cases, discussions and debates (organized

in small groups) based on movies and video presentations, analyses (in small groups) of ethical dilemmas, presentations and justifications of solutions/arguments (Green, Miller & Routh, 1995); Q&A sessions and case studies in small groups, the professors providing counseling and guidance during the training and the investigation of the issues presented in class, as well as supporting materials (Dinç & Görgülü, 2009: 261-262).

The analysis carried out by Krawczyk (1997: 61-62) on three study programs from the University of Minnesota in order to identify the manner in which ethics is being taught has revealed the fact that the methods used vary from the materials for lectures, case studies, time allotted for participation in class, the students being required to express their opinion about various ethical issues, to the video material presented to the entire class (without student involvement) or the discussion on various ethical issues, only in the case in which students express interest or concern.

The case study method is frequently mentioned as being often employed, but it is also criticized ("popular, but problematic") by the very professors who teach ethics in health care (Parsons, Barker and Armstrong, 2001). For this reason, Holland (1999: 436) based his theoretical dissertation not on "if" but on "how" the method should be used: the students should be invited "to come to an agreement about moral judgments and to explain what determines their accordance"; "to develop the ability to distinguish between what is moral and what is immoral in a situation"; "to recognize the fact that some decisions are simple non-options". In exchange, Donaldson, Fistein and Dunn (2010) propose an approach based on real cases identified by students prior to their participation in the ethics seminar, which brings more benefits: "focusing on real problems with which students are confronted, involvement in active learning, enabling the exploitation of the meaning of own values in relation to professional conduct". Benari (2009: 433) elaborates on an ethics teaching example which is much closer to experiential learning, in an "extreme" context generated by multicultural, multireligious and conflict-based atmosphere: the successful collaboration between Jewish and Arab nursing students in two projects. One project targeted teaching students about road safety, and the other was concerned with promoting the quality of life in a group of diabetic patients. The study conducted by Lin, Lu, Chung & Yang (2010) among 142 medical students from Taiwan illustrates that both the peer tutored problem-based learning method as well as the conventional teaching method based on lectures are as effective in consolidating ethical reasoning, but improvement is most evident in applying the former (where students also manifested a higher degree of satisfaction towards self-motivated learning and critical thinking).

Student-focused exercises are recommended in IT ("involving student participation in solving the ethical dilemmas for teaching ethics") to help them assess and solve ethical dilemmas encountered in practice, such as, for instance, from a

deontological and consequentialist perspective, promoting "live discussions and debates on ethical issues contained in scenario-based tutorial exercises", like the case study method (Taylor *et al.*, 2004: 52).

Teaching ethics through experiential learning methods

Over the past years, experiential learning has been insisted upon in teaching. Recent studies and concerns in teaching focus on "the importance of involving the student in the learning process", on identifying "what happens in the student's brain and mind in trying to understand the physiological and psychological [processes]" (Best & Thomas, 2008). The new teaching methods focus on "feeding the connectivity in [inside] the student – searching and securing cognitive, unconscious, social connections" (Best & Thomas, 2008: 98). The literature provides rich packages of creative strategies for teaching and learning which are able to respond to many of the challenges with which the professors are faced, i.e. what s/he can do and what methods to use for his/her students to become more creative; to maintain a live variety in class; to help students be more creative; to meet the students' individual preferences; to "inject" fun into the learning process, and to present, at the same time, challenges in class; to improve the students' learning abilities in a practical manner (idem).

Banikowski (1999) draws attention to the methods which can be used to improve memory and to the strategies which can be promoted by professors so as to facilitate the gaining and maintaining of their students' attention, the activation of knowledge and experience which they already have, their active involvement in the learning process, their ability to construct meaning and the possibility for them to demonstrate what they have learned. These strategies are based on brain functioning and memory model research regarding information processing. According to Bloom (1987, cited in Banikowski, 1999), the individuals' active involvement in the learning process will have the following effects: they will remember 10% of what they read; 20% of what they hear; 30% of what they see; 50% of what they hear and see; 70% of what they say; 90% of what they say and do. In this regard, the following effective strategies can be applied: illustrating, individually or in small (or even in large) groups, what has been learned ("every pupil response"); learning through cooperation; mutual teaching/learning; simulations/role play/debates/projects; direct participation using models or manipulations. Among the strategies used for the purpose of acquiring the ability to build a meaning there are graphic organizers, exemplification through images, drawings/illustration. The research undertaken by Saat (2014) on 102 students in their third year of studies in accounting assesses the effects of using experiential learning within the business ethics course. The activities carried out within the course, included and analyzed in the study, were lyrical composition/music on

ethical topics, case studies, role play, debates, student presentations, analysis of articles from newspapers, personal journals or agendas, but also formal teaching, in the form of lectures. The research highlights the fact that, after completing the course, the students became more sensitive, from an ethical perspective, to ethical issues, demonstrated better ethical reasoning abilities, as well as a higher level of cognitive and moral development. It was observed that effectiveness can be obtained in teaching and learning by combining the educational activities considered above. The conclusion is that "experiential learning is more efficient and is able to create more learning cycles" (Saat, 2014: 168).

Service learning method

One of the methods used in teaching business ethics, based on experiential learning, is *Service learning*, which "combines [voluntary] community service with reading [of relevant materials in the literature] and reflection" (Sims, 2002: 160). "Service Learning Metaprojects" (Vega, 2007) consists of involving students in projects dedicated to providing effective social services. It encourages the students' imaginative and creative exploration, the development of civic engagement, the acceptance of social responsibility, the contact between groups which would otherwise have no other opportunities to spend time together, to share thoughts, feelings that humanizes them; "open the student's eyes" and send the message that "everything is possible". It is thus attempted "to capture the students' imagination and to encourage them to explore, to live and to work in such a manner so as to bring benefits to the others, while learning important life lessons, as well as how to apply the theory". Promoting this method in teaching ethics leads to the students' awareness of "the stakeholders' needs, social aspects … building a better future and, at the same time, offers them the opportunity to reflect, to make fundamental judgments and to develop action plans for their lives" (Vega, 2007: 650). The measurable objectives regards the students' coming into contact with various divergent populations, to make moral decisions in a conscious manner and to become involved in ethical actions, to understand the importance of daily activities, and to develop adaptation and flexibility skills. They have the opportunity to reflect on the experience gained through the service provided by means of their project, to make the link with the theory studied (including the integration and synthesis with other previously studied courses), making contact with reality.

Applying the game theory

The game theory, "a product … of the modern conservative economic theory" comes as an alternative proposal which deserves to be explored due to the fact that it can be "critical and useful in teaching ethics at Master's Degree level" (see the prisoner's dilemma) (Gold, 2005: 1).

Teaching ethics through television

Another method of teaching ethics is through television (Zaffran, 2012). Several arguments are provided in defense of this approach: "today's students are brought up in a world of images; the movies and television series address social and moral issues immediately after the manifestation of the events which inspired them; the characters' consistency […] is close to reality; these fictions can be watched by en entire class simultaneously, which reduces the differences in perception inherent to reading a text, and can be discussed with colleagues immediately after being watched". In their works, Jamie Watson and Robert Arp ("What's Good on TV? – Understanding Ethics through Television"), and Wanday Teays ("Seeing the Light – Exploring Ethics Through Movies", 2012) advocate differently for teaching ethics using movies and television (mentioned in Zaffran, 2012).

Following the same line of thought, Ronald Sims (2002: 80) claims that the famous movie "The Wizard of Oz" (1939) "offers three lessons which can be directly applied to the experiential teaching of business ethics". Using films (even the commercial ones, such as "The Firm", "The Insider", "Boiler Room") as teaching material is also mentioned by Goltz and Hietapelto (2006: 234) in implementing the methodology of the course based on "challenge" activities in teaching ethics in organizational behavior courses. A renowned film used for teaching purposes is "A Class Divided" which, beyond the ethical dilemmas arising from the use of the controversial social experiment applied by Jane Elliott among primary school students in 1969 in a town from the USA, was (and can still be) a good tool in class when discussing about the destructive effects of discrimination (in this case, racism).

Shepard, Goldsby and Gerde highlight the fact that professors who teach business courses must "develop teaching methods able to stimulate the moral imagination of their students" attending ethics courses so as to acquire an ethics-specific vocabulary, "allowing them to discuss about business decisions and dilemmas in moral terms" (Shepard, Goldsby & Gerde, 1997: 33). The method proposed by the authors is a combination which includes, among others, watching films (for example, *"Twelve Angry Men"* (1957), p. 35), plays (Henrik Ibsen's *"An Enemy of the People"* p. 43), and reading novels (some of which are still being screened, such as *"The Great Gatsby"*, p. 37). According to the authors, "novels, staged plays, short stories offer information about characters in their capacity as employees, managers, community members, … with conflicting wishes, motivations and ambitions" and, by comparison, the standard approach, namely the case study method, cannot provide an adequate presentation of such complex situations. Moreover, the use of literature "allows the possibility to raise more complex issues than case studies" (p.45).

Standard challenge course activities method

Goltz and Hietapelto (2006) expose the advantages of using the "standard challenge course activities" method proposed by Rohnke and the Project Adventure organization, a participatory method based on the cooperation and active involvement of the participants who are "challenged", having the possibility to choose norms and behaviors (ethical or otherwise) which they consider to be adequate for the situation in which they are placed through the activity given.

The most adequate exercises for demonstrating the emergence of [unethical] norms within a group meet several conditions: the activities carried out by the group of students must respect a certain moderately challenging time limit; the activities must involve a certain number of rules that can be respected or broken by the participating students; the rules are described by the groups' facilitator (trainer), and the students establish the politics regarding the adherence to such rules (the option to break the norms is discussed only at the end of the activity). The learning process is mainly consolidated during the debriefing session, when the norms promoted within the group (honesty or lack thereof), the specific behaviors that led to these norms (the one reporting the violation of norms within the group, whether there were penalties for such violations), the types of situations which led to the failure to report the violation of norms (regardless of their minority, regardless of whether the group had almost completed the task) are identified through questions. The trainer must be flexible enough to offer the group the possibility to discover the key points of learning. Education through challenge is adequate when self-awareness is sought (Goltz & Hietapelto, 2006: 230). The ethics-challenge courses offer "the opportunity of practicing proper decision-making, [in a situation] in which the potential consequences of causing someone harm are minimal or nonexistent" (Goltz & Hietapelto, 2006: 230). The method has a positive impact due to the fact that it "encourages participants … to self-develop". "Learning and transfer are reinforced using multiple cycles of experience, theory, analysis, feedback, reflection and repetition". Another positive effect is that students have the opportunity to pay greater attention to their ethical behavior and to adopting a new, more ethical personal code of conduct within the organization in which they are going to work (Goltz & Hietapelto, 2006: 237).

Using materials, scripts and video games

Teaching ethics using video materials is not completely novel, as it is already practiced in many fields. We mention, for example, "the role of the media in modelling our vision about the world", or "condemning television music and the commercial culture to which it gave rise" (O'Brien, 1997: 121-122). Nonetheless, the method does not receive much credit in the academic world and, consequently, the research on its objectives, application or impact on learning is limited. Ronald

A. Berk's article (2009a: 2), "Multimedia Teaching with Video Clips: TV, Movies, YouTube, and mtvU in the College Classroom" summarizes twenty advantages that support the use of videos "as a systematic teaching instrument" for students: capturing attention, focusing concentration; creating a sense of anticipation; energizing or relaxing students for the learning exercise; appealing to imagination; improving the students' attitude towards the content taught and towards learning; building a connection with other students and with the trainer; improving the memorization of the content; improving understanding; encouraging creativity; stimulating the flow of ideas; offering the opportunity for freedom of expression; serving as a vehicle for collaboration; inspiring and motivation students; making learning fun; setting an appropriate tone or emotion; contributing to decreasing anxiety and tension in case of students who experience fear; creating memorable visual images. The initial tests have demonstrated that "learning under pictorial conditions" has superior effects to "learning under audio/verbal conditions" (Berk, 2009a: 5).

The list of video types is extensive (drama, action, romantic, comedy, romantic comedy, documentary, TV program, commercial video, music video for students ("mtvU")), including videos made by the faculty or by the students (Berk, 2009a: 7). In conclusion, the video materials represent "a major teaching resource" among the members of the young Net Generation, based on "their multiple intelligence and learning styles for the purpose of increasing the success of each student" (Berk, 2009a: 14), and which can give them the opportunity to create Internet content ("Youtube videos, podcasts, video scenarios with adequate content", Berk, 2009b: 14).

Another reference about using video scenarios on ethics is the field of engineering (Harris *et al.*, 1996: 95). On the same topic, Michael C. Loui (2006) reveals the results of a research conducted on engineers on the effects of watching the video scenario "Incidents at Morales" created in 2003. The new video, in contrast to the one traditionally used in teaching ethics in engineering - "*Gilbane Gold*", which presents the issue of the alarm signal, focusing on daily ethical decision-making concerns in the field of engineering (taking the example of building a new factory and of the related legal, financial, safety and ethics issues affecting technical decision-making processes).

Two groups of respondents were considered in the evaluation, namely professional engineers and engineering students. The subjects were first required to sit for a moral reasoning test, "*Defining Issue Test*", and later to participate in a questionnaire aimed at measuring thir responses before and after watching the video scenario, as well as after the session of discussions generated after watching the said video, in order to check the extent to which changes in the moral reasoning of the subjects were recorded (compared to the results of the initial test). The conclusion of the evaluation was that the video scenario can be effective in the short term (to the extent to which this exercise allowed such measurement) in

improving moral reasoning skills, as well as in changing opinions on some of the issues related to engineering ethics.

A generous free source of materials for teaching ethics by means of videos (on topics of ethics, ethics in decision-making processes, and especially of behavioral ethics) is offered through the database provided by "Ethics Unwrapped" (Drumwright, 2015: 441). These are made by the University of Texas at Austin, and can be accessed either on their website (http://ethicsunwrapped.utexas.edu/videos), or on Youtube. They are based on research, are current and thematic. The video scenarios, organized by series, are also accompanied by teaching notes and additional resources that can be used by themselves or as additional materials to courses and lectures on ethics, or can be provided as basis for discussions and debates. For example, the video scenarios from the first series "are written and narrated by academics, they include animations and interviews with students who react to their content and captivate the viewers". Some video scenarios address subjects who explain factors related to behavioral ethics "that make it difficult for good people to rise up to their own ethical standards" (p. 443).

The newest video genre in the first series shows "how a leader can behave ethically, both as regards himself, as well as how to encourage an ethical behavior in his organization". Another video explains the four factors of ethical action (moral awareness, moral decision, moral intention, moral action) and offers advice on how to overcome the difficulties related to carrying out these steps. These video resources are all the more valuable as not all professors have ethical training (especially in ethical behavior) and find it difficult to teach such content, but also because there are not many materials available on these topics.

An innovative perspective is that according to which ethics could be learned by means of computer games (Schrier & Gibson, 2010). There is the conviction that "all games are half-real … having real rules which are communicated to the player by means of a fictional world" (Juul, cited in Sicart, 2010: 4). Computer games are considered to be "(moral) systems". They offer a moral experience. The ethical component is provided through the manner in which the content of computer games is designed, through the series of decisions which the player/ agent can access (Sicart, 2010). The semantic content of the game is interpreted by the reflective player who can place them in an "individual, social and cultural field". He thus becomes an ethical agent, the game itself being the "interpretation of the world and the place in which the agent wishes to be in this context", meaning "the understanding of the values of the universe created in the game and the development of an ethical person who is simultaneously coherent with the game world and with the external values of the player as an ethical being" (Sicart, 2010: 6).

Video games create the (moral) experience of the player not only through their narrative and audio and video content, but also through the rules, principles, objectives that govern the game, through the ecosystem built by guidance, advice,

discussion groups that influence him in interpreting the game, as well as through "the opportunity to play in the company of peers in either physical or virtual proximity" (Koo and Seider, 2010: 16). Video games are "message senders" and foster prosocial learning (Koo & Seider, 2010: 20). They could be "valuable instruments in helping young people judge and address ethical issues" …, "in other words, they can foster the development of ethical reasoning skills … like the ability to have a perspective on others and to foresee the consequences of an action" (Gilbert, 2010: 151).

Methods

The main purpose of our study is to explore the opinion of students from four different professional Master's Degree programs (plus a complementary one), on the impact of applying the method that we have called "Ethics by Movie" (creating the students' own video scenarios on an ethical topic in teams) on substantiating ethical knowledge, ethical attitude and ethical behavior. The exploratory, quantitative research was conducted in the period from 2011 to 2015, during the academic year, at the end of the semester in which Business Ethics and/or Public Administration Ethics were studied at the Faculty of Economics and Business Administration within Alexandru Ioan Cuza University of Iai, Romania. The instrument of research was the questionnaire. It comprised 24 items on an evaluation scale from 1 to 5 (where 1 represented the smallest extent and 5 the highest extent), a free-answer question and the respondents' identification details (sex, age, Master's Degree, occupational status). The sampling method was the nonprobability sampling technique. The final sample consisted of 395 respondents, students in *Tourism and Hotel Management*[3] at Master's Degree levels, (n=119; 50% of all students enrolled), *Public Administration* (n=89; 53% of all students enrolled), *Human Resource Development Management* (n=126; 68% of all students enrolled), *Organizational Management*[4] (n=61 respondents; 48% of all students enrolled). The questionnaire was addressed to the entire student population in each Master's Degree program, during four academic generations (2011 – 2015 academic years). The number of students at each Master's Degree program and each academic generation differs, depending on enrollment numbers. The questions included in the questionnaire were formulated according to the

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[3] Note: the respondents (13) from the complementary Master's Degree program in Tourism Management were assimilated into the respondents of the Tourism and Hotel Management Master's Degree program, the course being taken together; in the academic year 2014/2015 there was no teaching course in Organizational Management Master's Degree program and the students enrolled in this series would take the course in the second year of studies, namely in the academic year 2015/2016.

[4] In the academic year 2013/2014 no study group for the Organizational Management Master's Degree program was formed.

objectives pursued by applying the method and the ethics course, the skills which were to be developed by students, and based on observing their reaction and on the feedback they provided further to applying the initial method (when the video scenarios created by students themselves were presented in class and debrifieng took place). The questionnaire, in its online version, was distributed to the students through Google Docs, at the end of the semester, after completing the course. The questionnaire was filled in voluntarily, the response rate for all the years taken into account for each Master's Degree program being 62% in Human Resource Development Management, 65% in Tourism and Hotel Management (including 13 students in Tourism Management in the academic year 2013/2014), 65% in Organizational Management and 59% in Public Administration.

Context in which the method was applied

The course and the seminar are based on mixed teaching methods aimed at actively involving students in acquiring knowledge: formal lectures, PPT presentations, combined with discussions on the basis of the concepts presented, case study analyses and debates, role playing, applicative exercises, newspaper article analysis, document analysis (codes of ethics), debated on current topics/events discussed in the media, presentation of research projects (learning based on the literature and the empirical research on a given topic), video scenario created by the students. The presentation of the specialized project and of the video scenario on a given topic is two parts of the final assessment portfolio, along with the written examination scheduled for the end-of-semester examination session. The making and the presentation of the video represents only a small percentage (5-10%) of the final mark, given that the students had no specific skills in this field (but had the freedom to collaborate with a specialist). The students worked in teams comprising 3-4 members, and chose an ethics/organizational ethics topic for their research, at the beginning of the semester. During the semester, they were due to present different parts of their project – the theoretical part, the research methodology, the empirical research results, and, during the last course of the semester, they presented the video scenario (which was on the same topic as the research project) in front of their colleagues. The video scenario was assessed by the professor and by the colleagues according to the various items on the asse-ssment grid provided by the professor in due time (the students had thus the opportunity to work on their video scenario based on the assessment criteria). The general issues that were taken into account during assessment included the accor-dance of the script with the topic chosen, the originality and attractiveness of the script, as well as the main ethical message communicated to the audience. The recommended duration of the clip was of maximum 10 minutes but the average time was generally of 3-5 minutes. Given the small percentage of the final mark allotted to the video script, some groups of students had the possibility to choose

not to present the video (such cases were, however, very rare, the students displaying a great interest and enthusiasm for fulfilling the academic task).

A similar method (to the one that we are going to analyse and propose further to our experience and research, refering to the active involvement of students) was described by Douglas Ziegenfuss (1999). He applied the method within an Operational Audit course. The principles upon which the method was implemented are: the limited time available for teaching ethics within the said course; the students will benefit from the maximum possible time allotted to ethics learning if they have the opportunity to get actively involved, to reflect critically on circumstances and opportunities and to become active agents in a social context; the professor has a mentoring role; the students should have the opportunity to develop their communication and interpersonal skills, and this method is considered to be suitable in this respect. At the beginning of the semester, the students were given various materials for documentation, on ethical topics, case studies, instructions on how to perform an analysis of ethical cases presented in class, including instructions on how to present video scenarios for auditors. They also received a predefined list of ethics scenarios for the internal auditors, according to various authors, on the basis of which students were free to choose, in groups, a specific scenario on which to work and which to present during the second half of the semester. The videos were watched and discussed by the entire class and, a week later, each student was required to hand in a page presenting their own views, respecting the instructions on case analysis. The author does not offer details about the impact and the result of using this method in terms of learning.

We focused, in our approach, on Black and Mendenhall's observation (1989, cited in Sims, 2002: 158), according to which "the techniques used in experiential learning, such as simulations, thematic excursions and role playing are more rigorous and involve participants more fully than lectures and [watching] video tapes". Creating one's own video scenario overcomes the disadvantages of the latter method, due to the fact that the student does not have the role of a passive viewer who receives the message and draws conclusions, but experiences a "virtual" reality, captured from his/her life or from real everyday life, s/he is simultaneously a creator of content, a reflective agent (reads, analyzes, observes and eventually selects a specific framework for action), actor (promotes an assumed role), collaborator (interrelates with the other members of the team), trainer, through the message sent to the audience. The method involves both the simulation of a situation and role playing. It was intended to be integrated into experiential learning, "learning as the holistic engagement of [interrelated] affective perceptual, cognitive, and behavioral processes (according to Kolb, 1984, cited in Sims, 2002: 85); which takes into account the fact that each student has their own different needs and styles of learning; where the foundation of learning resides in the experiences of the students, in "self-directed learning, and the role that sharing, dialogue and discussion play in creating a psychologically safe learning environment" (Sims, 2002: 85).

Results

According to the identification details, 314 (79.5%, chi2 = 137.44, df = 1, 1-p = >99.99%) of the respondents are female, and 81 (20.5%) male. The majority (n=348, 88.1%) are under the age of 25, 11.4% (n=45) are between 25-35 years old, and 0.5% (n=2) are over 35 years old. Moreover, 35.2% (n=139) of the respondents are employed.

The questionnaire was especially designed so as to pursue three essential coordinates in the learning process: understanding/awareness, reflection, behavior. The first questions regarded the participants' manner of understanding ethical issues, mainly related to values, ethical behavior, consequences, and responsibilities. The participation in creating the video scenario meant, for 41.3% (n= 163, chi2 = 309.57, df = 4, 1-p = >99.99%) of the respondents, to a great extent (40.8% to the greatest extent), the opportunity to *reflect more deeply on the importance which must be given to ethical behavior*. Moreover, for 42% (n=166, chi2 = 311.09, df = 4, 1-p = >99.99%) of the respondents, (40.0% to the greatest extent), it constituted the opportunity t*o reflect more deeply on the consequences of unethical behavior*. A percentage of 41.8% (n=165) (chi2 = 237.90, df = 4, 1-p = >99.99%) claimed, to a great extent (and for 32.4% to the greatest extent), to have had the opportunity *to reflect more deeply on their own moral values*. For 41.5% of the respondents (n=164, chi2 = 262.73, df = 4, 1-p = >99.99%), to a great extent (and for 36.2% to the greatest extent), it represented an opportunity *to reflect more deeply on what ethics actually means*.

A selection of the comments made by the students is presented below in quotation marks and in italics.

"It is a useful teaching method, because creating that movie and writing that paper made us become aware of the importance of ethics";

"Learning ethics through movies is, in my opinion, a very good and creative method of observing and analyzing more easily some situations with which we have or have not been confronted in our daily life. This way, we could reproduce and render issues related to ethical or unethical behavior which are often encountered in the society in which we live".

178 of the respondents (45.1%, chi2 = 275.09, df = 4, 1-p = >99.99%) claim, to a great extent (and for 31.9% to the greatest extent), to have *better understood the behavior of persons having an ethical behavior*. Following the same line of though, 45.3% (n=179, chi2 = 268.30, df = 4, 1-p = >99.99%) declared, to a great extent (30.9%, n= 122 to the greatest extent), to have had the opportunity *to observe how others relate to ethics*.

Over half of the subjects - 62.3% (n=246, chi2 = 544.76, df = 4, 1-p = >99.99%) argued that, to the greatest extent, they became more *aware of the fact that our*

society is confronted with many cases of unethical behavior (29.1%, n= 115 to a great extent).

44.1% of the respondents claimed, to the greatest extent (n=174, the difference with the reference repartition is highly significant, chi2 = 281.24, df = 4, 1-p = >99.99%) and 34.4% (n=136) to have understood that *together, we can be stronger in battle*, and felt more solidarity with those who fight for the respect of ethical values.

Another set of questions included *the relation to understanding and approaching ethical concepts/the ethics course*. In this respect, 38.5% (n= 152, chi2 = 197.37, df = 4, 1-p = >99.99%) argued, to a great extent, (29.6%, n=117 to the greatest extent, and 24.8%, n=98 to some extent), that they were more attracted to the ethics course; 44.1% (n=174, chi2 = 170.95, df = 4, 1-p = >99.99%) of the respondents considered, to a great extent, 25.1% to the greatest extent, and 23,8% to a great extent), that they were more efficient in understanding the ethical theories and concepts; 42.5% (n=168, chi2 = 256.00, df = 4, 1-p = >99.99%) paid, to a great extent (32.7%, n=129 to the greatest extent), more attention to the ethics course; 48.4% claimed, to a great extent (n=191, chi2 = 290.35, df = 4, 1-p = >99.99; 26.8%, n= 106 to the greatest extent), to have studied and substantiated the ethical concepts better, and 46.3%, to a great extent (n=183, chi2 = 271.11, df = 4, 1-p = >99.99%; 28.6%, n=113 to the greatest extent), claimed to have learned and memorized them better; (46.1%, n=182, chi2 = 366.96, df = 4, 1-p = >99.99%) became aware, to the greatest extent (40.3%, n= 159 to a great extent), that we have greater need for ethics.

> *"It is an interactive method of learning, and I believe that it stimulates our interest, as students, in learning a course on Business Ethics";*

> *"I believe that, through this innovative method of teaching/learning, I managed to better understand the subject and to apply it in practice. At the same time, it got me even closer to my colleagues";*

> *"By making this movie, I was put in a position to understand the relation between ethics and the topic chosen and to illustrate this relation in a creative manner. It is a creative learning method, the effects of which will linger over time";*

> *"I believe that this is a very good teaching method, because, in my opinion, learning means visualizing";*

> *"This method is an ideal practice for understanding a theoretical concept".*

Other questions from the questionnaire targeted the impact which the participation in creating the video scenario had on the students (attitude, behavior, understanding one's own responsibility). Thus, 43.5% of the participants (n=171, chi2 = 370.89, df = 4, 1-p = >99.99%) stated that, to a great extent, (and almost

the same percentage, 43.5%, n=172 to the greatest extent), they *became more aware of the fact that they must be more responsibile/they have a mission in promoting ethical values*; 45.6% (n=180, chi2 = 227.80, df = 4, 1-p = >99.99%; 24.8%, n= 98 to the greatest extent) *feel that they have done something more to be ethical*; 42.5% (n=168, chi2 = 316.00, df = 4, 1-p = >99.99%) feel, to the greatest extent, (40.3%, n= 159) that *they must take action against the unethical*. In agreement with this statement, almost half of the students who participated in the video scenarios (41.8%, n=165, chi2 = 211.01, df = 4, 1-p = >99.99%; 25.8%, n=102, to the greatest extent), claimed to *be less tolerant towards others' unethical behavior*; moreover, 45.1% of them (n=178, chi2 = 363.59, df = 4, 1-p = >99.99%) declare that, to a great extent, they are more careful about their own behavior, wishing to be more ethical (41%, n=162, to the greatest extent). A very high percentage of students argued that, after making the video scenario, they talked more with the others about ethics (33.9%, n=134 to a great extent, chi2 = 137.34, df = 4, 1-p = >99.99%, 31.6%, n= 125 to some extent, 21%, n=83 to the greatest extent). 44.1% (n=174, chi2 = 262.73, df = 4, 1-p = >99.99%) admitted that after this experience they feel a greater need to be more ethical (32.4%, n=128, to the greatest extent). Almost half of the respondents believe, to a great extent (43.8%, n=173, chi2 = 229.16, df = 4, 1-p = >99.99%; 30.4%, n= 120 to some extent; 16.2%, n=64, to the greatest extent), that they have positively influenced the attitude of the colleagues towards the importance of respecting ethical principles in the society/at the workplace. Finally, 45.1% concluded that, to a great extent (n=178, chi2 = 243.06, df = 4, 1-p = >99.99%; 28.6% to the greatest extent), they sent the others' a message about the importance of being ethical.

"A presentation method through which I was able to understand once more that each of us should have the mission to promote ethical values";

"It is very important for each of use to understand the fact that being ethical means behaving properly both in relation to oneself and to the ones around us. The movies we have watched during this course made me understand this. Some of the scenes from the movies presented showed that the long-term success of organizations on the market is built by applying and following ethical principles inside the orga-nization";

"The movie helped us acquire ethical concepts more easily, because we combined theory and practice ... Thanks to the movie, I was able to observe, once more, the many ethical problems with which the society in which we live is confronted, and if we want things to evolve in our country as well, we should be making the first step".

Table 1. *Descriptive statistics based on data analysis (average and standard deviation)*

Items	Average value	Minimum value	Maximum value	Standard deviation	Amount	Part
Becoming aware of unethical behavior in the society	4.49	1	5	0.81	1772	4.5
Becoming aware of the fact that we need ethics	4.28	1	5	0.81	1692	4.3
Becoming aware of the mission of promoting ethical values	4.26	1	5	0.80	1683	4.2
Being more careful about my behavior, being more ethical	4.23	1	5	0.79	1672	4.2
Becoming aware of the importance of taking action against the unethical	4.19	1	5	0.90	1654	4.2
Reflecting on the importance of ethical behavior	4.17	1	5	0.86	1649	4.1
Reflecting on the consequences of unethical behavior	4.17	1	5	0.85	1647	4.1
Stronger together, ethical behavior	4.16	1	5	0.94	1642	4.1
Reflecting deeply on ethics	4.06	1	5	0.92	1605	4.0
Understanding others' ethical behavior	4.02	1	5	0.89	1589	4.0
Needing to be more ethical	4.01	1	5	0.91	1585	4.0
Placing an increased importance to the Ethics course	4.01	1	5	0.92	1583	4.0
Observing how others relate to ethics	4.00	1	5	0.89	1580	4.0
Reflecting on moral values	3.98	1	5	0.94	1573	4.0
Learning ethical concepts better	3.97	1	5	0.87	1568	3.9
Substantiating ethical concepts better	9.95	1	5	0.87	1561	3.9
Sending others' a message to be ethical	3.93	1	5	0.93	1551	3.9
Solidarity in the fight for ethical values	3.88	1	5	0.98	1532	3.9
Being more attracted to Ethics as a subject	3.88	1	5	0.98	1531	3.9
Understanding ethical theories effectively	3.84	1	5	0.95	1517	3.8
Being less tolerant to others' unethical behavior	3.83	1	5	0.96	1514	3.8
Doing more to be ethical	3.83	1	5	0.97	1513	3.8
Influencing our colleagues' attitude towards ethics in a positive manner	3.64	1	5	0.92	1438	3.6
Speaking more about others' ethics	3.58	1	5	1.05	1415	3.6
Total	4.02	1	5		38066	100.0

Discussions

In brief, the empirical research we have conducted highlights the fact that, by applying the method of creating their own video scenarios on ethical topics, the majority of the students considered that they had the opportunity to *reflect more deeply* on the importance which must be given to ethical behavior, on the consequences of unethical behavior, on their own moral values, of what ethics actually means. They claimed to *have better understood* the behavior of ethical people, to have had the opportunity to observe how others relate to ethics. They considered that they became more aware of the fact that our society is confronted with many types of behavior, that they must be more responsible/have a mission to promote ethical values. They *felt the need* to be more ethical, they felt that they did something more to be ethical, that they must take action against the unethical, they felt more solidary with those who fight for respecting ethical values and they became less tolerant of others' unethical behavior.

A high percentage of students claimed, after making the video scenarios, that they talked more with others about ethics, that they believed they positively influenced their colleagues' attitude on the importance of respecting ethical principles in the society/at the workplace, and that they sent others a message on the importance of being ethical. With regard to efficiency in learning, the students argued that, after this experience, they became even more effective in understanding ethical theories and concepts, that they were able to study and to substantiate them better.

Conclusions

Video scenarios are an integrative method: they are in accordance with experiential learning, role playing and simulation. Participation requires understanding the issues (the message is built around a previously taught theoretical construct/topic), raising questioning (identifying a problem and analyzing an issue to which students are sensitive, which caught their attention), prefiguring an attitude and simulating a behavior (adopted at the very least in the video scenario by the students involved), be inspirational.

Depending on the role performed by the professor/instructor, it is necessary to send one's own message before the target audience, the students thus becoming the "professors" who wish to teach the others about a specific component of ethics. The video scenario is a collaborative effort (the participants become accomplices in this initiative), it entails interaction and agreement on an objective/message and on its presentation (the actors playing in the scenario reveal themselves to the others and let themselves be assessed). According to Berk (2009a: 14), this method can have a definitive impact on the method of teaching and on

students: "*The clips can add a dimension to teaching that may change how you teach forever; your view of teaching and your students will never be the same*" (Berk, 2009a: 14).

Our study might prove to be useful due to the fact that it revives attention to a complementary teaching method that can contribute to increasing awareness of the ethical issues around us, to learning ethical concepts in a more substantiated manner, to the need to solve the ethical dilemmas related to the fact that we must be solidarity in the fight against unethical actions and that, through everything we do, we can send out own ethical message. Whether it is a parody of various situations, the promotion of models or morals, a critical stance against harmful actions, or simply the relevation of ethical behavior, the students took a step in connecting theory with practice by identifying real situations from daily life. The students' video scenarios constitute their own messages, "*their own ethical story*", communicated to the others. The students thus became the messengers of a "meaningful message" in want of being acknowledged, understood and used as the basis for future changes. The experience of creating one's own movie encouraged debates which extended outside the classroom, confirming Felton and Sims's claim (2005) that "*A successful business ethics class is one in which the issues raised with the class continue to be discussed outside of the classroom*".

Acknowledgements

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