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## **EDITORIAL**

### **Ethical Issues in Higher Education**

More and more frequently, ethics is in the news. And not in a good way, either. Financial scandals, sexual improprieties, plagiarism, lies, misinformation—the world is not getting any better. Calls are being made for a return to the values most of us were raised with. Schools are being asked to do more. People are asking where we went wrong along the way. Above and beyond questions of whether ethics can actually be taught and whether morality makes sense without a shared religious foundation is a deep sense of conviction that we have to do something.

This issue of *International Forum* deals with some of the issues that touch the lives of international educators and the students they teach. How can we deal ethically with corrupt systems? What is our role in ethics education as educators in varying subject areas? What precautions should we take as researchers in order to maintain the highest ethical standards? Are there ways of teaching and doing business that are inherently more ethical than others? How can we achieve a higher standard and end the downward spiral that we find ourselves in?

Ethics touches all of us, in our professional lives, as well as our personal business dealings. Far too often, a dual standard applies to our decisions: we advocate the moral high ground, yet under-report our income on our tax returns. We criticize others for inappropriate use of company funds, yet we manipulate the system for our own personal benefit. But how can we be honest and upright when the system itself is corrupt? Wayne Hamra was born, raised, and educated in the West, but has lived in the East for over 30 years, and speaks the local language. His article on bribes vs. tips carries the clarity of a Christian business professional, and the wisdom and experience of someone who has most certainly 'been there' and 'done that.'

Educational institutions have not been exempt from ethical scandals in recent years. Seen as keepers of truth, it might seem that teachers would have nothing to gain from twisting information into new shapes. And yet, it happens over and over. Prema Gaikwad's piece is a call to teachers to a deeper

understanding of the ethical implications of the teaching profession, and a plea to take these concerns seriously in our daily lives. She ends with practical suggestions as to how this can be done, including recommending a professional code of ethics for teachers, somewhat parallel to the vows taken by medical professionals. After all, if teaching is shaping the character of the next generation, we had better take it seriously.

Pak Lee's article traces some of the major ethical scandals in recent years, using them to take stock of the current position of the world, and discuss where we are going in an ethical sense. Lee suggests that pessimistic predictions about the future of business ethics may be the most accurate of the options, yet at the same time, he calls us to stand up for what is right and make a difference in our society. As Christians, we should hold ourselves to a higher ethical standard, and that difference should be notable.

Rounding out this set of articles is a very specific study by Ronny Kountur on a form of research bias. Set within the broader scope of concern for overall ethical practices in research, and concern for the deteriorating morality of the world around us, it makes sense to do all we can to be sure that research results are accurate and represent reality. Researchers have a need to at the very least appear unbiased and fair, as they seek for new truths in our world. If they were not, who would listen to them? But for all the kinds of bias researchers attempt to control, one type is often entirely overlooked. We simply presume that respondents will answer honestly, and that their answers represent the truth. While this is often the case, response bias is a source of error that should be controlled, and Kountur demonstrates how this can be done.

In the end, ethics begins at home. It is in what we do every day, and in what we teach our children. It is in living what we say we believe, and doing what we know we should. If the ethics crisis in the world is to be alleviated, it will require each of us to do our small part, in our little corner of the globe, standing up for the right because it is right, and not expecting anything in return.

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