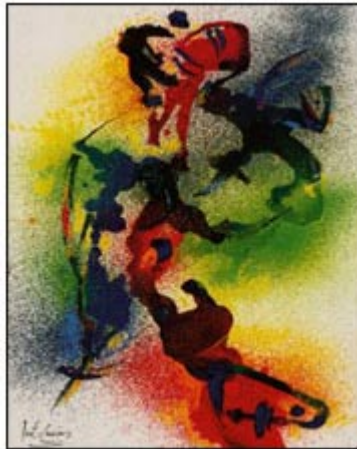# 6th ESA CONFERENCE
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RESEARCH NETWORKS 15
Sociology of Professions

*Professional ethics for the construction
of society In a global world*

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PROFESSIONAL ETHICS FOR THE CONSTRUCTION OF SOCIETY
IN A GLOBAL WORLD

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In the National and Autonomous University of Mexico (UNAM) we have a collective research project: *University and Professional Values of the Postgraduate Students of UNAM*. The research intends to study scientific values, professional ethics and civic ethics in a sample of students and postgraduate programs (master's and doctor's degrees) of the UNAM by knowledge areas. The basic assumption is that, depending on the area of the postgraduate students, the predominant values and their hierarchy will be different.

Educational institutions have relevant cultural and social functions in the construction of society and the important changes of the global world, seeking, by example, to find different ways to diminish social inequality, promoting social mobility, studying and formulating resolutions for central issues and problems, etc. Values are part of these matters.

Professional ethics is a vital theme for the institutions of higher education, because of the significant part the professionals have in society. To be useful, they have to be aware of the important role they have and search for the benefit of society and the specific public they serve.

Professional ethics is incomplete if it is not related to social ethics. Professionals are the persons and groups more prepared to promote a more rational and fare distribution of resources.

We defined: profession, professional ethics, ethics and deontology, principles, professional character ("ethos") and the rol of the university and we analyzed the researches made in the country about it (state of the art). With this frame of reference, we have specific questions for the survey we will apply in the first semester of 2003.

Some of the questions are: which are the basic services that each profession provides?. Who are the beneficiaries of their work?, which are the principles involved?, ethic dilemmas, which part of the university formation is related to ethic problems? and if they know about the ethics codes and colleges in their own profession.

The research counts with a State of the Art (COMIE, 2002) and the concept issue that contains a general framework, the categories, and their operalization, which will enable the preparation of the instrument (survey) to obtain the information. Experts will also be interviewed.

This is a 3-year collective research, in which researchers of several sections of the UNAM participate. The research team includes students of bachelor's, master's and doctor's degrees who are preparing their theses. The research is funded by the UNAM.

STUDY PROBLEM.

Studying the university and professional values of the postgraduate students implies analyzing and researching postgraduate studies in Mexico and, particularly, at the UNAM.

In 1929, when the University was granted its autonomy, the postgraduate degree was opened in our country in the disciplines of Law, Philosophy and Medicine. Since then, several postgraduate studies were opened, especially since the 1970's, when the growth of this level accelerated. This was a logical response to an ongoing demand for more and better professionals in the higher education institutions. This growth also sought the development of scientific and technological research. In this way, a new academic culture was created towards specialization in some areas of scientific knowledge.

As a consequence of the expansion of the postgraduate studies, during the last twenty years, registration grew over 200%. In 1984, there were 35,390 students in the three levels (specialization, master's and doctor's degrees). In 2000, there were 118,099 students of these levels (ANUIES and CONACYT: 2000).

At present, postgraduate registration in the entire Mexican Republic is as follows: 21.9% in specialization, 71.1% in master's degree and 7% in doctor's degree. The public institutions attend 59.4% of these students, while the private institutions attend the other 40.6%. In 1999, 3,895 programs were offered; and in 2000, 4,101. In this kind of studies the students are highly concentrated in certain geographical regions of the country: over 61.2% in Mexico City, Nuevo León, Jalisco, Puebla and the State of Mexico. 55% of the doctor's degree students are registered in institutions located in Mexico City.

The development of postgraduate studies has been unequal, both regarding the quality of programs and the attention of several knowledge areas. In view of this situation, the Program to Strengthen the National Postgraduate Studies (SUP) (SEP-CONACYT: 2001) has the purpose to drive the ongoing improvement of quality in these programs.

At present, the UNAM offers 36 programs of master and PhD degrees including several fields of knowledge. 32 have been opened as joint master's and doctor's degrees; 3 are exclusively master's degrees and one is a doctor's degree.

The unification and creation of the current Postgraduate University System of the UNAM, has advanced particularly in seven main principles: multiple participation of the academic entities, integration of collegiate bodies that carry out the academic application of programs, establishment of a tutor system, flexibility regarding the courses in several academic entities, development of interdiscipline and multidiscipline, link with other domestic and international programs and ongoing assessment (General Regulation of Postgraduate Studies, 1996).

A total of 3,527 tutors participate in the SUP who attend a total population of 9,192 students (2,836 of doctor's degree and 6,356 of master's degree).

The importance of postgraduate studies and the need to improve their quality require all kind of efforts, including research.

In particular, the issue of values is closely related to the integral formation. This formation is not only a product of the achievements in only one area of academic formation, but it also includes the ethical dimensions of scientific knowledge, of professional life and of civic life.

It is important to remember that the values integrate systems and networks and relate to each other. For example, the cognitive values, such as truth, are closely related to the values of responsibility and social commitment. All these cover the university from side to side as an educational institution, together with its structures and protagonists, and

even the social imaginary scenario in which it is registered. The values then are co-substantial to both the society and the institutions. The university, in general, and its postgraduate studies, in particular, must be well aware of the values they assume as their own, both the ones set forth in its Organic Law (1944), and the ones exercised day by day in the academic life.

GENERAL OBJECTIVES.
1) To know the main scientific values of the postgraduate students of the UNAM by knowledge areas, 2) To know the main values of professional ethics of postgraduate students, 3) To know the main values of civic ethics of the postgraduate students and 4) To build a proposal for the integration of scientific, professional ethics and civil ethics values for the postgraduate students.

BASIC QUESTIONS
How do postgraduate students of the UNAM perceive the scientific, professional ethics and civic ethics values? How do they arrange them hierarchically? What meaning do they assign them?

HYPOTHESIS
1) There is a difference between scientific values, professional ethics values and civic ethics values among the postgraduate students of the UNAM according to knowledge areas.
2) There is a tendency to emphasize more the formation of scientific values that the formation of professional and civil ethics values.

METHOD
This research is theoretical with an empirical reference. The research subjects are the postgraduate students of the UNAM.
A survey will be applied to a sample of students of the 36 postgraduate programs of the UNAM by knowledge areas (1 of Social Sciences, 2 of Humanities and Arts, 3 of Physics-Mathematics Sciences and Engineering, and 4 of Biological and Health Sciences).
The survey will be applied to groups of students in the latest years of postgraduate studies. The interviews to experts will be made in the four areas in which the UNAM divides its knowledge areas.

ADVANCES IN THE THEORETICAL – METHODOLOGICAL CATEGORIES
The advances include a status of knowledge (State of the Art), the development of the categories of analysis and the instrument (in process of preparation) to collect the information.
As a product of the State of Art: "Education, Values and Human Rights" (COMIE: 2002) we present a summary of the topic fields among which 53 publications were found. From those, 8 subfields were obtained: university values, professional values, professional ethics, social commitment of the current students and the graduated students, values of the university students, psychological factors and values of the students, values of the university professors and values of the postgraduate studies.
Following is a summary of the advances regarding the above mentioned categories.

1) Scientific Values.

Science and technology must justify their existence through their social function, as these activities are intermingled with values. It is necessary to overcome the duality of scientific and ethical values. The scientific values also have an ethical-political conception that opens a communication space between the knowledge of the disciplines, the experts and the civil society.

Research assumes the performance of intellectual and experimental activities in a systematic way in order to increase knowledge on a given subject. Defending the freedom of research and the obligation of communicating freely the results must be the first objective of the researcher's ethos.

The main values of a university researcher must be the search for truth, excellence, social commitment, responsibility and autonomy.

It is important to mention that there is a long and old debate about scientific neutrality and objectivity, which will be covered by this research. The project assumes that science, by itself, is not justified if there is not an everyday meaning for the social and human approach. The concept of service to society must be as important as the search for truth.

This leads us to the possibility of generating basic principles. We can summarized them in the following Decalogue (Núñez de Castro, in Cortina, 2002): 1) To keep the freedom and independence when electing a topic and a method to be developed; 2) Use the findings in benefit of humankind and avoid damage to other human beings and the environment; 3) Be conscious about the purposes of the research; 4) Consider that truth is the patrimony of all human beings; 5) Keep a search attitude; 6) Be constant at work and be willing to reformulate the researcher's own hypotheses; 7) Foster a collaboration culture in the creation of knowledge; 8) Recognize the limits of scientific competition and avoid the tendency to reduce the conception of man and the world; 9) Constantly improve the researcher's professional competency and 10) See research as a source of personal fulfillment.

All this assumes different contents according to the postgraduate areas because of its discipline nature and its practice.

2) Professional Ethics

The majority of the authors studied start by defining the meaning of profession.

For Adela Cortina (2002) profession is "A cooperative social activity whose intrinsic goal is to provide society with a specific and indispensable good for its survival as a human society and for which it is necessary to have the participation of the group of professionals identified as such before the society itself".

She continues saying that the main characteristics of professional ethics are: 1) Profession is not only a means for personal support but also, overall, a social human activity with which a specific and indispensable good is provided to the society in an institutionalized way; 2) Society has the right to demand the professionals to provide it with that specific good; 3) Professionals must have the skills required to provide such good and be conscious about the value of the service they render; 4) To access the professional exercise, it is necessary to carry out studies, from which a schedule to exercise such profession depends (in all the levels of college education); 5)

Professionals generally form societies and associations and 6) Entering into a given profession is a factor of social identity and belonging to a certain group.

Given the "bureaucratic ethos" of the person that meets the minimum legal requirements to become a professional, the "professional ethos" is required in search for excellence.

Juan González Anleo (Fernández y Hortal, 1994) defines the professional paradigm as: 1) a profession is, overall, a service to the society, which is unique, final and essential. Unique because the members of a discipline require for themselves the exclusive right to carry out the tasks exclusive to such profession. It is final or accurately defined because the general public must know the functions of each professional group and its competencies. And it is essential because it is a service that no developed society must be deprived of. 2) It is a vocation because it is thought that the professional must be devoted to it, feel intimately linked with its ideals and with other professionals in the same area. 3) The professional uses mainly intellectual knowledge and techniques to carry out the service he/she renders. 4) The mastery of intellectual techniques demands the professional to undergo a period of specialized and formal preparation, in general, at educational institutions. 5) The professional claims to have a wide autonomy field, both form him/herself and for the organization to which he/she belongs. 6) The other side of autonomy is the personal liability for the opinions issued, the acts performed and the techniques used upon exercising a profession. 7) Emphasis is given to the service rendered more than on the profit obtained. 8) There is an organization of professionals of each area, created and ruled by its own members, whose mission is to rule over the main ethical dilemmas, to create admission / exclusion criteria, to foster a high level of competency and to search for the improvement of working conditions and social prestige.

The main questions regarding professional ethics are: What values does the profession defend? How are they arranged hierarchically? What meaning do the subjects assign to such values?

3) Civic Ethics.

College education has the commitment to achieve an integral formation of professionals. The UNAM, as a higher education institution, offers to its students several possibilities regarding the formation of civic values, such as respect and tolerance, as well as the development of communication competencies (as dialogue and discussion), which are necessary in an environment of respect to individual autonomy and democracy. Such space must also offer the possibility of being a reflection space to allow them to exercise their role as citizens in a public forum.

Political culture is the reference framework created by the attitudes, standards and beliefs of individuals and groups (in a shared way) about the phenomena related to power. Until now we are only referring to a civic moral which includes the set of behaviors that belong to a good sharing (social practices).

Identity is an important issue that must be taken into consideration within the civic formation. It must begin with a sense of belonging to the immediate reference groups, in this case, to the academic community. This area implies characteristics related to the personal development and the socialization background.

The main values of the civic ethics we propose are: 1) justice understood as a duty, as a tendency towards equality, and as an empathic relationship among people regarding a certain order, standard or measure, 2) participation in three ways: social, communitarian

and political, to understand the dynamics of democracy; 3) solidarity, as a condition, compensation and complement of justice, including responsibility and 4) tolerance, understood as "the habitat of a plural society, where beliefs and all kind of expressions find support, and are effectively promoted, with no more limitations than the ones imposed by the rights of others and also the acknowledgment of their dignity" (Pedro Ortega et al., 1996: 58).

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