

Causes and Implications of Ethical Challenges Increased in Online Teaching and Learning

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Abstract: The geometrical growth and sudden transformation of technologies as a result of Covid-19 have provided an evolutionary means of learning online with sophisticated and enabling devices with a click. Teaching and learning online, though enabling flexibility and interactivity between the teacher and students, yet requires regulations and policies that coordinate and balance different expectations of learners and teachers. These standards and values called ethics are to be adhered to achieve the desired online goals, while avoidance of them would be mounted to immoral attitudes and behaviours that weaken online activities. The study discusses and identifies ideal ethics expected in online teaching and learning from all online activities stakeholders. It further explains how violating the regulations and policies would weaken the effective and efficient running of training, skills, and lectures online. The interview instrument was used to collect data from the students in form of focus groups, while students were asked open-ended questions using Google form on social media platforms. To ensure validity and reliability of the instruments, researcher colleagues validated the content and structure of the instruments before being subjected to reliability statistics to ensure a high-reliability index. The administration was done within three weeks. The results gotten were collated and analyzed with charts and pictorials for easy interpretation and visualization. The results establish that online participants should always respect and strictly adhere to codes and conducts that will give room for convenient teaching and learning and also encourage a high rate of retention in learners. To sum up, policies and regulations to run smooth teaching and learning online should always be read to involve participants each time to access learning online as a prerequisite to accessibility.

Keywords: Ethics, Online, Teaching, Learning, Technologies, regulations and policies

I. INTRODUCTION

The major goal of online teaching and learning is to increase the knowledge, skills and productive capabilities of students as well as teachers. It is a substitute for traditional classrooms, especially during the covid-19 pandemic. Online teaching and learning offer education without space or time limitations, no discrimination against age and race, proper recordkeeping is ensured and easier and at times discipline challenges are kept minimal [1]. The significance of ethics and ethical challenges in online teaching and learning has never been more imperative and relevant, particularly at this time when higher institutions are running classes online as a result of pandemics. [2] pointed out five major reasons why

ethical issues should be taken into consideration at the moment, he mentioned accreditation and compliance issues, the quality of teaching and learning experience, equity in educational outcomes, student privacy concerns, and inclusivity issues as serious ethical challenges that need immediate attention. According to [3], online teaching and learning need more concentration than ever before, so we should be mindful of the ethical aspect of it. [4], observed that online teaching and learning environments amplify the ethical issues faced by instructors and students. Ethics and ethical issues are an integral part of teaching and learning be it physical or online. But the advent of online education, as a result of pandemics, brought further demands for educators as well as students to maintain ethical principles to have a smooth running of online activities [5].

To [6] ethics is regarded as the harmony of human behaviours with moral principles, in which the moral principles are used as guides to determine the formal and informal rules that lead to choosing between right and wrong. [7] were of opinion that the covid-19 crisis affected the world globally between 2020 and 2021, and caused school closure around the world, which promptly embraced online learning and raised ethical awareness for teachers and students. Online teaching and learning that are based on continuously gaining relevance in educational institutions are challenged by a lack of documented ethics that maintain rights and encourage applying online teaching and learning. Unfortunately, online learning ethics are still obscure at this moment. Al though ethical teaching is practised in face-to-face situations, online teaching has new ethical issues that must be accommodated, and medical teachers who wish to teach online must be aware of these and need to teach ethically [8]. It was noted, from previous studies, that most of the expected ethics were not directly identified and discussed to proffer necessary solutions accordingly. So, violating the regulations and policies of ethics online would weaken the effective and efficient running of training, skills, and lectures online

II. RELATED LITERATURE

Ethics refer to guiding what humans ought to do, usually in terms of rights, obligations, fairness, and specific virtue. It is related to issues of propriety –rightness, and wrongness, what is right in ethical, and what is wrong in unethical. Sometimes

the word 'proper', 'fair', and 'just' are also used in the place of right and ethical [9].

More recently, special interest was concentrated on ethical challenges regarding the use and attitude of teachers and students with emphasis on educational ethics online as a result of partial and total closure of schooling globally. It was noticed that in the course of implementing online activities learning issues surrounding ethical misconduct have been amplified. In as much as ethics is used as a tool to assess situations and to guide decision-making with a focus on ensuring integrity, and digital equity and reducing inequality and digital privacy of individuals, it is imperative to hold on to the ethical challenges tightly to improve the relationship between the teachers and students. The code of ethics should be seen from the teachers' and students' sides: teachers should be saddled with the responsibility of kindness, be respectful, and be role models to the students. Providing equal digital access for learners, helping them to develop digital literacy skills, instilling in the students how to download legal resources, desisting from hacking their colleagues, how to avoid cyberbullying, and how to ensure they behave well while online. In the same vein, students are expected to be knowledgeable of the ethical policies (dos and don'ts), taking academic honesty so serious and practised, that they should be able to read the meaning of intellectual property, plagiarism, digital privacy, and copyright and patent. Students should be educated that violating them will affect their learning and online engagement [7].

[8] conducted a study on medical education and observed that ethical principles have long received attention; went further that online learning not only needs to include these, but also to recognize that the online environment introduces new ethical issues, and the ethical educator will need to be aware of these and ensure that online education is conducted ethically. [10] Research on ethical misconduct in higher education in Slovakia presented that the percentage of students violating the scholastic honesty rules in daily programs in a total number of enrolled students was approximately five times higher than in daily programs. Their results were related to fraud committed by students online not directly linked to t. [11] carried out a study to quantitatively identify the most recurrent ethical issues instructors encountered in online teaching and how to avoid them; he used 52 % of faculty staff that have encountered ethical challenges in recent times; the result showed ethical challenges could happen regardless of the academic degrees and different teaching experiences of the teachers



Fig. 1: Principle of ethics in online teaching and learning

There are principles of ethics in traditional teaching and learning as well as online teaching and learning respectively. The principles discussed in fig. 1 cut across any form of teaching and learning but most importantly in online environments. It ranges from honesty to accountability [12]

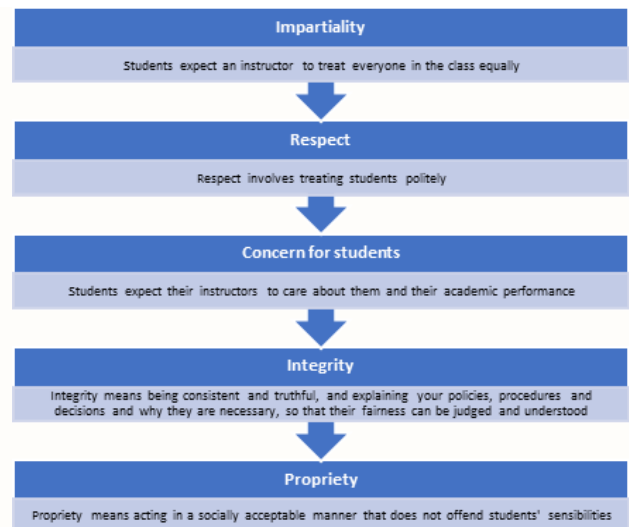


Fig. 2: Ethics in the online classroom from teacher to students

According to [13] there are students' expectations (ethics) needed while online learning to avoid ethical challenges. In this, students want to be treated equally (impartiality), treated politely (respect), handled with care (show concern), stated principles guiding the classroom clearly and with fairness (integrity), and social with them (propriety). By doing all these, orderliness and full respect will be maintained in online teaching and learning.

III. MATERIALS AND METHODS

The study population involved higher institution students within Lagos State; 100 students were sampled for the questionnaire instrument randomly while only 10 students were grouped and interviewed for the focus groups (5 students in each group) using a homogenous purposive sampling technique. The study employed a mixed design approach: The interview instrument was used to collect data from the students in form of focus groups. Two focus groups were formed (Focus group 1 and focus group 2). The participants in the focus groups were selected based on their online learning abilities and exposures; while a questionnaire instrument was (via Google form) administered on social media platforms - WhatApps, this was done to reach the required number of respondents for the study. The study employed both face and content validities: sample questionnaire statements were tested among the participants to establish that there were no ambiguous and complex statements construction and ensure a high rate of understanding to the targeted respondents; to ensure the reliability of the instruments, 10 copies of the were administered to respondents within the population but outside the sample, population used, after two weeks interval the same subjects were re-administered. The results gotten were subjected to Chronbach's' Alpha reliability statistics to ensure a high-reliability index; the index of 0.876 showed that the questionnaire instrument was reliable to use. The administration was done within three weeks. The results gotten were collated and analyzed with charts and pictorials for easy interpretation and visualization

IV. RESULTS

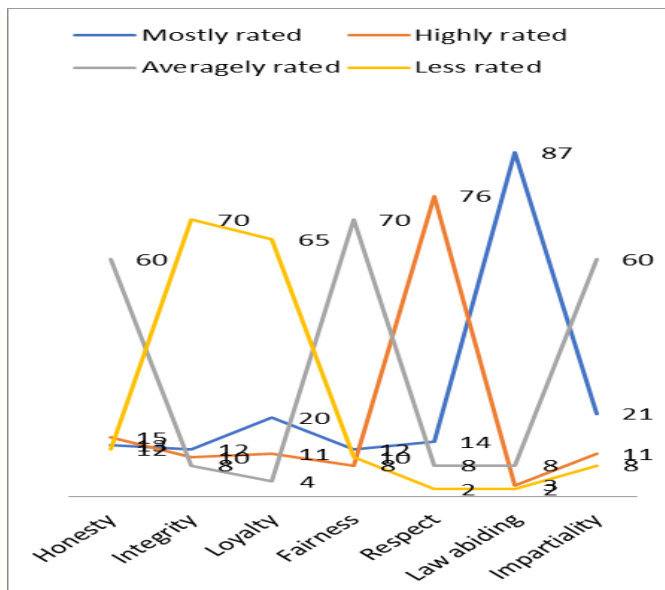


Fig. 3: Which of the ethics most regulate online teaching and learning activities?

In looking for the most ethical that should regulate ideal behaviours of both students and teachers online, the analysis shown in fig. 3 depicts that law-abiding is the most ethical

among others that students and teachers should hold seriously for effective running online classes; next to this is respect which was rated highly follow by fairness, impartiality, and honesty which were averagely rated while integrity and loyalty were less rated.

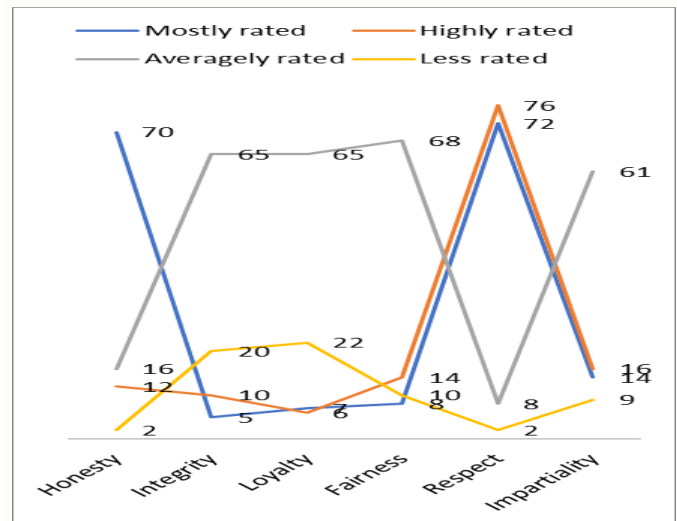


Fig. 4: Which of the ethics are mostly abused by the students?

It was reported in fig. 4 that honesty and respect were mostly abused by students online, also respect was pinpointed as a highly rated ethic that students abused online, next to these were integrity, loyalty, fairness, and impartiality which were averagely rated as ethics mostly abused by the students.

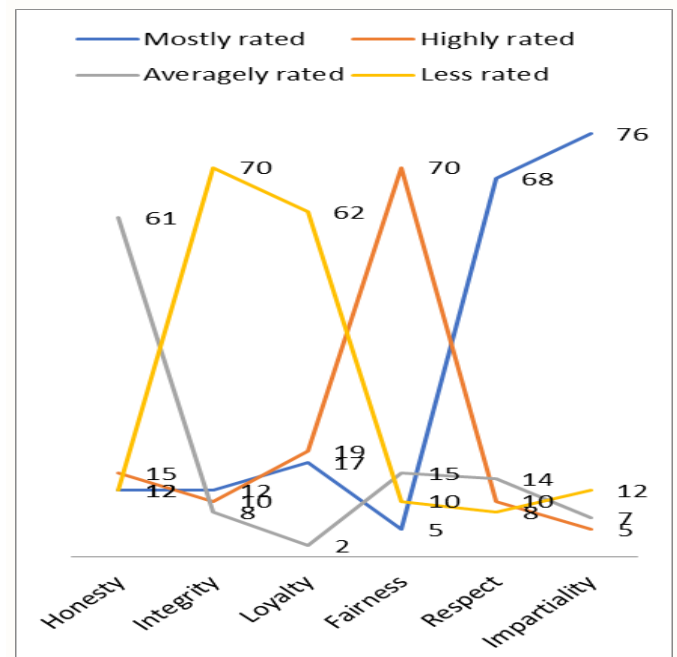


Fig.5: Which of the ethics are mostly violated by teachers?

In line with ethics online, it was observed that teachers also violate some ethics while online. Impartiality and respect were considered the most rated ethics online teaching and learning regarding teachers' violations, it was also noted that fairness is

going hand in hand with impartiality and respect because it was reported that fairness was highly rated as being violated by teachers. Honesty was averagely rated as an ethic violated by teachers while integrity and loyalty were less rated

The results collected and collated from focus groups were analyzed as follows:

The first question was asked that says “Which of the ethics most regulate the online teaching and learning activities?”

FG1(Focus Group 1): Rules and regulations, principles, and laws are very important tools in regulating online teaching and learning, likewise

FG2 (Focus Group 2): policies, law-abiding, do's, and don't's, were listed amongst tools that should be used to regulate online teaching and learning

On ethics abused by students, both focus groups (FG1 and FG2) picked respect and not caring as two major ethics to abuse by students. At the same time, impartiality was noted as the most rated ethic violated by teachers. All of these complemented the results gotten through figures (Fig.1, Fig.2, and Fig.3) respectively

V. DISCUSSION

The results established that online participants should always respect and strictly adhere to codes and conducts that will give room for convenient teaching and learning. It was also observed that law-abiding, policies and regulations are powerful tools to ensure ideal ethical behaviours in running smooth teaching and learning online. This assertion was in line with what [14] said that thoughtful policies on topics such as e-mail, electronic discussions, and intellectual property rights can keep an e-learning course running smoothly; by abiding by the law, citizens will promote civic responsibilities and participations which will increase young students' self-esteem and to promote a more favourable attitude toward educational authority. It is an effort to strengthen mutual respect and civility in the academic community online. Also, according to [15], students do abuse any opportunity given to them either in physical or online teaching and learning; and as the crisis of covid-19 started and enforced education system to be run online, it is of utmost importance for all stakeholders to identify policies that can be applied to maximize the effectiveness of online learning. Finally, it was established that teachers on their part do handle students with impartiality in some cases and on certain issues and this could lead to unethical challenges online. So, to foster smooth online learning, ethics should examine the role of students' and teachers' attitudes toward learning and teaching in maximizing the potential of online classrooms.

VI. CONCLUSION

Ethical issues are often seen in terms of outright abuse of power or privilege. However, it is crucial to have clear, comprehensive, and detailed ethical standards for effectively dealing with these ethical concerns by examining critically all

activities going online since the only alternative focus to impart information during covid-19 now is online teaching and learning. The current study proposed ethical principles to be included in a code of online learning ethics that aim at providing disciplinary guidelines and principles for self-discipline in an online environment, building a strong ethical foundation for achieving online learning, defining the duties and responsibilities of teachers towards themselves, their profession, students and society to sustain online learning and obtaining community confidence in supporting online learning.

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