

Ethics in Educational Research

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Abstract: Carrying out research in education often raises ethical issues, because it involves people other than the researcher. An ethical issue is one that concerns right and wrong ways of acting and behaving. One central principle of ethical behavior is that we should not act in ways which may cause foreseeable harm to another person, or group of people. Another is truthfulness – a commitment to report what you find as accurately and honestly as you can.

Keywords:- Ethical, Autonomy, Commitment, Harm

I. Introduction

Ethics concern with all the human interaction, including human research. 'ethics' focuses on the disciplines that study standards of conduct, such as philosophy, theology, law, psychology, or sociology. For example, a "medical ethicist" is someone who studies ethical standards in medicine. One may also define ethics as a method, procedure, or perspective for deciding how to act and for analyzing complex problems and issues. For instance, in considering a complex issue like global warming, one may take an economic, ecological, political, or ethical perspective on the problem. While an economist might examine the cost and benefits of various policies related to global warming, an environmental ethicist could examine the ethical values and principles at stake.

Educational research is a part of human research which has potential ethical problems. Therefore, "Each stage in the research sequence may be a potential source of ethical problems (Cohen, et.al, 2000, p.49). There are "three primary ethical principles: (1)autonomy and self-determination, (2) beneficence, (3) Justice" (Antle & Regehr, 2003, p.136). "Ethical concerns arise in connection with core values the researcher holds, as in the case of honesty or justice (Kakabadse, Kakabadse, & Kouzmin, 2002, p.107). Therefore, the researchers feel that the ethical rules will limit their effectiveness doing research (Burns, 1996). However, the ethics is the part important of the research process.

The first ethical issue is access and acceptance. "The initial stage of research project-that of access to the institution or organization where the research to be conducted, and acceptance by those whose permission one needs before embarking the task" (Cohen, et.al., 2000, p.53). Furthermore, "access to personal records, both as a primary or secondary source of data, must be approached both ethically and legally (Anderson & Arsenault, 1998, p.21). In this research, I will investigate the laboratory activities in my university, interview my colleagues, analytical chemistry lecturers, students, my assistants, and laboratory staff, analyze some official documents such as a practicum book and students' experiment report. Therefore, I need to get the permission from my head department to do this research. I will inform the information about the aims, nature and procedures of this research (Cohen, et.al., 2000). I hope that the information will help me to get access and acceptance to my research. Through this access and acceptance, I can do the interviews which will be done through the emails, and my assistant will send the

documents and the practicum book through mail. I also need stories from others who help me apply green chemistry approaches and metacognitive skills. Therefore, I need to get access and acceptance. I realize that “achieving goodwill and co-operation is especially important where the proposed research extends over a period time” (Cohen, et.al., 2000, p.54).

II. Ethical principles

Commonly recognised principles include

Harm. Is a research strategy likely to cause harm, and is there any way in which such harm could be justified or excused? Note that harm here could include not just consequences for the people being studied but for others too, and even for any researchers investigating the same setting or people in the future.

Autonomy. Does the research process display respect for people in the sense of allowing them to make decisions for themselves, notably about whether or not to participate? This principle is often seen as ruling out any kind of deception, though deception is also sometimes rejected on the grounds that it causes harm.

Privacy. A central feature of research is to make matters public, to provide descriptions and explanations that are publicly available. But what should and should not be made public?

Reciprocity. Researchers depend upon being allowed access to data, and this may involve people cooperating in various ways; for example, giving up time in order to be interviewed or to fill in a questionnaire. The research process can also disrupt people’s lives in various ways. Given this, what, if anything, should participants reasonably expect in return from researchers; and what should researchers offer them? Should experimental subjects or people being interviewed be paid?

Equity. It may be argued that the various individuals and groups that a researcher comes into contact with in the course of research should be treated equally, in the sense that no-one is unjustly favoured or discriminated against.

III. Ethics in Educational Research

The relationship between ethics and research is one of the most important problems faced by educational researchers. The demand for accountability and ethical responsibility in research is valid and has become irresistible, as instances to the contrary have resulted in impaired research opportunities, infringement on the autonomy of peoples studied, and in some instances harm to research participants (Howe & Moses, 2002). Many education associations have their own codes of ethics to guide members’ research activity. As a professional educators’ association, the AERA documents the initiative involved in educating researchers to produce research of high integrity and quality with respect to human research protections. Ethical principles are vital for educational researchers because important ethical issues frequently arise in their work. This set of principles is intended to heighten awareness of the ethical issues that face these researchers and to offer them workable guidelines to help resolve these issues. It encourages educational researchers to educate themselves in this area, and to exercise their own good judgment. It is also intended to provide protection for researchers who come under pressure to act in ways contrary to their professional ethics (American Educational Research Association, 1991).

Taken in conjunction with typical codes of research ethics, linking teaching and research ethics is helpful in identifying criteria and principles to be met by teacher researchers when conducting formal investigations in their classroom or school (Copeland, 2003). These include having a valid research design, their responsibilities to the research participants, their responsibilities to the students, and using data with integrity. Additionally, educators collect and analyze data to guide them in making decisions to help improve the success of the students and their schools.

Research ethics involves the application of fundamental ethical principles to a variety of topics involving scientific research. These include the design and implementation of research involving human experimentation, animal experimentation, various aspects of academic scandal, including scientific misconduct (such as fraud, fabrication of data and plagiarism), whistle blowing; regulation of research, etc. Research ethics is most developed as a concept in medical research. The key agreement here is the 1974 Declaration of Helsinki. The Nuremberg Code is a former agreement, but with many still important notes. Research in the social sciences presents a different set of issues than those in medical research.

There are many other activities that the government does not define as "misconduct" but which are still regarded by most researchers as unethical. These are called "other deviations" from acceptable research practices and include:

IV. Main Ethical Problems in Educational Research

Publishing the same paper in two different journals without telling the editors

- Submitting the same paper to different journals without telling the editors
- Not informing a collaborator of your intent to file a patent in order to make sure that you are the sole inventor
- Including a colleague as an author on a paper in return for a favor even though the colleague did not make a serious contribution to the paper
- Discussing with your colleagues confidential data from a paper that you are reviewing for a journal
- Trimming outliers from a data set without discussing your reasons in paper
- Using an inappropriate statistical technique in order to enhance the significance of your research
- Bypassing the peer review process and announcing your results through a press conference without giving peers adequate information to review your work
- Conducting a review of the literature that fails to acknowledge the contributions of other people in the field or relevant prior work
- Stretching the truth on a grant application in order to convince reviewers that your project will make a significant contribution to the field
- Stretching the truth on a job application or curriculum vitae
- Giving the same research project to two graduate students in order to see who can do it the fastest
- Overworking, neglecting, or exploiting graduate or post-doctoral students
- Failing to keep good research records
- Failing to maintain research data for a reasonable period of time
- Making derogatory comments and personal attacks in your review of author's submission
- Promising a student a better grade for sexual favours
- Using a racist epithet in the laboratory
- Not reporting an adverse event in a human research experiment
- Exposing students and staff to biological risks in violation of your institution's biosafety rules
- Rejecting a manuscript for publication without even reading it
- Sabotaging someone's work
- Stealing supplies, books, or data
- Rigging an experiment so you know how it will turn out
- Making unauthorized copies of data, papers, or computer programs

V. Conclusion

Ethical issues are an integral part of a research design and considerations for ethics should run throughout the course of the research process, including identification of research problem, engagement in the inquiry and dissemination of results. Training in research ethics should be able to help researchers grapple with ethical problems by introducing researchers to important concepts, tools, principles, and methods that can be useful in resolving these problems.

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