

Ethical Conduct of E-Learners and E-Instructors in Blended Learning Approach at The University of Jordan

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Abstract—Effective teaching-learning participation in e-Learning necessitates both students and instructors to strike a balance of respect and tolerance with one another. In this perspective, participation in e-Learning does not differ much from participation in a conventional face-to-face classroom. In fact, the former requires a broader set of rules and policies to establish proper ethical conduct to avoid, if not resolve, actions that may be deemed inappropriate in e-Learning. In light of this awareness, this paper explores the actions of ethical conduct of e-Learners and e-Instructors in Blended Learning Approach, an e-Learning platform/portal at The University of Jordan. Discussion is further explored with some thoughts on current and future challenges facing the ethical perspectives of e-Learning within the Jordanian context.

Keywords—Ethical conduct, Ethics, e-Learning, Learning Management System, The University of Jordan

I. Introduction

Since 2017, The University of Jordan (UoJ) offers hundreds of e-Courses, via a blended learning approach, to learners just as many courses as are offered by regular higher education tertiary institutions. The difference is that students benefit from the flexibility of time and accessibility to vast academic resources that e-Learning portal offers. Through its learning management system (LMS) known as Moodle, online learning communities of e-Learners are formed, connecting students to their tutors and course materials.

For such an e-Learning system to function effectively and achieve the ultimate objective of effective learning, certain norms and code of conduct must be in place and adhered to by all. Using the University of Jordan e-Learning Portal as its point of reference, this paper discusses the concept of ethics and its relevance to e-Learning. Thereafter, the paper explores the ethical conduct of e-Learners and e-Instructors in an e-Learning before concluding with some thoughts on current and future challenges facing the ethical perspectives of e-Learning.

II. Blended Learning at UoJ

A. Blended Learning in General

Learning and education process is the foundation for

constructing and advancing societies in different fields, and it was influenced by the revolution of information and communication technology (ICT), where some forms of learning have appeared like online learning either in a synchronous or asynchronous way, distance learning, blended learning, and virtual classes. Each of these types has its own requirements, constraints, characteristics and features, and advantages and disadvantages. Blended learning refers to the hybrid of traditional face-to-face classroom lectures and e-Learning. Blended learning is becoming an increasingly popular form of e-Learning, particularly suitable for use in the process of transition from traditional forms of learning and teaching towards e-Learning [1]. However, using a blended solution appears to be an effective strategy to implement a constructivist pedagogy [2].

The spread of blended learning began into the early 2000s to be a bridge between online and traditional learning to combine the advantage of each. Blended Learning was defined as "the thoughtful integration of classroom face-to-face learning experiences with online learning experiences" [3]. Hilliard [4] defined blended learning as "a combination of online and face-to-face activities for classroom instruction or other training modalities to help develop new knowledge and skills that can be transferred to the workplace environment". Dangwal [5] stated that "Blended learning is the concept that includes framing teaching-learning process that incorporates both face-to-face teaching and teaching supported by ICT, and it incorporates direct instruction, indirect instruction, collaborative teaching, individualized computer-assisted learning".

Hilliard [4] believes that the reasons for the global orientation of universities towards blended learning are: blended learning will increase access, flexibility and mobility for students and learners; improve pedagogy structure for instruction and professional development; improve tracking and control of academic activities; increase more interest in self-study for academic improvement; increase the opportunity for global connection, collaboration and relationship building; improve and use cost-effectiveness for materials and resources; and prepare students with needed skills, knowledge and professional disposition in a quick and more effective manner for a competitively-driven marketplace for an economy-based global society.

Using chat rooms, Blackboard, Moodle, PBworks, Wikispaces, emails, cloud applications, blogs, and Edmodo in blended learning with a group project and collaborative learning model, give instructors the opportunity to create a

student-centered environment that provides them with real-life experiences and skills [6].

One of the most popular tools used in blended learning is e-Learning Management Systems (LMS) like Blackboard and Moodle, that facilitates the management and delivery of blended learning in terms of providing content with several materials, easy of materials delivery and creation, ability to assess students and follow-up their performance, manage the discussion and communication between students with each other and with instructors, organization of activities and time and date schedule, give instant feedback, create and submit tests and deliver and evaluate assignments. These systems are characterized by the ability to determine the authority and ease of updating and development as well [7].

B. Blended Learning Approach at UoJ

The vision for e-Learning for the University of Jordan is "based on a 'resource-based' definition of the match that a university can make between its internal resources and skills and the opportunities and risks created by its external environment". The main objectives of this e-Learning vision are to create a digital literacy (to promote digital literacy in Jordanian society and thereby contribute to personal and professional development, active participation, intercultural dialogue and active citizenship), create virtual campuses, and create transversal actions for the Jordanian universities to promote innovation in teaching, improve the quality and effectiveness of education and training process, and foster the autonomy of learners.

On the other hand in line with the view of the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research (MoHESR) about the educational development process, in 2005 the University of Jordan used Blackboard, a pre-payment learning management system, in its educational and learning system to deliver, control and evaluate them. Blackboard has a high degree of proficiency in the management of e-Learning, course content, collaborative activities, communication, assessment and follow-up of students' performance, computerized tests, and alike. However, as the number of students increased, another system had been used in 2012, that is Moodle [8].

Al-Shboul, et al. [8] pointed that the UoJ e-Learning platform adopted Khan's effective and comprehensive theoretical e-Learning framework, which divided into three main parts: The first one is related to education (consists of pedagogical, evaluation and ethical), the second portion is related to technology and interface, and the third portion is related to managerial issues (includes management of resources, institutions and resource support). Khan's [9] framework dimensions are: (1) Institutional Dimension: it applied at the University of Jordan which as: Administrative Affairs, Academic Affairs, and Student Services. (2) Management Dimension: where UoJ consider Moodle platform, modifying and updating it by applying multimedia and other tools. (3) Technological Dimension: including infrastructure planning, hardware and software; the infrastructure of Moodle in the UoJ consists of the authoring tool, messaging system, and discussion forums. (4)

Pedagogical Dimension: It concerning with content analysis, audience analysis, goal analysis, medium analysis, design approach, organization, and learning strategies. (5) Ethical Dimension: it's related to social and political influence, bias, geographical, cultural and learner diversity, digital divided, etiquette and the legal issues. In the UoJ there are clear and extensive directions and rules known by all the students and instructors. (6) Interface Design Dimension: in the UoJ Moodle course interface is easy to use, attractive, and user-friendly. And (7) Resource Support Dimension: It's about online support and internal or external resources required. Here the UoJ has agreements with IEEE, Eric, Mandumah and other digital libraries to be accessed by instructors and students.

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Al-Shboul, et al. [10] pointed out some of the UoJ requirements for e-Learning and blended learning that can be summarized as: environmental infrastructure, community engagement, curriculum integration, professional development, version control, workflow, access and permissions, flexible content rendering, copyright and ethical issues, distributed caching, content sharing, reuse and repurposing, and rapid content assembly and disassembly of learning objects for true reuse. However, based on the UoJ visions, blended learning and e-Learning should be applied to make education available to everyone and overcome the physical and financial limitations, using the best and recent teaching methods to cope with the different learning styles and

needs, increasing student effectiveness and easily monitoring students' performance.

However, according to a press report issued by the Information and Public Relations Department at the University of Jordan, UoJ began implementing the blended learning system in the spring semester of 2016/2017, which was applied into two courses of the School of Foreign Languages with 35% of the instruction devoted to blended learning. Then the university expanded the number of blended courses from 2 to 5 during the summer semester of the same academic year; then on fall semester 2017/2018 the implementation level of blended learning reached 70 courses in various schools in the university in order to achieve a comprehensive renaissance in accordance with the plan to develop e-Learning at the UoJ for the period (2017-2022) [11].

The UoJ has trained (150) faculty members on specialized and intensive courses by blended learning experts and conducted several seminars and workshops in cooperation with Center for Accreditation and Quality Assurance, and then chose (30) faculty members to implement the blended learning in their courses. The University has also prepared a blended learning guide in both Arabic and English to assist faculty members. In 2017, UoJ signed two cooperation agreements with the Queen Rania Foundation's (QRF) related to higher education online learning platform, Edraak, to teach the "National Culture" and the "Arabic language skills" courses for the students in UoJ by using blended learning. Figure 1 illustrates the blended learning approach at the UoJ.

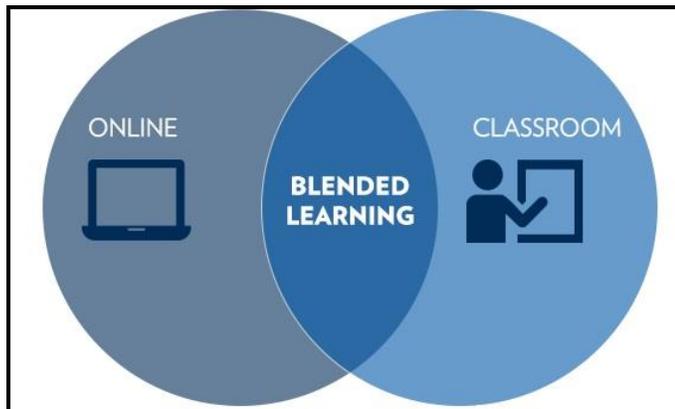


Figure 1. Blended learning approach at UoJ.

In August 2017, the Center for Accreditation and Quality Assurance at the university in cooperation with the Office of e-Learning at King Abdullah II College of Information Technology held a training workshop for a number of faculty members regarding the utilization of the blended learning, and how to deal with Moodle as well as how to use it to build a complete electronic educational courses.

In February 2019, the Blended Learning Station (BLS) was launched; it was created and equipped within the framework of the EU-funded Erasmus+ Project titled "Modernization of Teaching Methodologies in Higher Education: EU Experience for Jordan and Palestinian territory (METHODS). The station was equipped with modern computers and smart classroom systems in the School of Engineering and Technology and the

School of Educational Sciences. It aims to train the faculty members on the best and latest educational and technical means and modern educational methods to keep pace with the technological revolution in higher education.

III. Ethics in e-Learning

Many educators have viewed Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) tools as a means to achieve educational goals and objectives in a more flexible, accessible and motivational way. These views have facilitated and supported the emergence of new forms of learning and teaching [12].

Moreover, many educators and researchers consider e-Learning as any type of learning facilitated by electronic technology and aims to develop the knowledge, skills, attitudes and productive capabilities of the learners. It serves as a substitute for the traditional classroom setting and offers education with fewer space or time limitations, education in which discrimination against age and race is almost non-existent, the record keeping much easier and discipline problems kept to a minimum. Despite of its undisputable benefits many people view e-Learning as inferior in quality in comparison with the traditional classroom setting. The critics often argue that the lack of personal contact causes low motivation of students. They also claim that the lack of control holds the students back from doing their tasks properly. Another disadvantage is that e-Learning is thought to provide more possibilities for academic fraud and some state that it is easier to cheat online than face to face [13].

Thus, e-Learning environments require policies balancing different expectations of participants and considering how the users perceive ethics during online learning. As in the case of face-to-face classes; learners must show respect and tolerance among each other, and conduct civil relations and interaction based on pre-determined rules. Learner diversity, behavioral and legal regulations in the online environment have been viewed as important issues in e-Learning [14].

A. E-Learning

Various changes have taken place in the contemporary world through advancements in information and communication technologies (ICTs). Elements of e-Learning have also been revolutionized through the use of ICTs. Delivery of study materials, evaluation of student's abilities and improvement of students through teacher and student interaction is done through the use of ICT tools in e-Learning institutions. Some researchers believe that the procedure of acquiring knowledge skills and attitudes consists of five main features. These features are the teacher, content, learner, goals to be achieved, and the context or learning environment. Most academic institutions use an e-Learning educational platform called Learning Management System (LMS) because of its advantages as synchronous and asynchronous learning, greater increase to information, more collaboration, better communication and lastly, improvement in pedagogical and cost-effectiveness. Blended and fully online modes are the two modes of e-Learning used in academic institutions. The mode,

in which entire contents are delivered through technology without resorting to face-to-face interaction between the learner and the instructor, is the fully online learning mode. On the other hand, a combination of virtual environment activities and interactions and face-to-face interactions in a traditional classroom is known as the blended learning mode. One of the basic differences between a e-Learning classroom and a traditional classroom is that it is not required by the students and instructors to always be physically present together in an e-Learning classroom [15].

Despite the various modes, types, and variations of e-Learning, the essential elements remain the same. The instructor, learners, and content must all adapt to this relatively new learning system. This would normally indicate the adaptation of new instructional strategies and methods as well as a modification in certain aspects of the social norms and installment of new or different values. This modification is not necessarily a great one but rather an attempt to adjust to the new system. One of the main cultural flaws is the readiness to take advantage of opportunities that may come in the form of unethical or moral practices. Thusly, studies on the influence of e-Learning on ethical and unethical practices of learners have begun to gain importance [16]. In a digital age where everything is only a few keystrokes away, ethical and moral values are put to the test. This leads most institutions and organizations to adopt a clear and detailed code of ethics and code of conduct. But here one must ask if this would be enough and whether these issues are new to the educational system or have only been concealed to be revealed by the digital age of openness and globalization.

B. Ethics

Ethics can be defined as socially acceptable and moral behavior, which is contradictory to wrongdoings or taboos of society. The term “ethics” is often used to describe the scientific study of moral behavior. Character, Morals, Values, and Ethics are the concepts of sociology that are interrelated with each other for ethical development. There is a particular set of values, beliefs, and means through which, objectives and aims of educational institutions are delivered. These customs, attitudes, and understandings are necessary to be understood by adults and youth [17]. Through this, students are able to build their characters by learning self-competence, awareness, rational thinking and at like literate people in society. The main purpose of education is to give a direction for a successful life. The new generation is supported through the implementation of essential skills, knowledge, attitudes, and understandings to make their personality and intellect useful for the welfare of society. A teacher plays a significant role in this process because he/she grooms the already existing talents according to the requirement in every individual. Ethical issues have become more dominant due to the use of technology. Almost all the professional bodies in the world have developed their Code of Ethics, which indicates that there has been a violation of ethical codes in the past or present.

C. E-Learning Ethics

Ethics, values and socially acceptable behavior are needed in all societies especially with the knowledge that we are living in a highly interconnected interdependent world controlled by trade, information, communication technology, fast social media, free trade of goods and the partial freedom of people movement. Therefore, logically speaking the global interaction requires a common set of values such as cooperation and fairness, peace and a common sense of justice. Without these values exchange of information and cooperation wouldn't be possible. Students learn ethics by being exposed to examples. This strategy of teaching could be indirect in order for them to be successful in a certain profession in the future. This could mean putting students at risk if they have the Diploma but not the knowledge of how to employ it [18].

The role of ethical values within higher education and society is declining and requires a new way of thinking. Colleges and Universities are the custodians of knowledge; these institutions create and disseminate knowledge within a society and they are also the gateway to power, significantly affecting the quality of economic and social life throughout the world. Therefore, these institutions have moral responsibilities to maintain the wellbeing of that society. In the majority of the educational institutions, there is a significant lapse on the concept of human development and the nation-building process; this lapse has resulted in the decline of values among students. It is, therefore, required to identify the major causes of this decline in ethical values. The best way to address this issue is to impart value-based ethical education incorporated in the academic curriculum. Therefore, it is important to emphasize the importance of understanding the roles of values and ethos and their role to shape students, educational institutions, and today's society [19].

On the other hand, academic dishonesty may be one of the problems confronting contemporary universities and has become more serious especially since the online environment provides a more tempting environment for students to cheat. Most of the studies on e-Learning indicate “psychological distance” as the main problem of studying online. When using information technology some learners tend to break the ethical rules because the act feels less personal as they cannot see or hear the other person. Today it cannot rely on the fact that traditional moral rules were learned at home. Students tend to find „easy ways“ of getting their degree and do not feel guilty breaking the rules of ethical behavior [20].

A study by the American Council on Education described early patterns of inappropriate behavior in e-Learning. The study identified the following categories of academic fraud in the e-Learning environment: inappropriate assistance on examinations, misuse of sources on papers and projects, writing assistance and other inappropriate tutoring, misrepresentation in the collection and reporting of data, improper use of academic resources, disrespecting the work of others, lack of protection for human subjects in research, breaches of computer ethics, lack of adherence to copyright and copy-protection, providing inappropriate assistance to others, and lack of adherence to academic regulations. Due to

the lack of time, online students may be more prone to ethical misconduct when compared to face-to-face (traditional) students. On top of that, the online students may be less scared of the consequences (if caught) since dismissal from their study or a forced break in their registration may not affect their lives as traditional students' lives would [21].

Most postgraduate students use their mobile phones during lectures which further stresses the attachment to technology but the inappropriate form of use. Some might sum up the total of problems facing the use of technologies in learning in two points. The first is the moral challenges a learner faces when going through the experience of e-Learning and engaging in the learning process online or through an electronic tool. The second includes the multiple challenges faced by institutions and organizations providing e-Learning, such challenges emphasize the quality of e-Learning and learning outcomes. Even though these two points encompass numerous issues, the Internet adds some more to the count [15].

Al-Shehri [12] suggests the improvement in the standards of the quality in e-Learning should include the ethical aspects of learning through electronic environments. He also stresses the importance of considering the ethical aspect and relating issues carefully before any e-Learning program, course or training. The responsibility of establishing and clarifying ethical and acceptable behavior in e-Learning does not solely fall upon the institutions and organizations or e-Instructors but also upon the e-Learners. Al-Shehri also details the essential role adopted by institutions not only in providing rules, policies, and standards for proper conduct and acceptable behavior in the provided courses and programs, but also making the e-Learners aware of these rules, policies, and standards and enforcing them without exception.

Currently, connecting to an online discussion board or attending a webinar has become a requirement for training and many learning programs. This shift toward the use of technology has shed light on the seriousness of the unethical behavior of both instructors and learners in modern online and e-Learning environments. By giving the issue the proper attention and care, awareness of the ethical standards and guidelines among instructors and learners will allow for a positive change in the e-Learning environment. Hence, both instructors and learners will have the knowledge and basic understanding of how to best face challenges in e-Learning environments and properly conduct themselves in online discussions, while writing papers or in undertaking tasks and projects. When the ethical standards of an institution are clearly defined, announced and enforced, the teaching and learning experience through e-Learning environments becomes more focused on quality learning [22].

Traditional (face-to-face) education already suffers from unethical practices such as cheating, plagiarism, violation of privacy, vandalism, theft, spying into cyberspace and bullying but with the introduction of e-Learning, these issues become more complicated. Some of these problems affect the ethical development of learners which ultimately affect the main goals of the whole educational system to develop and improve learners' personalities from all aspects. Ethics are an integral part of any educational or social system. This includes e-

Learning systems. The concerns for morality, values and justice is now even more prominent with the current advances in technology. The ethical development has started declining, which motivated many organizations to start ethical programs such as UNESCO, several European universities and associations. In the process of considering this newly aggravating issue, several conclusions were made about the effects of the latest technologies on the ethical conduct and development of learners such as; data collection, trust, security, privacy, lack of human contact, ever-present technologies and over-dependence on technologies. Some of the critical ethical issues arising from the use of technologies are access, intellectual property, privacy and informed consent, protection of children and security of information [23].

In agreement, Östlund, Panchenko, and Engel [24] suggest institutions sit up policies as a model for students to follow and involve ethical issues and challenges when using technology in the curriculum. They stress the view of unethical behavior as criminal behavior and the impact it will have on the students' future. They listed a number of non-negotiable moral rules developed originally by the Association for Computing Machinery (ACM). The list included avoiding harm to others, being honest and trustworthy, honoring property rights (copyrights and patents), giving proper credit to intellectual property and honoring confidentiality. Clearly, these were meant as general guidelines for academic institutions to start developing their own set of internal rules.

In search of the moral challenges faced by universities, institutions and companies offering e-Learning, Östlund et al. [24] have found cheating and plagiarism to be the most prominent and common issues. However, impersonation, copyrights, providing identifiable information, data security and storing personal data in the e-Learning process were also discussed as arising issues in e-Learning. Some mentioned problems related to the lack of evaluation for the quality of instruction and so the impact it has on cheating and other issues. When institutions, instructors and learners seek better quality learning, less cheating is committed and the opposite is also true.

Moreover, Östlund et al. [24] have investigated the rights-based justice, quality of e-Learning programs, academic fraud, materials provided and quality assurance as factors and in the open issues in the e-Learning field. In the case of academic fraud, many academics report encountering academic fraud while an equal amount also reports not encountering it as an issue. Some types of academic fraud include: presenting lectures without copyrights ownership of the material, deception, plagiarism, cheating, stealing other students' material and presenting them as their own, impersonation and having their assignments done by a third party. Not only students and e-learners are committing fraud but also instructors are disrespecting copyright rules. Copyright laws exist almost globally but the statements are often vague, especially when it comes to online material and software. Most universities, institutions, and associations have regulations describing exactly who holds the rights of the produced material it provides such as dissertations and research papers so that intellectual property rights are

conserved. In contrast, the copyrights of a course content material are not included in the regulations.

IV. E-Learner and E-Instructor Ethics

Academic and educational institutions and universities have been referenced to be the greatest holder of the responsibility of developing ethical values not only in e-Learners but e-Instructors as well. With the new changes in society and the introduction of e-Learning, most academic institutions are now witnessing a great variety of cultures and social backgrounds in every classroom, may it be face-to-face or online. But the e-Learning courses and programs have long since upped the stakes by including a global audience of learners and in the case of fully online courses a change was noticed in the demographics of class participants. With the movement of providing learning for anyone, anywhere and at any time, there has been an inclination to consider the connection between ethics and cultural proficiency [22].

In order to facilitate a comprehensive institutional approach to global ethics, the academic institutions must consider: (1) Implementing ethical training for staff, instructors and learners at several intervals through the curriculum; (2) Clearly identifying what constitutes acceptable and unacceptable behavior by the academic institutions; (3) Defining the consequences for breaking the rules and regulations of copyrights or for emotionally harming or bullying others; (4) Implementing a strict no-tolerance policy in regard to unethical conduct [25].

In today's world of interconnected diverse cultures and societies, many institutions face ethical issues when attempting to provide their services and in particular providing a worldwide education. Some of these issues relate to different aspects of today's world and the technological advances made in the field; specifically e-Learner and e-Instructor. Educators are ethically obliged to prepare students for the world of tomorrow where they will interact appropriately and effectively with culturally diverse people in e-Learning environments, which encompassing massive numbers of learners [22].

A. E-Learner Ethics

Educators and administrators need to recognize the importance of ethical codes and regulations do not lie in the presentation of such knowledge or transferring it to learners but they must play the center-stage role of modeling all values in order for learners to be willing to consider living with these values and abiding by them. Some researchers stress the importance of updating the ethical standards of learning and research as rapidly as new technological advances are being made. Old regulations, rules, and standards for acceptable behavior have changed with the addition of ICTs in education and the wide use of the Internet [23].

While the concept of ethics covers a very wide spectrum of issues but the most prominent are those newly being focused on by the e-Learning community. The learners have been

exposed to the open and endless depths of the Internet and the opportunities to use ICT tools for cheating, academic fraud, plagiarism, impersonation, and other unethical acts. The choice to take the easy way out is not a few keystrokes away. As discussed above, e-Learners are now facing serious challenges related to the use of technology tools and the Internet in an ethical and acceptable way. Higher education institutions and instructors hold the responsibility to educate e-Learners about the ethical values and rules of acceptable behavior but e-Learners are not passive in this regard. The e-Learners in e-Learning are specifically endowed with the responsibility of their own learning; they share the responsibility with their peers, instructors, and administrators [13].

Various studies have shown that ethical development has been declining with the increase of physical distance and the increase of ICT tools application in classrooms. E-Learning has offered learners an alternative, more flexible, and adaptable to their needs and conditions. However, it seems that e-Learning also requires a certain type of learners, who are committed to the learning process and wish to uphold their values and morals, not because of the supervision provided by instructors and administrators, but rather because they wish to learn and take pride in their learning, assignments, and projects. Studies also have shown that a great number of e-Learners are adult learners taking advantage of the flexible form of learning in order to improve their status or fulfill a long past dream. E-Learners must adhere to the regulations and rules of the academic institutes they are enrolled in; such rules or conduct contains many categories of regulations, among which are ethical values regulations [15]: adhering to regulations of the institution; abstaining from violating the privacy others; refraining from any form of plagiarism; avoiding any practices that may be categorized as cyberspace espionage; abstaining from any form of cheating or stealing of information and vandalism; never using intellectual property without correctly referencing owner; honoring of property rights, copyrights and patents; completing assigned tasks and projects by the learner and no one else; avoiding any action or statement that could be considered harmful to another learner or the instructor; honoring the privacy and confidentiality of other learners; refraining from impersonating other learners; maintaining an trustworthy and honest persona; abstaining from any form of cyber-bullying including the use of words or emoticons or actions; and using technology tools and software with regard to the access regulations.

These are a mere representation of some ethical rules upheld by academic institutions. Most researchers are recommending the use of different but vague approaches to the topic of e-Learner ethics. According to this assumption, the next trend will be associated with a global change of morals and ethical values. With e-Learners coming together from all over the world in an e-Learning course, the whole world would need to adhere to the same rules and ethical behavior regulations [15].

B. *E-Instructor Ethics*

By the nature of the position, an instructor usually presents a role model for others. Most academics, instructors, and teachers must adhere to a number of rules, regulations, rules, and standards placed by the institutions they work for or the government of the country they reside in. Instructors' values and attitudes could be categorized under three separate points of view: the legal point of view, the viewpoint of education, and the viewpoint of ethics. The legal point of view is concerned with the legal regulations and sanctions that allowed instructors to work under. This means that instructors' work must follow certain rules in order to be legal and legit. This also offers the instructor a type of protection when fulfilling the legal duties of education. This is called legal responsibility, which refers to a specific obligation to be fulfilled from a legal perspective. Identifying the legal sanctions and consequences of improper behavior is supposed to prevent instructors from committing any illegal and unethical acts. Awareness of the legal aspects of the instructors' work may save them from liability to criminal, civil, and administrative consequences [26].

From an educational point of view, ethical behavior would refer to fulfilling vocational and professional duties and obligations. In this aspect, the administration plays a key role in supervision and discipline. Although the consequences of this viewpoint are administrative and professional, they also offer an opportunity for improvement in instruction on the level of the institution. The third viewpoint referring to the ethical aspect of an instructor's work and conduct related directly and is reflected in the second viewpoint. Ethical standing, motivation for improvement in instruction and presented values create the ethical responsibility, which in turn guides the instructor's sense of responsibility towards the students and their learning. One could say it is related to the instructor's conscience and is a requirement of educational professionalism. The difficulty of this point of view is that motives invisibly lie behind actions and attitude of feeling a sense of responsibility combined with the level of internal maturity are issues of great import but could only be seen as poorly measurable and so they are difficult to compare [23].

Many researchers have attempted to put together a list of ethical values that would be a guide for instructors but the truth is only guidelines could be listed to refer to the duties and ethical conduct expected from e-Academics, e-Instructors, and e-Teachers: maintaining a high professional responsibility and competence at the workplace; identifying with interests and professional skills for teaching in a specific field of knowledge; obtaining a motivation for positive actions in spite of the multitude of professional nuisances; making the well-being of students, the fundamental value for all decision making; approaching issues in a democratic fashion with tolerance and rational behavior; retaining an inclination to dialogue and cooperation in a variety of situations and instructional activities; establishing a trustworthy and understanding persona and a tendency to objectify states of affairs; protecting civil and human rights of all individuals; honesty and integrity for fulfilling professional responsibilities; retain reliability, regularity and accuracy in the performance of instructional tasks and activities; obeying

the local, state and national laws; having a desire and ability to explore and motivate learners in every instructional situation; pursuing appropriate measures to correct regulations that aren't in conformity with sound educational goals; maintaining a mentality of motivation toward self improvement and growth as a citizen and employee in qualifications, skills or knowledge in general; possessing an openness to change which would lead to improvement through reflection, innovation, research and creativeness; implementing the administrative rules and regulations of the affiliated institution; avoiding use of position for personal gains; and honoring all contracts until fulfillment or release [23].

These values affect instructors' work in a tremendous way and eventually lead to an improvement in all aspects of an instructor's work and thusly affect the required duties positively. Most academic and non-academic institutions grant the duties of a certain vocational position a great amount of attention and describe the required duties in much detail but in recent years with the attention shifting toward a focus on personal improvement and growth, more academic and non-academic institutions are beginning to establish list of values for professionals to work as a guideline for ethical behavior and self-improvement [27].

v. **Conclusions**

Although most researchers have suggested that academic institutions hold a great deal of responsibility when it comes to the definition of acceptable ethical behavior, rules and standards of moral conduct, the suggestions were often vague without a clear outline of what aspects every academic institution needs to cover. This may be the result of the various and versatile needs of each institution which differs from others. Nevertheless, the main point lies in the importance of clearly defining the limitations and most important guidelines for the e-Instructor and e-Learner behavior in e-Learning environments. Academic research should also attempt to further study the topic in order to provide a clearer understanding of its requirements. The rapid changes following the technological revolution and the endless race in innovation and creativity had left the ethical values and standards a bit behind while looking for the next best ICT tool or connectivist application to better link the world together. This does not mean a lack of ethical values today, nor should it be an alarming revelation that the ethical standard may need to be revised and adjusted in the era of global connectedness for improving the acceptance and respect of individuals for one another [12, 13, 15, 17, 23].

Most institutions, companies, and universities do not have material or handbooks regarding the issue of fraud or the misuse of resources and software. Looking at the quality assurance process raises red flags because of a lack of attention to ethical issues in this area of the educational system. With the improvement of flexibility options and mobility, the problems around legal and ethical issues also increase. The different standards of morality in different parts of the world become an integral part of these issues as well. This could only mean a proactive approach needs to

implemented by institutions and governments all over the world. Hence, this paper suggests the application of new approaches to use policy enforcement systems and “accountability for distributed systems” in e-Learning scenarios. This will aid in the steps to improve e-Learning tools and help adapt the e-Learning content and experience to accommodate e-Learners conditions and various situations. With the accelerating advances in the technologies of e-Learning platforms, a need for rapid changes in the rules and laws also arises. The processes of implementing these laws and regulations play a key role in the preservation of ethical values and standards. Several parties are responsible for the change and a massive issue as e-Learning ethics requires attention and proactive change from not only academic institutions but also governments and society as a whole. A globalized e-Learning market requires a global approach to solve the resulting issues.

Last but not least, academic institutions offering e-Learning are not the only participants in this movement towards change. Each individual is accountable and responsible for their own conduct and ethical values. Nevertheless, most research has focused on academic institutions and universities because of the fundamental part they play in grounding the social, ethical, and moral values in society. Education’s greatest objective is to prepare individuals with the appropriate tools for life and work in the world of tomorrow. This is the most basic objective of education and it will ever remain the same. Academic institutions’ and instructors’ efforts aim eventually at the creation of a better generation for the future.

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