



A CALL FOR ETHICS IN EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH

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Abstract

Research ethics provides guidelines for the responsible conduct of research. In addition, research ethics educates and monitors researcher in conducting research to ensure high ethical standards. There are many ethical challenges rooted in many dimensions of research, including the collection, use and interpretation of data, methods of reporting, relationship between researcher and those who will be affected by the research. There are many terms associated with research ethics whose knowledge every researcher should be aware of. In this article author has discussed various such ethical issues ethical principles and seriousness of it in Educational Research.

Key words- *Ethics, Ethical issues, Ethical Principles*

Introduction

'The entire framework of research projects needs to be under ethical scrutiny, not just dilemmas that arises in the field...the choice of research topic already is an ethical decision'

Klegelmann(1966)

Research that involves human subjects raises unique and complex ethical issues. Research ethics, as that term is usually used, is the study of appropriate ethical standards for researches involving humans and establishment of appropriate government mechanisms for such



research. Though traditionally biomedical in its focus, research ethics is now understood properly to apply to human-subjects research of all kinds. Research ethics is specifically interested in the analysis of ethical issues that are raised when people are involved as participants in research.

There are three objectives in research ethics. The first and broadest objective is to protect human participants. The second objective is to ensure that research is conducted in a way that serves interests of individuals, groups and society as a whole. Finally, the third objective is to examine specific research activities and projects for their ethical soundness, looking at issues such as the management of risk, protection of confidentiality and the process of informed consent.

It is not uncommon, in planning research or in carrying it out, for the question to arise: Is this ethical? Similar questions may be prompted when reading accounts of other people's research. Here are a few examples of ethical issues that can arise:

- In designing a project concerned with investigating racist practices within schools, the researcher believes that only by disguising the focus of enquiry will access be granted. Would she be justified in doing this?
- In writing up a study of three nurseries, the researcher realizes that her analysis is likely to be interpreted by parents and the local media as suggesting that one of these nurseries does not meet current inspection standards. Should she proceed to publish the findings?
- In the course of a piece of practitioner research concerned with improving the operation of a prison education unit, its manager decides to allocate prisoners randomly to two tutors, whom he trains to teach in contrasting pedagogical styles. Is this legitimate?



What constitutes legitimate, and therefore morally acceptable, moral reasoning is the subject of dispute. Several distinct ethical principles can be involved in dilemmas of this kind, and it is important to identify them clearly.

Ethical Principles

1. **Minimizing Harm.** Is a research strategy likely to cause harm, how serious is this, and is there any way in which it could be justified or excused? Note that harm here could include not just consequences for the people being studied (financial, reputational, etc) but for others too, and even for any researchers investigating the same setting or people in the future.
2. **Respecting Autonomy.** Does the research process show respect for people in the sense of allowing them to make decisions for themselves, notably about whether or not to participate?
3. **Protecting 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? What does it mean to keep data confidential, and is this always possible or desirable? Can and should settings and informants be anonymised in research reports?
4. **Offering 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 and to varying degrees. Given this, what, if anything, can participants reasonably expect in return from researchers; and what should researchers offer them? Should experimental subjects or informants in qualitative research be paid?



5. *Treating People Equitably*. 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 favored or discriminated against.

These principles do not exhaust all of the ethical concerns relevant to social science researches, but they are probably the main ones, which need to be taken care of while conducting educational research.

The building blocks of responsible conduct of research include:

- Honesty- conveying information truthfully.
- Accuracy – reporting findings precisely and taking care to avoid errors.
- Objectivity – letting the facts speak for themselves and avoiding improper bias.

The consequences of a piece of research including the effect on the participants and social consequences of its publication must enhance the general welfare.

How serious are Ethical Issues in Educational Research?

Our discussion may well have given the impression that the activity of doing educational research is saturated with agonizing ethical dilemmas. It is certainly true that any research project involves many ethical issues. However, these are by no means always very serious matters about which researchers need to worry or deliberate. Our view is that there is often a tendency to over-dramatize the seriousness of the ethical problems involved in social and educational research. For example, much of the time the research has relatively little significance for the people being studied, compared with all the other things going on in their lives. Indeed, it seems to us that, in ethical terms, social and educational research is not much different from many ordinary activities that we all engage in every day. There too there is always scope for identifying ethical issues that might need consideration. Much of the time these will have to be put on one side in order to get anything done, but some of them will be of such importance that they need to be addressed. Careful discrimination is required.

Needless to say, our views on this matter are far from universally shared by educational researchers or by other stakeholders. However, this fact simply underscores what has been one of



our main points here: that there is considerable room for reasonable disagreement about research ethics.

Conclusion

In considering the ethics of research priority must be given to advancing the aims of the community. The principle aim is to produce quality research that enhances the ability of the community to promote individual and social welfare. Researcher must respect the rights and welfare of research subject and the institution that have been put in place to sense them.

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