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Charles Timothy Dickel

Sharon R. Ishii-Jordan

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IMPLEMENTING JESUIT CHARISMS AND CORE VALUES IN DISTANCE EDUCATION

CHARLES TIMOTHY DICKEL

SHARON R. ISHII-JORDAN

Creighton University

Given the ever-increasing number of students who are taking distance education courses, it seems appropriate to look beyond the explicit, academic curriculum and consider how institutional charisms and core values might be implemented in distance education courses. This article explores the incorporation of charisms and core values in distance education with particular attention to some of those of the Society of Jesus (the Jesuits). Each of the mentioned Jesuit charisms and core values is described and operationalized in terms of distance education for secondary and higher education students. Relevant and practical examples are provided from courses currently being offered.

The last several years have seen a dramatic increase in the number of students who are taking distance coursework. Within postsecondary education in the United States, Allen and Seaman (2005) report that the majority of graduate programs offering face-to-face courses also offer distance courses. In addition, Allen and Seaman (2005) also report that distance education increased from 1.98 million students in 2003 to 2.35 million students in 2004, which is 10 times the growth rate predicted by the National Center for Educational Statistics. Allen and Seaman (2006) declared that the growth of distance education for postsecondary students shows no sign of “leveling off” (p. 1), and as evidence, they state that by the fall of 2005, there were 3.2 million students.

At the K-12 level, the number of students taking distance coursework also continues to increase. Smith, Clark, and Blomeyer (2005) cite various data sources that indicate that 300,000 K-12 students were enrolled in distance courses in 2002-2003, an increase from an estimated 40-50,000 in 2000-2001. Picciano and Seaman (2007) surveyed public school administrators and found that of large school districts, half had students enrolled in distance courses, and rural school districts were more likely than suburban or urban districts to have students enrolled in distance education courses. According to Picciano and Seaman (2007), high school students made up

68% of distance enrollments, and of these enrollments, 14% were in Advanced Placement courses. Post-secondary institutions provided the distance education for 48% of the high school students (Picciano & Seaman, 2007). Smith and colleagues (2005) estimated that K-12 distance enrollments could reach 600,000 students by 2005.

CORE VALUES

All faith-based educational institutions have core values that are supposed to be both a part of all that is done at the institution and part of the outcome profile of its graduates. In many cases, the faith-based core values, those values that make the institutions “distinctive and cohesive” (Cook, 2004) are called charisms, and it is expected that these will be a part of the instructional process as well as part of the character of the graduates of the institution’s programs. A firm foundation in charisms as promoted by St. Ignatius, the founder of the Society of Jesus, has always been the hallmark of Jesuit institutional heritage; however, the movement toward a more technological delivery of education requires that Jesuit institutions and their faculties examine how they continue promoting core values into a distance format in education. As courses and programs are developed for students in distance education, it is important that the institutional core values be a part of the instructional process, in both face-to-face classes and distance courses.

The transition for faculty from face-to-face to distance instruction can be challenging. Faculty are often very comfortable with what they do face-to-face and have trouble imagining how they might have the same impact at a distance, especially in the areas of institutional charisms and core values.

VALUES IN DISTANCE EDUCATION

Nothing is valueless, and even when we believe there is not value expressed, then that is an expression of value. Distance instruction could be assumed to be without values, but it cannot be without values. Whether intending to be value-free or incorporating institutional values, distance instruction represents the instructional values of those who have designed the coursework, the methodological values of the instructors and the software used to deliver the coursework, and the personality values of the instructor, whether intentional or unintentional. Whether face-to-face or distance, Katzner and Nieman (2006) decry the absence of values discussions in American education, for each individual is called upon each day to make multiple values-based decisions. Distance education provides not only an opportunity to teach values but also to stress the values for which an institution stands. One reason that values education should be an integral part of coursework at the university

level is that the type of student enrolling in classes has shifted to more adult learners. Those adults who are employed part-time or full-time while engaged in university coursework are in positions “to influence workplace values either positively or negatively” (Taplin, 2002, p. 145). If the reason for assuring values education in university courses is to form individuals who will incorporate those values into their personal lives and workplaces, then students who are already engaged in employment can begin applying the values immediately. In a study of stakeholders’ opinions about incorporating values education into adult distance education, Taplin (2002) found that course coordinators believed that values should be addressed in some way in distance courses, but the types of values, the manner in which they should be incorporated, and the support for values education drew mixed opinions from among coordinators, tutors, and students.

JESUIT VALUES IN DISTANCE EDUCATION

As have other Catholic institutions, Jesuit institutions have boldly entered the distance education arena. Vigilante (2005) reports that Jesuit post-secondary institutions offer more than 50 distance degree programs from the traditional baccalaureate degree to the Doctor of Pharmacy degree. The number of post-secondary students taking distance courses through Jesuit institutions was estimated at 51,000 by Vigilante (2005), and it is only reasonable to assume that the number continues to grow. Hausman (2006) reported the establishment of a Jesuit Distance Learning Academy that would “facilitate technology-based collaboration and innovation within and among the network of Jesuit secondary schools” (p. 11). Leaders of this initiative expect that the Academy will be “a necessary and vital part of Jesuit secondary education” (p. 11) by 2015.

Jesuits have a long history of offering secondary and post-secondary education across the world, and in addition to offering excellence in academic preparation, Jesuit high schools, colleges, and universities stress a common set of charisms (International Commission on the Apostolate of Jesuit Education, 1994). Dulles (2007) states that “a charism is a gift of grace, conferred not for one’s personal sanctification but for the benefit of others” (p. 10). For the Jesuits, their charisms are taught so that their students may go and freely give them to others. Some of the well-known Jesuit charisms are: (a) education of the whole person, (b) *cura personalis*, (c) *magis*, (d) men and women for and with others, (e) service of faith and promotion of justice, (f) leadership, and (g) contemplation in action. In the following sections, each charism is defined, operationalized, translated into suggested distance education instructor actions, and exemplified with actual distance course practices. The courses mentioned are offered at a Jesuit university. Inclusion

of all of the charisms into one course might not be possible or appropriate, but each course in a value-centered program could emphasize some of the charisms.

EDUCATION OF THE WHOLE PERSON

The concept of “education of the whole person” is described in *The International Commission on the Apostolate of Jesuit Education* (1994) which states that the purpose of Jesuit education “is to assist in the fullest possible development of all of the God-given talents of each individual person as a member of the human community” (p. 135). Cook (2002) elaborates on this statement by saying that “Jesuit and Catholic tradition views education holistically and emphasizes formation of the total person—mind, heart, body, and soul” (p. 2).

Forming the whole person includes openly introducing, examining, and applying education in values in higher education. Taplin (2002) examined the idea of values education in higher institutes of learning with the belief that “the basic aim of values education is the development of character through all the five layers of the human personality: intellectual, physical, emotional, psyche and spiritual” (p. 142). Taplin also supported the idea of educating the whole person with the four pillars of education from the *1995 Report of UNESCO Commission on Education for the 21st Century*: learning to be, learning to know, learning to do, and learning to live together (Taplin, 2002).

In traditional university education, the focus has been on “knowing” and “doing,” with the responsibility for “being” and “socialization” resting with the co-curricular entities of the university, that is, residence life and student organizations or clubs. With distance learning rapidly becoming a fixture in education in the 21st century, the preparation of the whole person has lost its co-curricular partners at the university level. For the whole person to be formed, the responsibility for all aspects of formation must now be managed as a part of distance courses.

Typically, instruction is viewed as only developing the mind, and far too often, it is filling the mind with the transmission of facts and information, rather than engaging the mind toward transformation of the person. To give further meaning to “education of the whole person,” a face-to-face instructor might actively encourage: (a) development of the mind during the course, by reading and discussions; (b) development of feelings and values during the course, by giving assignments that elicit affective responses and allowing time for students to express these; (c) development of the body during the course, by encouraging movement and attention to physical fitness; and (d) development of the soul during the course, by allowing discussion of faith

and spirituality. The distance instructor could: (a) provide students with resources to read that go beyond the course content to give a broader view of the course material; (b) provide opportunities for sharing analysis/critical thinking with others in the course; (c) include discussion or reflection questions that incorporate beliefs and values related to the course content; and (d) provide suggested activities for students to do while at the computer to exercise arms/legs, back, and eyes.

In practice, “education of the whole person” can be implemented in a number of different ways. In a special education inclusion course for general education majors, the students are given video lectures to view through a streaming account, textbook chapters to read, and discussions with their peers that contribute to the development of their minds. They are also required to spend 15-20 hours in an assigned special education placement to learn practical ideas from a special educator on working with students who have special needs. The development and nurturing of values and soul are attended to in other ways. At the beginning of the course, the students view a video or powerpoint explanation of the charisms selected by the department to be incorporated into the preparation of educators. This information, along with both asynchronous discussion and synchronous chat session questions that occasionally refer back to the charisms, provide the students with opportunities to share their views on value statements associated with teaching students with disabilities. They also incorporate their field experiences into their responses to the values-related questions. Additionally, the students are provided with an inspirational quote, story, or prayer related to the weekly topic that enables them to consider their learning that week in relation to their own values or faith. The third area of development of the physical body has its focus during this distance inclusion course on suggestions to exercise the eyes, legs, and arms while working at the computer.

CURA PERSONALIS

The International Commission on the Apostolate of Jesuit Education (1994) declares that “Jesuit Education insists on individual care and concern for each person” (p. 137). Cook (2002) interprets this missive as grounded in fundamental and visible caring relationships. He further emphasizes that “*cura personalis* signifies personal concern for each individual as a unique child of God who is made in God’s image and likeness. *Cura personalis*, or personal care, connotes a belief that education is fundamentally relational” (p. 2).

The face-to-face instructor who practices *cura personalis*: (a) displays a personal concern for each individual in the course; (b) uses a caring relationship as the foundation for the education in the course; and (c) models an

ethic of caring in the course. Furthermore, students in the course are expected to display caring for each other. Bentley, Tinney, and Chia (2005) state that it is the responsibility of the course designer or instructor to not only incorporate the institution's values into the course design and materials, but to be explicit in its visibility to the learners. Therefore, when preparing distance education courses, the manifestation of *cura personalis* would include: (a) responding to individual students promptly; (b) responding in a caring fashion to personal communications that may arise from students; (c) inquiring about the progress of students on long-term assignments; (d) providing a personal email to each student before the course begins; (e) modeling caring in both synchronous and asynchronous public communication modes for the class; (f) using constructive suggestions in correcting assignments; and (g) requiring group norms/standards for distance discussions that reflect civility, compassion, and core values.

When implemented in distance coursework, *cura personalis* can take many forms. For some, it is hard to imagine meeting the needs and nurturing the talents of students who may never be seen, but with deliberate action, instructors can achieve *cura personalis*. In a life span development course, students identify themselves to the instructor through a brief, structured autobiography. The structure of the autobiography enables the students to inform the instructor of their basic demographics, and in addition, each student is asked to specify how the student wishes to be changed as a result of the course experience, and what the instructor and the student will need to do together to achieve the changes that the student desires. The instructor communicates throughout the semester with each student regarding his/her needs, and they mutually work to meet the students' needs. Using a suggestion from Bender (2003), the instructor of an educational research course contacts each student before the beginning of the course. This is done via phone or email with the intent to provide a personal touch and to elicit information about the student that might be helpful in leading the distance education course. In addition to basic demographics, the instructor might ask questions about the student's previous experiences with distance learning and with the technology required for the course. This inquiry might also include asking the student if he/she has any concerns about taking a distance course and offering to be of assistance should the student's concerns become reality. This initial contact begins a relationship between the instructor and each student and facilitates future interaction in the absence of face-to-face contact.

MAGIS

Cook (2002) summarizes *magis* by stating that “Translated from Latin as ‘the more’, *magis* refers directly to St. Ignatius’ lifelong desire to do more *Ad Majorem Dei Gloriam* (“for the greater glory of God”—the Jesuit motto)” (p. 3). When it is a part of the values contained in Jesuit education,

magis has come to mean the continual striving by individuals and schools to develop to the fullest their God-given gifts and talents and potential. In the spirit of *magis*, persons and schools strive to be the best they can be. *Magis* has become synonymous with excellence. (p. 3)

The concept of *magis*, contained within *Go Forth and Teach: The Characteristics of Jesuit Education* (The International Commission on the Apostolate of Jesuit Education, 1994) is explained as the development of gifts “not for self-satisfaction or self gain, but rather, with the help of God for the good of the human community” (p. 143).

Given this description of *magis*, it is likely present in any instructor who: (a) has high expectations for student performance in the course; (b) encourages each student to strive for excellence in the course; and (c) wants each student to fulfill her/his full potential in the course. These behaviors are not different from those of a distance instructor who is oriented to *magis*. This distance instructor: (a) sets explicit, high standards for student performance on assignments; (b) provides students with explicit grading rubrics; and (c) relates to each student in a way that enables her/him to want to achieve for the instructor and for her/himself.

However, the concept of *magis* is not merely setting and maintaining a high bar in academics. The reality is that students enter higher education with varying levels of academic content knowledge, personal life experiences, familiarity with educational technology, and faith-based values. It follows, then, that an ethically responsible instructor must view both *magis* and *cura personalis* as integrated concepts. The instructor should indeed expect students to excel, but must also be prepared to provide the scaffolding necessary to enable all students to move toward excellence.

Distance courses that weave the *magis* charism into the design push students to stretch and achieve in their coursework. For example, the instructor in a life span development course uses grading rubrics for course assignments derived from Walvoord and Anderson’s (1998) primary trait analysis. The assignments allow students to know exactly what criteria the instructor will use in evaluating each assignment component and how many points will be awarded for each level of achievement on each component. Students are asked to evaluate their performance on each component. This way, they can

choose to achieve at the highest level, for they know the criteria against which they will be judged.

In the distance-based inclusion course on disabilities, the instructor has the students digitally submit the first two sections of the major case study assignment for non-graded critique, so that the instructor can provide individual explanations for errors and suggestions for improvement. The student can then use all the suggestions given by the instructor, with the opportunity to consider patterns of error in writing the non-critiqued sections, before submitting the full case study for a grade. Although not teaching an English class, the instructor practices the combination of *cura personalis* and *magis* with the hope that the students will practice the same when eventually working with their own future students.

MEN AND WOMEN FOR AND WITH OTHERS

The phrase “men and women for and with others” comes from Arrupe (1974/1994) who states that man is “called to go outside of himself, to give himself to others in love” (p. 37). Cook (2002) provides an additional description of this charism. “Professional educators trained in the Jesuit tradition are called to develop their gifts and talents for the service of others, to become ‘men and women for and with others’” (p. 3).

The concept and practice of being men and women for and with others can be operationalized in terms of how an instructor relates to a class and its students. Instructors who integrate this charism into their courses exhibit behaviors, such as: (a) encouraging members of the course to help each other with assignments; (b) encouraging members of the course to be of service outside the class period; (c) creating a climate of inclusion within the course; (d) providing equitable treatment for each member of the class; (e) practicing fairness in managing class discussion; (f) practicing fairness in the grading of class assignments; and (g) upholding the dignity of each member of the course. When implemented via distance education, instructors might: (a) assign group projects with incentives to help each other in and out of class and (b) engage students in service learning followed by course discussions of their experiences.

In actual courses, “men and women for and with others” is presented using several different strategies. In a life span development course, students are required to spend at least 20 hours during the semester with populations of different ages and engage in verbal processing of the needs that these populations express with class members. These experiences are intended to help the students understand different age populations and to learn to empathize with them. In the inclusion course on disabilities, the students must spend 15-20 hours aiding students with disabilities in special education to dispel

myths about different disabilities and provide the impetus for continued service with individuals who have disabilities.

SERVICE OF FAITH AND PROMOTION OF JUSTICE

The concept of “service of faith and promotion of justice” is described in *Go Forth and Teach: The Characteristics of Jesuit Education* (The International Commission on the Apostolate of Jesuit Education, 1994).

The “decisive action” called for today is the faith that does justice: “The mission of the Society of Jesus today is the service of faith, of which the promotion of justice is an absolute requirement. For reconciliation with God demands the reconciliation of people with one another.” This service of faith that does justice is action in imitation of Christ; it is the justice of God, which is informed by evangelical charity: “It is charity which gives force to faith, and to the desire for justice. Justice does not reach its interior fullness except in charity.” (p. 141)

Cook (2002) adds that it is the responsibility of faith-filled professional educators who have been formed with Ignatian charisms to lead their educational and social communities in monitoring and acting on injustices that occur in policies, behaviors, and curriculum.

An instructor who emphasizes “service of faith and promotion of justice” is one who: (a) actively introduces justice issues during the course; (b) actively encourages students to address justice issues found in the course material; (c) actively encourages students through course assignments to identify injustices in course material and to suggest strategies for eliminating those injustices; (d) creates an atmosphere within the course that supports inclusion of all of the course’s students; (e) fosters equality and equity among the students in the course; (f) stresses human rights and responsibilities among students within the course; (g) encourages students to look at their faith tradition and how it promotes justice; and (h) asks students to examine the active responses of their faith tradition to justice issues within the particular course.

This charism is developed in actual courses using several strategies. In a life span development course, students are asked to identify justice issues for the various developmental stages. Particular attention is paid to the impact of poverty on development across the life span, and recently, students have been asked to consider the impact of no health insurance on development across the life span. Other justice issues across the life span include the impact of discrimination based on age, ethnicity, poverty, and other personal characteristics. In an inclusion class on disabilities, students are given information on federal policies or reauthorizations that may arise during the semester and

encouraged to email their Congressional representatives to advocate for individuals with disabilities.

LEADERSHIP

The concept of leadership within Jesuit education comes from the history and traditions of the Jesuits. Arrupe (1974/1994) cites the Synod of Bishops of 1971 as grounds for action. Cook (2002) clarifies this by stating that

Preparing leaders is a hallmark of Jesuit education. The Ignatian and Jesuit vision of leadership is ultimately one of service. In other words, leaders serve their communities by leading....The goal is not to become one of the powerful elite, but rather to become a “leader in service,” especially as service relates to the promotion of justice. (p. 4)

The Center for Mission Reflection (1998) of the University of Scranton, describes two necessary elements, “charismatic leadership and prayerful tolerance of difference,” suggesting that “leadership demands enormous energy and fortitude” (p. 15).

The charge to lead and to create leaders is fundamental. The instructor who emphasizes leadership: (a) makes time for each student to assume a leadership position during the course, and (b) structures class leadership positions in terms of service to others in the course. For those timid about leadership, Riessman (1965) suggests that putting someone in a given role of helper or leader may be good in terms of developing the individual’s self-esteem. A distance course that contains numerous leadership opportunities, especially that push the students into service roles, promotes the leadership of each student.

Leadership is a charism that is incorporated into distance courses through various expectations. For example, in an inclusion course on disabilities, students are divided into small groups of five to seven students for their weekly synchronous chat session times. Given chat questions in advance that reflect the textbook readings and streamed video lectures, the students must participate as either a facilitator who guides the discussion of the questions and assures that all voices are heard in the chat session, or as a recorder that summarizes the chat discussion and digitally submits the summary to the instructor. Students alternate the roles so that each person has the opportunity for these leadership experiences.

CONTEMPLATION IN ACTION

The International Commission on the Apostolate of Jesuit Education (1994) discusses the nature of the many aspects of Jesuit education and affirms that

a common purpose is the creation of a person who has “ongoing habits of reflection” (p. 136). In addition, the Commission uses the phrase “individual and communal discernment” (p. 150) to describe how Jesuits engage in “contemplation in action,” and Cook (2002) supports this by stating that

Contemplation in action is closely related to discernment, which in Ignatian spirituality means a faith-based process for decision making. Educators who are contemplatives in action lead an examined life. The nature of their reflection is prayerful, it includes the ethical and moral dimension, and it combines the mind and heart. Furthermore, discernment leads to action. (p. 4)

Instructors who stress “contemplation in action”: (a) assign reflection on course material as a component of the course; (b) assign reflection on the moral and ethical dimensions of the course material as a course component; (c) assign both written and verbal reflection during the course; (d) assign reflective exercises that necessitate student examination of her/his own life in a deliberate manner; (e) share student reflections among course members; and (f) encourage action by students based on conclusions drawn from reflections.

Others have suggested strategies that would work to foster “contemplation in action” during distance education. In his classic text, Schon (1987) talks about “knowing in action” (p. 26), the kind of knowledge that we use on a daily basis to solve problems, and we often do not think about what we know because it works for us. However, there are times when we base our actions on what we know, and we get outcomes that are not what we expect. In these cases, Schon (1987) suggests that we stop and reflect on what we intended and what actually happened. In distance learning, following Schon (1987), the instructor might create situations where students must confront unexpected outcomes, where reflection is required, and where new, alternative action is proposed. Mezirow (1994) suggests providing some dilemma that is disorienting to the students, then asking them to look at their emotional reactions and their assumptions about the situation, and then requiring them to plan new action that will achieve different results. Moon (1999) believes that journaling helps develop reflective practice, and if used with distance students, one might use Ross’s (1990) model of descriptive entries, comparative entries, and critical entries. Conrad and Donaldson (2004) write about engaging distance activities and specify effective reflective activities that involve “a synthesis of the learning experience,” learners sharing their experiences, learners providing “helpful feedback that will be useful to the instructor in future course development,” “honest and open responses,” expression of “genuine emotions or openness” (p. 75), and journaling over the duration of the course.

“Contemplation in action” is a part of actual distance courses in many ways. In a life span development course, students have assigned readings each week. They are expected to complete the readings before the “class meeting.” They are given a two-part question on each week’s reading assignment. The first part of the question necessitates that they have read the material and can react to it. The second part of the question requires that they apply the material to the population that they anticipated counseling. In a counseling theories and methods course, students construct a personal theory of counseling throughout the semester. At each stage of the construction, students are asked to reflect on the strengths and weaknesses of what they have assembled. The succeeding step then incorporates corrections for the identified weaknesses. This follows Fink’s (2003) suggestion that students spend some time reflecting on their own learning.

CHALLENGES TO IMPLEMENTATION OF JESUIT CHARISMS IN DISTANCE EDUCATION

Institutions based in the Jesuit tradition that seek to initiate or strengthen their distance education programs must examine the role of Jesuit values or charisms in the delivery of coursework. The challenges that must be overcome involve an integrated network of actions. First, there must be a firm belief that charisms can be taught, modeled, promoted, and evaluated in distance education. If the institution does not extend this foundation from land-based courses to distance courses, it should not take on the challenge of building a distance education program. The institution that loses its ideals in favor of a share of the market will soon lose its identity.

Second, the institution must recognize that the entire experience of traditional universities has served to form students in the Jesuit tradition. Without the co-curricular entities which provided the daily opportunities for practicing the charisms in residence life, student organizations, teams, and other campus-wide social and intellectual offerings, a segment of the whole formation is lost. Therefore, it becomes imperative for distance course designers and instructors to build explicitly into their course design multiple opportunities for learning and practicing the values and charisms.

Third, creating such courses will require both the preparation of instructors with a new instructional technology knowledge base and sufficient technology resources (hardware, software, and human) to support the instructors and students. The institution must be willing to invest in the supports needed for distance education that incorporate the values of the Jesuit educational tradition, or the customer base will begin to erode.

There are specific reasons that students choose faith-based institutions for their intellectual, personal, and spiritual development. The transforma-

tion of learners with the Jesuit charisms has long been a hallmark of Jesuit education. Because the movement toward reaching greater audiences through distance education cannot come at the price of sacrificing the values of the institution, the challenges for implementing the institutional core values require attention.

CONCLUSION

The preceding paragraphs have presented an overview of the implementation of Jesuit charisms and core values in distance education. While the emphasis has been on the Jesuit charisms and on ensuring their presentation in Jesuit distance education from secondary through post-secondary education, the message applies to all faith-based institutions. Each faith-based institution must courageously ask how it is different and for which values it stands. These values, then, must be present in both face-to-face and distance courses.

Worldwide, formal education is moving toward distance offerings. For some institutions, this is intended to reach location-bound students, and for other institutions, distance offerings represent attempts to increase their student base. In either case, faith-based institutions must not ignore the charisms and values that make them distinct. Whether they believe that their charisms and values can be taught at a distance is not the issue. What matters most is that institutional charisms and values are a part of distance instruction. This may challenge distance instructors and instructional designers, but for a faith-based institution, it is an obligation, not a matter of choice.

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Charles Timothy Dickel is professor in the Education Department at Creighton University. Sharon R. Ishii-Jordan is associate professor and chair of the Education Department at Creighton University. Correspondence concerning this article should be sent to Charles Timothy Dickel, Ed.D., Education Department, Creighton University, 2500 California Plaza, Omaha, NE 68178.