

Ethics in Educational Research

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Ethics in educational research is one of the most neglected areas or aspects of Educational research. However the pertinent need to understand ethics and its implementation is perhaps mandatory for the common good of human existence and sustainability. In every day society every group or community or professions assigns and forms its own set of rules or ethical code of conduct for ease of implementation by all. It becomes a common practice for all to follow and it is expected that one needs to be learned and informed for adherence to such norms for the smooth functioning of human existence. Surely norms and guidelines make our task easier to follow for the masses but it may just provide few instances and boundaries but cannot explicitly explain the whole. In spite of various ethical norms and rules of conduct still we find many often people not adhering to the rules and regulation and the possible reasons may be people interpret them in the light of their own values system, past experiences and the present or futuristic aspirations. There may be possibility to get influenced by so many complex factors. On the other hand people are also found not to follow due to mere ignorance. However unethical practices either for ignorance or for any reasons is an offence and is expected to face dire consequence.

Ethics in academia

Ethical code of conduct may vary depending on the academic discipline and also profession (Kfir and Shamai, 2002). In any academic discipline and more specifically education there is multidimensional interaction that takes place which leads to immediate threat of any breach of conduct.

Research is being conducted from time immemorial. Every year there is surplus number of publications carried on within India in the form of books, journals etc. There is also massive increase in the number of journals coming out every year but how many of these actually are following and maintaining the ethical guidelines is a pertinent question which needs to be thought over and over again and addressed by the research fraternity in any institution or University. The role and function of research advisory committee in many institutions in most cases are very limited or non functional. It is also assumed that educational research cause no harm to the participants/ society which may not be true. In India there is no National association exclusively devoted to account of ethics in educational research neither we have well defined code of conduct like BERA, AERA etc. There is also a reason to believe that most often researchers are unable to publish their works in an International Journal as the ethical considerations are not met by the researchers which is mandatory for these International bodies.

Research Ethics

Fieser and Dowden (2004) defines it as *'the field of ethics, also called moral philosophy, involves systematizing, defending, and recommending concepts of right and wrong behaviour'*

In India it may be just few years back that the question of ethics in education research has been taken seriously. However offshore from as early as 1979 we may find various prominent bodies with well structured and designed ethical guidelines. Some of the most prominent are the following;

- *American Educational Research Association (AERA) (1992)*
- *British Educational Research Association (BERA) (1993)*
- *Scottish Educational Research Association (SERA) (2000)*

These bodies offer general guidelines for researchers and academicians for adhering to ethics so that research are conducted carefully without causing any harm to others or with very limited one quite justifiable.

Need for Ethics in Educational Research

The need to publish and conduct research in the academic and research community has increased unprecedentedly with leaps and bounds from quite some time now. There is no doubt that the primary need to conduct research for which it all started was to benefit mankind and society rather than individual gain. However with time this primary need has transformed to being just a secondary or tertiary need while the prime need remains at the backdrop. It needs to be understood that any unethical practices in research as little may be can significantly harm an individual and the society at large.

Important areas of educational research

Ethical norms (BERA, 2011; Hammersley and Traianou, 2012; Smith, 2002) guide the Educational researchers to account responsibilities towards Participants, Users, area and Research community:

- a. Responsibility towards Participants.*
- b. Responsibility towards Users.*
- c. Responsibility towards the Area.*
- d. Responsibility towards the Research Community.*

Ethical Principles in Educational Research

Some of the most commonly used ethical principles in educational research are the following (BERA, 2011; Hammersley and Traianou, 2012):

Potential Harm needs to be minimized.

Autonomy of participant should be respected.

Protection of privacy.

Reciprocity to the respondents.

People to be treated Equitably.

Informed Consent.

Conflict of interest.

Plagiarism

Plagiarism can be defined (as per wiki) as representation of others work that can be language, thoughts, ideas or expressions as ones' own original work without proper acknowledgement or citing or any references.

Self Plagiarism

Self plagiarism is simply repeatedly publishing one's own work in multiple ways and means (i.e. books, journal, articles etc). So the same research or findings is published multiple times in multiple sources without contributing anything new.

Conclusion

Ethics is something which needs to be adhered or followed by all human beings in all spheres be it education or everyday life. Ethics in Education is just a part of this much broader spectrum. Educators and Supervisors should be able to help researchers grapple with the ethical dilemmas they are likely to encounter by introducing them to important concepts, tools, principles, and methods that can be useful in resolving these dilemmas (Resnik, 2015). However there may be few norms and rules which may be specific to that subject or discipline or profession which needs to be known and informed from time to time so that people do not indulge in such practices just because of mere ignorance. When it comes to research ethics surely it is the responsibility of both the subject, profession and the ethical

body for sensitizing the person concerned for such issues but it is also the responsibility of the researcher to know and be informed so that they do not deviate from ethical conduct.

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