Chronological discussion of ANIE events 2007– 2012

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Abstract

In 2007, a group of international academics in the fields of Information Technology, Philosophy and Politics came together to form an academic network. This network is known as the African Network on Information Ethics (ANIE). ANIE identified a gap in the academic representation of the African Continent on the global stage, specifically pertaining to Information Ethics, and therefore started organising events to stimulate research on Information Ethics in Africa. The aim of this article is to give an overview of the activities that took place from 2007 to 2012 which include international conferences, workshops and publications. The methodology includes the study of conference and workshop presentations by internationally acclaimed academics; analysis of the ANIE website, the outcomes and reports from workshops and conferences organised on the topic of Information Ethics in Africa and the minutes of meetings related to Information Ethics in Africa. The methodology secondly comprises of a chronological layout of activities related to Information Ethics in Africa since the Information Ethics Conference in 2007 up to the formal establishment of the African Centre of Excellence for Information Ethics (ACEIE) in May 2012. The result of this international collaboration has led to a partnership with the South African National Department of Communications, the United Nations Education, Scientific and Culture Organisation (UNESCO) and various universities across Africa. Finally, this collaboration contributed to the establishment of ACEIE.

Introduction

Information ethics in Africa is a new field of study that was structured and interpreted by the Information Ethics Conference that took place in February

2007, in Pretoria. This conference was attended by academics from Europe, North America and various countries in Africa.

As a new field, information ethics is not clearly understood. There is a need for more clarity and description of the field to overcome the confusion currently experienced by students (Douglas 2012). The African Network on Information Ethics (ANIE) and its recent counterpart at the University of Pretoria known as the African Centre of Excellence for Information Ethics (ACEIE), have made significant contributions to making information ethics understood in Africa. ANIE was established in 2007 with the purpose of structuring information ethics in Africa. The Management structure of ANIE includes the ANIE Academic Board, ANIE Management Executive Committee and ANIE Information Ethics Curriculum design committee.

Drawing from the Declaration of Principles of the World Summit on Information Society, the ANIE envisages an African Information Society that is people-centred, inclusive and development-oriented in accordance with the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations Declaration of Human Rights. The African Information Society should enable people everywhere to create, access, utilise and share information and knowledge, to achieve their full potential and to attain the internationally agreed development goals and objectives, including the Millennium Development Goals.

In accordance with the Declaration of Principles of the World Summit on the Information Society regarding the ethical dimensions of the information society we reaffirm that the African information society should respect peace and uphold the fundamental values of freedom, equality, solidarity, tolerance, shared responsibility, and respect for nature. It should be committed to promoting the use and development of modern information and communication technology (ICT) in order to defeat poverty and underdevelopment. The African information society should also promote societal as well as technical ICT structures and processes in order to make knowledge available to all Africans. It should particularly promote the participation of all African citizens in the development of public policy in the process of constructing the African information society.

The resources for supporting activities of ANIE have been made possible through the support of UNESCO, the Department of Communications, South African Government, and also support from participating universities. As a signatory to the UNESCO and WSIS agreements, the South African

Government through its Department of Communications and the Presidential National Commission on Information Societies and Development, are amongst other sponsors involved in the support of information ethics in Africa since 2007.

The University of Pretoria and Department of Communications started negotiations in 2009 aimed at securing funding to run the activities of the network and concluded in 2011 with the approval of a R7.4 million (about US$1 million) budget over 3 years according to a Memorandum of Agreement between the two parties. The agreement inter alia, envisages a Centre of Excellence for Information Ethics in Africa as well as the implementation of the Information Ethics curriculum at 12 participating universities in Africa. The purpose of this article is to create a formal reflection of activities, definitions and references on the history of Information Ethics in Africa.

A chronology of activities and events of ANIE

The African Network on Information Ethics (ANIE) was established to spearhead a formal and structured engagement on the subject of information ethics in Africa. Britz explains the meaning of information ethics as

> a discourse that focuses on the moral questions relating to the life cycle of information as it pertains to its generation, gathering, organization, storage, retrieval, and use. As a field it broadly examines issues related to privacy, security, access to information, intellectual freedom, quality and integrity of information, as well as intellectual property rights. In addition, the broader domain of professional ethics is of import, encompassing the ways we as professionals engage with, and respond and react to those ethical issues. The main stakeholders impacted by this array of ethical issues can be divided into three groups. These are the creators/distributors of information products and services, information mediators, including librarians, and the information users. Information and Communication Technology (ICT) supports the different information life cycle activities and plays a pivotal role in the shaping, understanding, and defining of information ethics (Britz 2010).

At the June 2011 workshop in Pretoria on developing a curriculum for teaching information ethics in Africa, Capurro defined information ethics as

> a descriptive and emancipatory discipline dealing with the study of the changes in the relationship between people and the world due to information and communication technologies. Information ethics in

> Africa provides a unique platform to build an Information and
> Knowledge Society driven by critical reflection on ethos and values
> within the African Context. It addresses opportunities and challenges
> unique to the development of African societies (Capurro 2008).

To harmonise the two definitions above, information ethics is understood
to mean a field of critical reflection on societal moral values and practices
with regard to the production, storage, distribution and access to
knowledge as well as to all kinds of societal processes, systems and media
of information and communication.

A limitation of the chronology of information ethics in Africa is that the
activities of ANIE do not include all the countries in Africa, and therefore this
article only reflects on those countries and academic institutions that form part
of ANIE and ACEIE. In addition, Capurro (2008) points out that information
ethics from Africa is another field and not much has been published on its
impact on African societies and cultures from a philosophical perspective.
Therefore, due to a lack of published material on information ethics in Africa,
we do not have a pool of information to draw from. One of the aims of this
article is to address the issue of a lack of formal academic research and
references in information underpinned by the realisation that information is a
dangerous tool in the hands of a fool – hence information ethics is our
protection against the dangers of information.

Our methodology includes the study of conference and workshop presentations
by internationally acclaimed academics; the study of the ANIE website; the
outcomes and reports from workshops and conferences organised on the topic
of Information Ethics in Africa and the minutes of meetings related to
Information Ethics in Africa. Secondly, our methodology includes a
chronological layout of activities related to Information Ethics in Africa since
the Information Ethics Conference in 2007 up to the formal establishment of the
ACEIE in May 2012. Thirdly, our methodology further includes a study of the
impact of the above mentioned activities on each other and on the way forward.

The first ANIE conference 5–7 February 2007, Kievits Kroon, Pretoria, South Africa

The First African Conference on Information Ethics was held in
Tshwane/Pretoria, South Africa, 5 - 7 February 2007, under the auspices of
UNESCO, sponsored by the South African Government, Department of

Communications and organised by the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, University of Pretoria, University of Pittsburgh, and the International Center of Information Ethics.

Under the heading 'The joy of sharing knowledge', the conference brought together some 80 policy makers and academic minds from Africa and around the world to discuss the impact of the use of modern Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) on the African continent and formulate a specifically African perspective on the challenges involved - locally and globally.

The following topics were addressed:
- Foundations of African Information Ethics;
- Cultural Diversity and Globalisation;
- Development, Poverty and ICT.

In addressing the ethical challenges of the Information Society on the African continent the conference was inspired by the Geneva Declaration adopted by the Geneva World Summit on Information Society (WSIS) of 2003. It was explicitly conceived as part of the implementation of Action Line C10 of the Geneva Plan of Action.

Following the 2007 first ANIE Conference, the ANIE network was established, providing the academic platform for scholars and academics across Africa to exchange ideas concerning Information Ethics in Africa. Since the first conference in 2007, several universities in Africa are participating in ANIE activities to promote information ethics in Africa. These institutions include, among others: UNESCO; the South African Government (Department of Communications); Presidential National Commission on Information Science and Development; University of Pretoria; the Tshwane University of Technology; University of KwaZulu-Natal; Moi-University of Kenya; Kenya Polytechnic; University College-Kenya; University of Ibadan, Nigeria; University of Zululand; University of Botswana; University of Ghana; the National University of Science and Technology in Zimbabwe; Uganda Christian University; University of Zambia; EASLIS Makerere University; University of Tennessee (USA); the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee; the Capurro-Fiek Foundation (Europe) and the European-based International Center of Information Ethics (ICIE).

UNESCO training workshop on information ethics and e–Government in sub–Saharan Africa 23–26 February 2009, Magaliesburg, South Africa

This workshop on e-Government was sponsored by the South African Government, and took place under the auspices of UNESCO. The workshop resulted in various important guidelines for the interaction between resources and communities towards more efficient e-Government.

The resources that are needed include finance, appropriate tools, and mechanisms to help communities and governments cope with e-Government and development challenges. Also needed is 1) the establishment of new or strengthening of existing education training centres of excellence (perhaps one per country, region, or sub-regional as a start); 2) collaborative models among countries or regions faced with similar challenges to share ideas, approaches, case studies; 3) methods to conserve limited human resources, built on experiences from pilot projects; and 4) a single, comprehensive (i.e. all Africa) authoritative e-Government clearinghouse, related directly to the Website, to collect, organise, index, translate, preserve, and provide information resources management tools and techniques to serve practicing professionals, policy makers, educators and trainers, thus providing services to enable people to find, retrieve, evaluate, preserve and use information they need. In addition, the clearinghouse could maintain or arrange for the updating and maintenance of the Website and also provide access to existing valuable tools, such as the UNESCO Tool Kit, reports of pilot projects and studies.

These resources are for use by all stakeholders, not just those within government, that are leading and managing e-Government programmes, participating private sector components, academia (which is providing research and education/training needs), and large NGOs which specialise in responding to the needs of disadvantaged sub-populations. In addition, resources for local communities should be made available using appropriate technologies. These might include, for example, radio and local television broadcasts, reports in a multitude of languages and delivery mechanisms for possible adaptation and use by local villages and other communities. The development of infrastructure, as well as the use of additional resources, should not be at the expense of the environment. An appropriate balance must be established and maintained, and the focus should be on renewable resources energy.

While discussion of e-Government and Information Ethics among professionals is important and should continue, all publicity, descriptions, planning and implementation of projects should focus on the local priorities, such as availability of clean water, farming concerns, education, health care, etc. and development – using the language of the local community and language pertinent to the local priorities. These needs must be explored, explained, clarified and amplified to all intended stakeholders to be served by the e-Government programme.

African information ethics: the road ahead, 15–16 January 2010, University of Pretoria, South Africa

This event was organised to discuss:
- Research projects;
- Teaching and curriculum development;
- Practical applications, for example workshops on e-Government and ethics;
- Future conferences.

Nine research projects were identified as outlined below:
Project 1: Introduction of the Grant Proposal for the 12 University Teaching Structure and Proposed Joint Curriculums – Mr. Michael Zimmer, Prof Stephen Mutula and Prof Dennis Ocholla.
Project 2: September 2010 SCECSAL Conference: pre-conference workshop on African Information Ethics – finalising the call for papers.
Project 3: Follow-up e-Government Workshops – group discussion.
Project 4: Introduction of the Reader on Information Ethics in Africa – Prof Theo Bothma.
Project 5: Discussion on the establishment of an African Information Ethics Institute – group discussion.
Project 6: Discussion on an African based Journal for Information Science / Ethics and Development – group discussion.
Project 7: Discussion on an African based Information Ethics Advisory Council – group discussion.
Project 8: Auditing of theses and dissertations on Information Ethics in Africa: establishment of an International Network of Research – group discussion.
Project 9: Finalisation of the visit to Yale University in February 2010 – Prof Rafael Capurro.

Third ANIE Conference 6 - 7 September 2010, University of Botswana

The objective of this conference was to shed light on the current status, opportunities and challenges of teaching Information Ethics in Africa. The conference also provided the platform to develop an Information Ethics toolkit for African Universities. During the conference, Mr Coetzee Bester received the first ANIE award for distinguished service for contributing to the growth of information ethics for Africa (ANIE 2010b).

Information ethics research workshop in Africa, 4 –5 July 2011, University of Pretoria

The 2011 ANIE Research Workshop was based on a need that was identified during the conference on 'Teaching Information Ethics in Africa: Current Status, Opportunities and Challenges' that took place in Gaborone, Botswana during September 2010. Presentations during that conference indicated that Information Ethics is not mainstreamed across tertiary education institutions, but that elements of Information Ethics are only present in several courses in Library and Information Science curricula. Participants at the Botswana event also called for more research to be done in constructing a particular curriculum on the subject, taking into account theories, key concepts and history, African Philosophy, case studies and analysis of the case studies. The workshop analysed the debate on different concepts related to Information Ethics from an African perspective and suggested an Africa-oriented teaching agenda on special Information Ethics issues.

In addition to the mentioned objectives the 2011 ANIE Research Workshop contributed towards a detailed course description and learning objectives according to the above mentioned discussions and also selected appropriate pedagogical approaches for the course. Key publications that might be used as compulsory and/or optional reading in Information Ethics' teaching were also discussed. The participants suggested key questions to each selected publication that might help lecturers and students to develop a critical and creative awareness of the issues at stake.

Following on the formal feedback, various universities requested a formal report on the progress on the wider spectrum of the ANIE activities, to be used by them as part of their Annual Reports. The curriculum attempts to address different needs for participating universities. Following on the interaction with the universities in Africa who participated in the development of the curriculum

to teach Information Ethics in Africa, we realised that each university might have its own current position in the process of teaching. These positions could include:

- Universities that are currently teaching full courses in Information Ethics;
- Universities that currently teach Ethics in different faculties but wish to include Information Ethics as an academic orientation programme;
- Universities that are teaching Information Ethics and wish to standardise content according to the ANIE guidelines;
- Universities that wish to start teaching Information Ethics and want to use the ANIE Curriculum guidelines;
- Universities that are investigating the possibility in future to teach Information Ethics.

Workshop on information ethics curriculum in Africa, 22–27 September 2011, University of Wisconsin–Milwaukee, United States of America

The Workshop was attended by representatives from the following institutions:

- Office of the Provost and DVC at UWM
- University of Zululand
- Tshwane University of Technology
- University of Pretoria
- School of Philosophy UWM
- School of Information Science UWM
- Centre for 21st Century Studies UWM

The Workshop focused on activities to develop elements of a curriculum for teaching Information Ethics in Africa. The workshop debated different concepts from the questionnaires that were received from various participating universities in Africa. The focus of the deliberations was on an African perspective when teaching information ethics. The workshop provided guidelines to produce a structured curriculum for the teaching of Information Ethics in Africa and identified guidelines towards related learning objectives (ANIE 2011b).

The University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee (UWM) follow-up discussion took place under the auspices of the UWM Vice Chancellor and Provost Prof Johannes Britz. This discussion aimed to add value to the curriculum guidelines that were developed during the ANIE Information Ethics Workshop that took

place at the University of Pretoria on 4 and 5 July 2011. The purpose of the UWM discussion was aimed at listing and structuring concepts for the layout of a proposed curriculum to teach Information Ethics at universities in Africa. The participants were unanimous that the focus of the content should be on creating an awareness of information ethics amongst students. Once this has been achieved, the students' academic development can be furthered.

The UWM workshop discussed the possibilities of two models. The first could be described as an holistic overview with a general awareness of Information Ethics as the main objective, while the second could be aimed at specific target groups and themes. The first could be a model with the focus on short courses, reflecting the general Information Ethics content. The second will focus on specialised groups with skills towards application as the objective. All undergraduate content would focus on the level of awareness and the definitions of concepts.

The participants identified a few 'informal' levels of outcome for the students who were already exposed to the content of Information Ethics. These outcomes include the fact that students should:
- become interested in the content
- be aware of the content
- know the content
- understand the content
- be able to interpret the content
- be able to apply the content
- be able to create new content

The outcome and results of the UWM Information Ethics workshop was handed to the ANIE management in the next step towards creating a structure for the curriculum for teaching Information Ethics in Africa. The preliminary curriculum was designed and distributed to at least 12 universities across Africa.

Third international ICST conference on e-Infrastructure and e-Services for developing countries, 23-24 November 2011, Zanzibar, Tanzania

Mr Coetzee Bester delivered a poster presentation at the Conference. His presentation focused on:
1. Development as an ICT focus

2. Development as an information ethics focus
   - Opportunities
   - Dangers
   - Ethical monitoring mechanisms
   - Community, culture and humanity involvement.

3. Operational framework to support development initiatives
   - Establishment of the African Network on Information Ethics (ANIE)
   - Establishment of the Centre of Excellence for Information Ethics in Africa with the support of UNESCO and the Department of Communications in South Africa
   - Research projects and information sessions
   - Development of a curriculum to teach Information Ethics in Africa - pilot project: 12 universities in Africa
   - Information Ethics Advisory Board to support Government and private sector development initiatives.

Reader on information ethics in Africa

- During the 2007 inaugural conference in Pretoria the Organising Committee decided to review selected papers by participants and to compile a book of reference on matters related to Information Ethics in Africa. This book was published on the ANIE website as a Reader on Information Ethics in Africa (Reader). The Reader will also be distributed in limited numbers in hard copy to institutions that are involved in the design and development of the curriculum to teach Information Ethics in Africa.
- The Reader was compiled as a tribute to the late Mokwining Nhlapo, who as a government official in South Africa was one of the visionaries for the Information Ethics project in Africa.

The establishment of the African Centre of Excellence for Information Ethics, 15 December 2011, Hatfield, Pretoria

The stakeholders in the establishment of ACEIE are the University of Pretoria and the South African National Department of Communications. According to a formal Memorandum of Agreement between the University of Pretoria and the South African National Department of Communications as signed on the 15th of

December 2011 (original copy of the MoA), the ACEIE was conceptualised and will further:

- Support the establishment of other Ethics Centres in Africa through the African Ethics Research Centre Network;
- Convene, coordinate and administrate Ethics Conferences and follow-up implementation of the conference resolutions;
- Facilitate the hosting of ethics awards ceremonies in collaboration with other partners; and
- Focus on research and training in Information Ethics.

In addition, the ACEIE will:

- Develop short courses for governmental officials in the 9 provinces of South Africa;
- Encourage Information Ethics workshops where academics and practitioners can come together to enable the exchange of knowledge and enhance the practical dynamics of Information Ethics;
- Function as a centre where research interests can come together to endorse key proposals concerning Information Ethics and its application in African societies, governments and institutions; and
- Maintain its collaborative relationships with UNESCO; the e-Skills Hub hosted by the Department of Informatics; and its host, the Department of Information Science.

Conclusion

In this article the authors used unpublished projects and management documentations to give a factual overview of the history of Information Ethics in Africa. This was done through the activities of the African Network for Information Ethics and the subsequent work of the African Centre of Excellence for Information Ethics between 2007 and 2012. The content included an active definition on Information Ethics and described the most important activities that guided African academics during this time of development.

The authors trust that the content of this article will give students and role players interested in Information Ethics in Africa a source of information that can be used in further research.

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