


Ethics of Hybrid Learning in Higher Education

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The issue of unethical behavior in academic work is more severe in hybrid learning in the context of responsive and responsible learning. This study conducted a qualitative research method and a case study design. It used the semi-structured interview to determine the college students' understanding and motivations for unethical behavior in academic work in hybrid learning, in the context of responsive and responsible learning. The findings showed that participants noticed unethical behavior contrary to ethical norms but could not come up with a sound definition of unethical behavior in academic work. Participants pointed out some types of unethical behavior. Still, they were mainly unsure about the different types of unethical behavior. Besides, nine categories of motivations for students' unethical behavior were revealed.

INTRODUCTION

The global spread of COVID-19 poses unprecedented challenges to the field of higher education that haven't been witnessed since the advent of technology support and online education (Liguori & Winkler, 2020). Globally, a common trend among education systems is their response to COVID-19 through emergency e-learning protocols; this marks a rapid shift from face-to-face to online learning (Murphy, 2020). Indeed, COVID-19 in various countries is in the normalization stage and has entered a post-epidemic era. However, the advent of COVID-19's post-epidemic era does not mean that it has completely disappeared and every facet of life recovers to its pre-COVID state. On the contrary, this era

signifies that COVID-19 may occur at any time, such as during the migration of population to and from various countries. Here, small-scale outbreaks and lasts are more prolonged, with far-reaching impacts on humans (Zhuli, 2020).

Specifically, in this aforementioned era the higher-education learning methods in various countries have been concomitantly adjusted to a certain extent, with a visible shift from single offline/online learning to hybrid learning strategies (Fangfang & Hao, 2021). As hybrid learning is a new learning paradigm, the issue of unethical behavior in academic work presents new characteristics with respect to hybrid learning (Raes et al., 2020). In fact, COVID-19 has necessitated stricter requirements for hybrid learning, requiring students to show more responsive and responsible learning behaviors and also undertake such learning actions in higher education (Xiaobing & Jinxia, 2020). Hence, it is clear that higher education also faces novel issues related to unethical behavior in hybrid learning processes. However, there is a lack of adequate previous research on the ethics of learning in hybrid learning paradigms, despite its increased popularity and its salience in the delivery of higher education. Hence, educators and administrators are now interested in framing policies with regard to this new pedagogical shift in higher education.

Presently, the accepted perspective on the ethics of hybrid learning draws on the findings of a small exploratory study of Chinese college students' perspectives on unethical behavior in higher-education academic work. Therefore, this study sought to provide an initial perspective on the following question: What are some considerations with regard to developing an ethics of learning within a hybrid learning environment in higher education? It found that with hybrid learning, an ethic of responsive and responsible learning sincerely focuses on the ethical aspect of students' unethical behavior in concomitant academic work. Based on the exploration of students' perspectives on unethical behavior in higher-education academic work within hybrid learning environments, an initial observation of the important notions related to the ethics of hybrid learning for higher education was noted. Hence, this study framed these findings and considered the tentative features of hybrid learning ethics, focusing on what features should be articulated and further explored.

CONCEPT DEFINITIONS

For the purpose of this study, its authors defined unethical behavior regarding hybrid-learning academic work as follows: activities—e.g., academic research activities, academic evaluation activities, academic reward activities, etc., in offline modes outside a classroom setup (tutorials, courses in other institutions on campus, or peer-review seminars) and in computer-mediated learning (online courses)—where a researcher does not adhere to the ethics integral to exploring and developing knowledge. This concept was based on the previous definitions of ethical behavior, academic work, and hybrid learning. In this study, these three definitions (discussed below) allowed the authors to identify the contours of unethical behavior within academic work through hybrid learning.

First, ethical behavior is that which is initiated by individuals, groups, and organizations in the face of ethical dilemmas (Gülcan, 2015). It is the external embodiment of individual ethical quality, representing the practical action that is beneficial (or harmful) to individuals and society (Tangney et al., 2007). According to Treviño et al. (2006), ethical behavior is subject to (or judged according to) generally accepted norms. Thus, it is observed within the context of more extensive social scripts. Such a broad definition also accounts for behavior contrary to ethical norms that is typically deemed unethical, such

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