Chapter XVIII
Technoethics in Education for the Twenty–First Century

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ABSTRACT

Are we developing a (global) society where our youth think it is ok to copy and paste whatever they see on the Internet and turn it in for homework; where writing an English paper would include BTW, IMHO, LOL among other emoticons; where downloading a song or movie that they can pirate from the Web is perfectly ok? We would certainly hope not. However, theses concerns are just the tip of what is happening in our society. When looking at the social impact of technology in on our society it becomes clear the importance of instilling ethical behaviors and practices in the members of our society. Where is the best place to instill these ethical behaviors? This author contends it is within our education system but is our education system prepared to deal with the ethical issues being raised by our use of technology known as technoethics? Currently our education system is not. This chapter defines technoethics for education and provides suggestions for technoethics in our education system.

INTRODUCTION

Freedman (2006) commented that determining what is ethical is difficult to do under any circumstance; it is even harder in this Internet age. He noted that we are dealing with all types of issues including privacy issues, free speech, racial and cultural issues. Swierstra (1997) looked at technology changes in relation to survival of society over the years and commented that the technology of this era has had more impact on society than any other technology change. It is no longer a matter of survival but of the quality of life and having a good life. Galván (2001) noted that technology is not an addition to man but is, in fact, one of the ways in which mankind distinguishes itself from animals and has provided added value to mankind. These comments are from some recent research on technoethics. As students enter the public school systems, the youth of our society

are fully entwined with technology and learning potential bad practices in using and learning with technology. From elementary education on, we need to instill ethical, legal and moral practices of using technology to our youth. Growing up with technology our youth should learn all aspects of using technology. As with many societal norms, we cannot expect that such values will be learned in the home. Defining technoethics and reviewing the literature on how it has developed is important to demonstrate how education must rise to the occasion.

Chapter Objectives:

- To define the concept of technoethics
- To review pertinent literature and research on technoethics in education
- To provide recommendations on how technoethics can be handled in our education system

BACKGROUND

Defining Technoethics

Floridi and Sanders (2001) proposed that the ethical issues surrounding computer and information technology are a new species of traditional moral issues; based on the idea that computer-ethical issues can be classified into traditional ethical categories such as personal privacy, harm, taking responsibility for the consequences of one's actions, putting people at risk, and so on. On the other hand, the presence of computer technology often means that the issues arise with a new twist, a new feature, a new possibility. The new feature makes it difficult to draw on traditional moral concepts and norms. However viewed, technoethics must exist as a field worthy of study in its own right and not because it can provide a useful means to endure as a separate field, there must be a unique domain for technoethics distinct from the domain for moral education, distinct even from the domains of other kinds of professional and applied ethics. Technology raises special ethical issues, hence technoethics deserves special status.

According to Bao and Xiang (2006) technoethics should be the ethical basis for the world or global community. Technoethics should be a behavioral norm for all those who are active in the global community, such as international organizations and nations, as well as other groups and individuals. Technoethics can be a new principle, or a variation on past research findings. Technoethics provide principles geared to the needs of the digital era.

For the purposes of this chapter, technoethics is defined as the study of moral, legal and social issues involving technology. Technoethics examines the impact of technology on our social, legal and moral systems, and it evaluates the social policies and laws that have been framed in response to issues generated by its development and use (Tavani, 2004).

Literature Review

Sloan (1980) noted that reviewing the teaching of ethics over a hundred year period shows that ethics has been uniquely and inseparably connected with the most important issues of modern higher education. No wonder there is an emphasis on technoethics now in the information age. Technology has become one of the most important issues in higher education, and in education in general. According to Sloan, academic freedom lies at the heart of ethics and responsibilities for members of the academic community. Ethics and responsibilities are at the core of reconstructing a sensible and defensible rationale for the preservation of academic freedom. With these thoughts in mind, the literature review is designed to introduce a basic understanding of ethical theory, understanding the development of the use of technology, and understanding the major ethical issues related to technology use.

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