

Timeliness and Continuity in Academic Ethics. The New Framework-code of University Ethics in Romania

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Abstract: *In this paper, we will make a brief introduction regarding the elements of novelty and continuity brought by the new Framework-code of University Ethics and Deontology approved by the Government of Romania on April 4, 2024 and published in Monitorul Oficial on April 9, 2024. There will be made a series of observations regarding the name of the document (framework-code), the objectives of this normative act, its applicability, the constitutive and operational ethical values of the university activity legislated by this Code, as well as regarding the novelty elements that this code brings with regard to Romanian academic ethics.*

In this presentation, we seek to debate a series of concepts used by the legislator in this Code. We will also briefly present the principles applicable to university ethics and deontology contained in the ethics Framework-Code, insisting on the principle of independence from any moral, scientific, religious, political, economic influence or of any other nature, in the didactic or scientific activity, as well as and on the principle of respecting the rights and freedoms of the members of the university community.

Keywords: *framework code, university ethics, values, norms, principles.*

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Introduction

The framework-code of university ethics and deontology was published in the Official Gazette number 327 of April 9, 2024, being issued by the Government of Romania. In the following we will make some clarifications, comments and annotations regarding some of the articles of this code, in order to clarify the elements of novelty and continuity of academic ethics, as it is codified for the university space within this framework-code.

The current framework-code aims to create a unified vision on academic ethics, constituting the pillars of the national ethics policy in the academic space. Previously, the codes of university ethics and deontology were established based on Law 1/2011, i.e. the old education law. Currently, starting from 2023, a new law on higher education as well as a new law on pre-university education has appeared, thus splitting the existing single law on education until 2023 and making necessary a new approach to ethics - both in higher education, as well as that of pre-university education. For higher education, the framework-code of ethics constitutes the foundation of ethics policies, this code being mandatory for all higher education institutions in Romania, while there is an obligation for all institutions of this kind in the country to adopt university ethics codes that are in agreement with this national framework-code.

Ethics framework-code and national ethics policies

This framework-code represents an element of secondary legislation, clarifying the vision of the Romanian Government - and, implicitly, of the Ministry of Education - versus the ethical commandments as they are enacted in accordance with the Higher Education Law. This code does not necessarily change ethical practice, but clarifies a number of dimensions of academic deontology, unifies the research area with the academic area, in a coherent and current vision - in relative consensus with the one existing worldwide, in such a way that an interested person should be able to know all the ethical stipulations in the field from the moment of integration into the academic space and until leaving it, either as a student, master's or doctoral student, or as teaching staff who actually works in higher education, as tenured or associate teacher who enters the system through competition or leaves the system through retirement, resignation or through other means regulated by the labor legislation or the legislation specific to higher education.

Basically, this document wants to solve a series of ethical problems of university education noted by the public and which seem to have an impact on public trust in Romanian higher education, precisely because a series of ethical principles valid in academic institutions from around the world were either not clearly regulated, or were applied in a more or less uniform way and gave rise to various interpretations, both in legal doctrine, jurisprudence and academic practice.

From the very name of the framework-code document, we note that the legislator - the Government of Romania in this case - intends to establish a structure, a framework, a practical framework on the basis of which universities can establish their own code of ethics or their own deontological codes valid on the basis of university autonomy, for each individual institution, thus preferring the existence of guidelines, which would be the same for all higher education institutions, without thereby violating university autonomy.

Even before the appearance of this Code, higher education institutions had a series of ethics regulations, including principles of an ethical nature contained in the university charter, principles largely similar to the current ones. However, there was great latitude in the development of those principles, from the perspective of the importance given to them by each individual university, emphasizing either honesty and fairness, or integrity, or transparency.

As for the subjective meaning of the university ethics policy, each university valued it differently, even if formally, even if the ethical regulations were to be brought together in a code - as there was the formal requirement of the existence of such a code among the institutional accreditation criteria – its visibility and implicit accessibility by the interested public or, in other words, the virtual usability of this text – is different from university to university, depending on the positioning of this document on the institutional website (Ciulei, 2018). Moreover, the evolution of academic ethics was a winding and difficult one, starting from the quasi-existence of ethical regulations before the appearance of Law no. 1/2011, until the coherent and relatively harmonized structuring with international legislation in the current framework-code.

The fact that before 2011 ethical regulations were almost non-existent is also proven by the recent solution proposed by the Supreme Court (April 3, 2024, see the Daniel Moldoveanu vs. Ministry of Education case), which rejects the cancellation of a doctoral thesis on the grounds of plagiarism, since at the time when the thesis was sustained there were no regulations in the field (Mureșan, 2024). Practically, the principle of non-

retroactivity of the law is also applicable with regard to regulations of an ethical nature, which cannot be applied before the date of their issuance and implicitly the sanctions for plagiarism are not applicable to doctoral theses prior to 2016, as the legislation clearly provides for the cancellation of the doctorate as a sanction for plagiarism only in 2016.

The unification of ethical standards achieved by the new framework-code is thus justified by the legislator's intention to no longer allow the same ethical misconduct to be sanctioned differently from one university to another, or even not to be sanctioned, in some situations.

The framework-code is, in our opinion, a direct result of public and media pressure on the Ministry and the national education system regarding frequently perceived violations of academic ethics – from plagiarism to harassment, including sexual harassment. After the plagiarism identified in former Prime Minister Victor Ponta's doctoral thesis (Schiermeier, 2012), initially used as a tool of political disavowal, opened the public's appetite for identifying irregularities in ethical conduct, especially in research, the recent harassment scandals (Bularca, 2024) will pave the way for a movement similar to the international *me too* movement (Jaffe et al., 2021) - as a form of boycott of sexual abuse or harassment in public institutions - in Romanian educational institutions, initially awakening public interest in scandals of a sexual nature and, subsequently, leading to the moral improvement of Romanian education where such cases still exist.

Also, the role of this framework-code is to unify the practices of ethics committees in universities - both in terms of unethical conduct in research and unethical conduct in relations between members of the academic community. Based on this unique framework, universities can only modify the way this framework works at the level of the respective institution, without however adding to the law, not being able to change or omit principles - at least in theory - but being able to increase the level of exigency with which these principles are applicable in the respective university, in the respective higher education and research institution. It is possible now and it is more obvious to combine teaching with research, especially in institutions where we have/will have dual education. What was previously considered by some teaching staff to be an obstacle in quality assurance - namely the interpenetration of research activity with didactic activities, the involvement of students in research and respectively the use of research results in the didactic act implicitly becomes a priority, even if it is not in concretely provided for in this framework-code, but it is deduced from the complementarity between research and education that seems to be found in the explanatory component regarding the ethical values on which higher education is based.

The existence of this code was required due to the internationalization of Romanian higher education, but also due to the legitimate aspiration of the academic environment to see its activity highlighted through a more visible presence in the international academic charts. Precisely this internationalization requires an explicit and not just implicit presence of the ethical principles that are applicable in the academic system and especially in the top one - in the Romanian legislation and, implicitly, in the codes of ethics of each university, of course without wishing to interfere in university autonomy, which, however, cannot be seen as total independence.

Even if some members of the academic community believe that some of the ethical standards - whether we are talking about principles, norms, values - are not necessarily specific to the Romanian educational culture, the vocation towards the internationalization of the universities in our country and the desire for international recognition of diplomas issued by these universities makes necessary a new institutional culture, transparent to ethical values and principles.

Abuses of any kind in universities or the lack of integrity cannot be sanctioned only formally - or, at most, left to collegial social control - but must become an object of ethical, disciplinary and legal control, regardless of the person and personality of the one who violated these values or principles. The university environment must be a space of academic freedom, but also of both individual and social responsibility.

The phrase *ethics and deontology*, often criticized as pleonastic (Dragomirescu & Nicolae, 2011) precisely because deontology aims at a series of ethical obligations that must be respected by professionals - a kind of categorical imperative for them - appears in the subtitle of this framework-code as well as in most ethics policy documents entitled Codes of Ethics and Deontology, both in the field of academic ethics and more generally, professional ethics. It would basically be the inclusion in the same phrase of a particular field, that of deontology, which is implicitly included in the broad field of ethics - and therefore the use of the first term in the phrase would at least be redundant.

Deontology comprises the standards of practice for a minimum normative acceptability, below which a professional's performance should not fall, that is, it sets a threshold of minimum acceptability both ethically and professionally. However, a code of ethics - be it the framework or the particular one of an institution - should also include a series of regulations aimed at good practices or even excellence in the field - i.e. those norms that establish the definition of a good professional (Frunza & Sandu, 2018). For a

practice to be ethically and professionally acceptable, it must not be carried out in violation of fundamental rules, or qualitatively below certain minimum standards of acceptability of that practice.

Ethics, on the other hand, includes references to the personality or other components of the individual's psychology, to his own moral psychology, to his interaction with the socio-professional environment in which he operates, with the processes of interpretive adrift through which they are constructed and through which the values and principles of an ethical nature reach the moral subject, and also how these values and principles are articulated against the background of individual or collective consciousness, of a community, as well as against the background of the organizational culture of the institution of which the subject is a part.

Academic deontology signifies the negative regulation of institutional practices, i.e. the prohibitive component, those practices that should not be manifested in the academic environment under any circumstances. Any form of sexual harassment would therefore fall under the deontological regulations. On the other hand, the idea of educational partnership between student and teacher, for example, or involving the student in the educational act represents a desirable practice and even an example of good practice that would rather be part of the corpus of ethical regulations, together with the principles and values that led to the appreciation (Sandu, 2012) of that activity as an example of good practice.

The framework-code, although it defines the values and principles on which it is based, does not establish a clear demarcation between what represents standards of good practice and what represents delimitations of undesirable conduct, thus making the syntagma ethics and deontology to be put under the sign of expressions of pleonastic type, since it rather regulates the deontological component, leaving the identification of good practices to the discretion of each university, institutions that only receive indications regarding the values and principles that must be included in their own code of ethics. The sanction that can be applied is also regulated, as well as who applies the respective sanction, higher education institutions only being able to establish the limits of those sanctions and the limits of their own competence when it is not already established in favor of CNATDCU¹ or CEMU².

¹ CNATDCU stands, in Romanian, for Consiliul Național de Atestare a Titlurilor, Diplomelor și Certificatelor Universitare - National Council for the Attestation of University Titles, Diplomas and Certificates

² CEMU stands, in Romanian, for Consiliului de Etică și Management Universitar - University Ethics and Management Council

This framework-code brings together both good practices and criteria for limiting bad habits in teaching and research, aiming at both an explanatory dimension - an axiological one, but also a normative one, together constituting the foundation of the national ethics policy in the field of higher education.

Applicability of the framework-code

The code begins, from the first article of the first chapter, with the establishment of the scope and general principles, to which reference will be made in the content of this code. In concrete terms, the university space is delimited, as being that of higher education institutions, this code not being applicable, for example, to research institutions, as it is the case of the Romanian Academy - it is not clear if it applies to the doctoral schools of the Romanian Academy -, by they also do not apply to public or private research institutes, nor to other educational institutions that do not carry out higher education activities. Even if the values and principles contained in this framework code will later be found in the codes of ethics for pre-university education or for research activity, this code does not find its direct applicability in the respective spheres of activity, unless there will be fields of the intersection between the respective areas of education and research and that of higher education: for example, dual education carried out by a university in partnership with a pre-university education institution, or research carried out in collaboration with research institutions or in situations where research staff carry out and teaching activities in higher education institutions.

We believe that due to the similarity of constitutive and operational ethical values, this normative framework should be applicable directly or in a similar manner, through a normative act, to other non-university research institutions that also carry out higher didactic activities. There are a number of research fields that have specific ethical peculiarities and that could establish exemptions from this framework code, for example institutions that carry out research activity based on contracts with private or even public financiers that impose confidentiality on research results, or institutions that carry out teaching and research activities in the sphere of national defense or the maintenance of public order and that can and will consider that part of the teaching and research activity falls under the scope of professional secrecy, and then the values of openness and transparency should be applicable to them only partially. The results of other research whose public applicability may generate dangers for society or for individuals can be exempted from the obligation of transparency - as is the case with biomedical research, information technology etc.

Principles and rules regulated in the framework-code

The principles of ethics represent a series of statements that transpose ethically and legally a set of values considered constitutive for the respective normative act (Frunza & Sandu, 2018) which, in the view of the legislator, led to the need for the appearance of the current ethics policy documents. Values represent an ideational axiological construction and in the process of their normative transposition they take the form of directly or indirectly applicable principles that can constitute rules either of minimal acceptability - deontological - or of good practice.

The value of *academic freedom*, for example, is translated as the principle of freedom of teaching and research activity, which will be developed in a series of rules regarding the delimitation of the academic space, the limits of freedom of expression, desirable behaviors in the relationship with other members of the academic community, ethical publishing standards, etc.

Quality represents another such value, not only professional but also ethical, quality in higher education being an ethical value that operationalizes a constitutive value for the entire education system - that of the public good. The principle of a quality higher education imposes a series of specific rules for each field and educational program, including rules of an ethical nature, the application of which can be audited, for example, during the visits to monitor the didactic activity carried out by ARACIS. Also, the auditing of compliance with ethical rules can be carried out by the control body of the Ministry of Education, or by internal or external (ethical) auditors.

Constitutive values tell us why a certain institution should appear - education in our case -, operational values tell us how that institution should work from an axiological - ethical - point of view, (institutional ethics, that is), and those operational values will be transposed in the form of principles - either of good practice or limiting, restrictive, which prohibit malpractice, for example, or prohibit a series of deviations from the respective code and can be codified in the form of ethics, deontology norms, these meaning particular instructions for applying those principles.

The prohibition of intimate relationships between teaching staff and students also includes the prohibition of sexual harassment, for example, the principle coming to defend the value of integrity but also that of academic freedom - the first being operational and the second constitutive for higher education.

The framework-code of university ethics and deontology is mandatory for the categories of personnel provided by the law on higher education, with subsequent amendments and additions, but also for persons who had the capacity of members of the academic community after the

entry into force of the aforementioned law. It is not very clear to what extent these principles are applicable, for example to other categories of students of higher education institutions or in general to its clients, who do not have the status of students or members of the academic community. From our point of view, the provisions of this framework code are not directly applicable to clients of higher education institutions who are not members of the academic community, nor to staff who work or study, learn or teach at pre-university institutions affiliated to universities; for example, a primary school organized next to the university or a high school that is directly subordinate to that university and directly under the coordination of the university.

The academic community is somewhat restricted to students and teaching staff in higher education, although the university may have in its subordination staff who do not belong to these previously described categories. In order for these principles to become applicable to the other categories of personnel in universities, a special mention must be included in the code of ethics of each higher education institution, thus leaving it to its discretion to clarify the field of applicability of the code of ethics, beyond by the categories of teachers and students expressly provided by the framework code.

The framework-code delimits its applicability to persons who are or were members of the academic community after the entry into force of Law 199/2023, the higher education law. This is important from the perspective of the possibility of applying sanctions to people who at some point are no longer members of the academic community, but they were at some point and benefited from it. Cancellation of the doctorate for reasons of plagiarism or other violations of research ethics, contained in this framework-code or in the ethics code of the respective university, may become a sanction at the discretion of the university - of course, in compliance with this framework-code, i.e. with sending the thesis for evaluation first to the ethics committee of the university, then to CNATDCU. The withdrawal, however, can be done directly by the issuing university, without resorting to the judiciary, as it was mandatory in the last period based on the previous legislation, or to the Ministry of Education - as the issuing institution of the title, as it was previously done. Of course, this possibility must be corroborated with the modification of the normative framework, so that the doctor's degree is issued by the university where the doctoral thesis is defended.

The applicability of sanctions issued by a university where a person was a member of the academic community at a certain time - by other

educational or research institutions in the country or abroad - remains in question. If the withdrawal of an academic document makes it voidable in itself, as this is the case with the doctorate title, it is not clear to what extent another disciplinary sanction, for another type of misconduct, is mandatory for the other similar institutions.

We express this concern starting from the fact that degrees and university titles that are not issued nationally, such as the PhD. title - we are talking here about the title of lecturer or professor - are not necessarily mandatory for other similar institutions, and in the case of transfer from one institution to another, the title is confirmed through competition, by the new institution or by its Senate, if it is about didactic or research hours held at a university other than the one in which the holder has the basic norm.

The framework-code recognizes its inapplicability in the case of persons who were members of the academic community before the entry into force of this higher education law, based on the principle of non-retroactivity of the law, valid in most branches of law, except for the application of the most favorable criminal law, in case of criminal acts.

There is international custom regarding sanctions of an ethical nature – that they are applicable even when the culpable act occurred at a time when it was not expressly sanctionable. Prime Minister Ponta's plagiarism (Schiermeier, 2012) was presented for the first time in Nature magazine and from here it was picked up by the Romanian and international media, as it is a moral misconduct of a person who fulfills the position of prime minister and candidate for the presidency of the country. For the occupation of none of these positions, the possession of a PhD. degree would be required - as such, its cancellation should not have political or legal effects other than moral ones, diminishing public confidence in the person in question. As such, Mr. Victor Ponta's PhD. title was revoked, despite recusals from the commission that had the task of analyzing the accusation of plagiarism and ruling on it, despite the fact that the person whose work was plagiarized did not file a complaint and the fact that the complained person himself (Victor Ponta) wanted to give up on his own initiative the PhD. title as well as his academic activity.

The recent decision of the Supreme Court of Justice, in a case previously mentioned in this work, stipulates that based on the principle of non-retroactivity of the law, the doctorate cannot be withdrawn on the grounds of plagiarism if it was issued in a period when the legislation did not expressly stipulate this, nor the appeal regarding the withdrawal of the doctorate. Also, prior to the entry into force of Law 1/2011, the legislation

on ethics – including on plagiarism – although it existed, was unclear and somewhat unpredictable in terms of the intensity of the sanction.

More precisely, based on the legislation prior to the appearance of Law 1/2011, there were no clear recommendations regarding the making of citations, especially when they were not taken *ad literam* but especially by paraphrasing, it was not clear and unfortunately even now it is not clarified in many regulations for writing scientific works, how often the source must be mentioned when a larger content of an author's work is paraphrased, whose ideas are used to support one's own argumentation, especially when one's own arguments also intervene in the course of the argumentation ideas of the person who is authoring the work.

The text of the framework-code is limited to the fact that based on this normative act and implicitly on the ethics codes of universities, this code is not opposable to people who, from the date of entry into force of the new higher education law, are not members of the academic community. A university may not request the withdrawal of a PhD. title if this one was issued before the entry into force of the new law on higher education, if the person in question is no longer a member of the academic community of the respective university from the time of entry into force of the above-mentioned laws and up to the moment of asserting the violation of the ethical norm. Of course, the legal interpretation may be different depending on the judicial practice and the consolidated doctrine until the moment of the violation of the respective norm. The precedent created by the Supreme Court of Justice (Mureșan, 2024), especially as it has as its justification the decision of partial admission of the request to cancel the Minister's Order aimed at withdrawing a PhD. degree, seems to create a jurisprudence in favor of the application of this principle in all situations where the ethical misconduct occurred before the existence of the higher education law or any other legislation that would sanction said misconduct in the same manner.

It is also not clear to what extent an ethical sanction is valid in an academic community other than the one in which it was applied. Of course, if the sanction is applied on the recommendation of CEMU or CNATDCU, it could be binding on all academic communities. However, it is not clear enough what happens if the sanction is ordered by the ethics committee of the respective educational institution. Can a student expelled for ethical reasons be re-enrolled in the same year at another university, based on the transferability of credits, or is it necessary, for example, to re-enroll at the new university from the first year of studies?

The framework-code and the increase in quality of the didactic act in higher education

Increasing the quality of teaching and research is the purpose of this framework-code, declared as such in art. 2, which makes the value "quality in higher education" be considered a constitutive value, which led to the need for such an act, while the other values described in the following articles represent operational values, which together lead to the achievement of a quality higher education. As such, we can consider *quality*, in accordance with this normative act, to be an ethical value or at least a value that involves the realization of other operational values that are of an ethical nature.

Quality, however, is a value of an extrinsic nature (Sandu, 2017), as it in turn derives its axiological potential from other values such as trust in education - from employers, from students, in general from all stakeholders of the educational and research act, but also of society in general. Consolidating a climate of trust in higher education institutions as well as even within them, is also a goal declared by the legislator, within the code. To achieve this goal, the solution identified by the legislator is the establishment of an organizational culture based on ethical values and an institutional climate centered on trust, competence and competitiveness, but also on collaboration and academic freedom. We are talking about the need to build an organizational ethical culture in higher education institutions and not just about the existence of ethical codes or even formal and formalized ethical policies that are in disagreement with the institutional practices of one or another of the institutions.

The alleged culture of abuse and gender discrimination that seems to be highlighted by the latest revelations in the press regarding teaching staff from a certain university in Romania, who allegedly abuse or sexually harass female students, seems to contravene the existence of ethics management tools at the disposal of the respective institution, but ineffectively or not at all used - at least if the statements of some witnesses are true, who state that female students who enroll in a certain program within the respective university are warned from the moment of enrollment by their colleagues in older years about to the possible abuses of some teachers (Stoica, 2024).

The need for an ethical climate in universities and an organizational culture based on trust is all the more current as some decision-makers of a certain university, "surprised" by the sexual scandal exposed by the press, seem to recognize that there were some indications from the verbal behavior of the persons affected by the sexual scandal, as if they had a possible profile

of abusive persons, but no measures were taken to strengthen the climate of trust in that institution (Petrea, 2024)³.

First of all, this framework-code represents a regulation of ethical conduct, of professional conduct in general - which should be based on a series of ethical values starting from which models of behavior and cohesion can be established such as and valorizing the potential of the academic community, stipulates article 2 of the framework-code in paragraph 1. Practically, through this framework-code, there are proposed a series of models of ethical behavior necessary for the development of quality higher education, in a climate of institutional trust, especially at the level of the various categories of people involved in the academic community. This framework-code of ethics and deontology wants to substantiate models of ethical behavior - or, at least, to convey the values and principles necessary for organizational and individual ethical behavior of members of an academic community. It is not only a code of a deontological nature that inspires or describes those behaviors that should be avoided, but it is also a code which includes the values, the principles that should guide the behavior and constitute such models of behavior, such models of good practice in academic ethics and in institutional ethics in general.

Trust – constitutive ethical dimension of academic ethics

Trust represents a constitutive value of higher education, of academism in general, at least in the opinion of the legislator because it applies to the entire university education system, because academism is useful when there is trust that the research results are the real ones, that there is no falsification of the results, that there is no misrepresentation of them, that there is no intentional misinterpretation.

Education can only be carried out under the conditions of trust that the information transmitted generates in the clients of the educational system a series of skills necessary on the labor market and which ensures a good professional insertion for the graduates and at the same time assures the employer that the graduates of the respective institution really possess the skills certified by the diploma. Also, the climate of trust guarantees to all members of the academic community that their freedom of expression and

³ At the time of writing this article, we are talking about alleged violations of academic ethics and even of the law, but there is still no report by an ethics committee of the respective educational institution or a final conviction by a court. As such, the presumption of innocence continues to apply to the individuals and institutions concerned.

research, the right to identity, the right to safety, the intangibility of the person etc. will be respected.

The term *trust* is a widespread value in codes of ethics, in ethics works (Lounsbury, 2023), in ethics guidelines, and we should understand what it means to trust because trust contains several dimensions (Sandu, 2017).

A first dimension that trust can have is professional trust. We trust, for example, a teacher, because he represents an educational institution. The trust of a student in professor X or a teacher in his colleague Y, regardless of the academic degree of the person in question, especially if he has a management position, comes on one hand from the prestige of the profession and the institution where he works and, on the other hand from the individual's personal prestige, trust manifesting on one hand in the goodwill of the respective person and on the other hand in his competence.

Trust is correlated here with honesty. It is important to trust in the person's good will, that he does not have from the start the will to do harm or that the institutional environment does not allow the manifestation of such an intention. Professional trust refers to the good faith of the professional but also to his competence. Someone can trust a doctor who is a good surgeon, allowing to get operated by this one, without trusting that person as a driver, to participate with him, for example, in a rally race, since he has no knowledge of his qualities as a rally driver. So, professional trust differs from interpersonal trust, which is mainly aimed at the person's human qualities, qualities that do not result from his CV but from the experience of interacting with that person. Institutional or professional trust is mostly correlated with prestige but also with the particular interaction in the respective professional area, which the individual has with the respective professional. The prestige of the institution is generally transferred - be it positive or negative - to the professionals who are affiliated with it and, reciprocally, the individual and professional prestige of the individuals gives authority and prestige to the respective institution.

Regardless of the personal and professional value of the professionals themselves, the organizational environment positively or negatively changes the level of trust of the public in a professional affiliated with that institution.

In the academic environment there are even a series of indicators aimed at the impact of the person in question among the members of their own professional community, such as the impact factors, the influence score, which is calculated starting from the citations received by the works of an author but also from the prestige of the publications in which he publishes most frequently. It is not impossible for a paper of exceptional value to be published, for example, in a relatively little-known journal. However, the

impact of that work on the scientific community will be reduced if we are not talking about an author with a particularly high prestige, so that he will be read and possibly cited by the members of his own scientific community, regardless of the prestige of the journal in which he publishes. The prestige of the individual transfers to the institution and vice versa. The institution, however, has the advantage that the prestige is cumulative, depending on that of each individual who composes it. When, for example, a Nobel laureate works at a certain educational institution or even studied there, the prestige of that researcher positively influences the prestige of the institution, an influence that is visible even in the positioning of that institution in the institutional charts.

Conclusions

The role of such a framework-code of ethics is to make possible the transformation of requirements of a strictly professional or behavioral nature - such as the idea of quality in education or trust - through the ethics policies promoted by universities based on this framework-code, to become requirements of an ethical nature, namely professional obligations, such as the creation of teaching/learning tools appropriate to the students' requirements, focusing on the student and not on the teacher, dialogue, competence, partnership between the educator and the educated, openness to the new, fairness, transparency, integrity.

All these values are not, nor should they be, only professional values, to be respected in an optional and formal way, but they should constitute the organizational culture, the environment where current professionals and also those who are in training reconfigure their own values, starting from the idea that an education based on trust can result in a long-term society based on integrity and cooperation.

The purpose of this code is the unification of ethics policies that were previously configured separately at the level of each higher education institution and the establishment of a unitary vision, the foundation of an ethics policy transparent to the specifics of each individual academic community and their particular values.

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