

Ethical guidelines for educational research in a changing world

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Contemporary issues

01 – Digital research

02 – International and intercultural contexts

03 – Relevance to practitioners and independent researchers

04 – Enacting equality, diversity and inclusivity

05 – Sustainability and environmental responsibility

Digital Research



01

Recognising our digital world

Internet research as defined by the AOIR ([2012, p3](#)), encompasses inquiry that:

- (a) uses the internet to collect data or information, e.g., through online interviews, surveys, archiving, or automated means of data scraping;
- (b) studies how people use and access the internet, e.g., through collecting and observing activities or participating on social network sites, listservs, web sites, blogs, games, virtual worlds, or other online environments or contexts;
- (c) uses or engages in data processing, analysis, or storage of datasets, databanks, and/or repositories available
- (d) studies software, code, and internet technologies
- (e) examines the design or structures of systems, interfaces, pages, and elements
- (f) employs visual and textual analysis, semiotic analysis, content analysis, or other methods of analysis to study the web and/or internet-facilitated images, writings, and media forms
- (g) studies large-scale production, use, and regulation of the internet by governments, industries, corporations, and military forces

A framework for ethical learning technology (ALT, 2021)

Framework for Ethical Learning Technology (FELT)

Awareness

- Respect the autonomy and interests of different stakeholders
- Be mindful, reflective and reflexive
- Think critically about your practice and consider the wider environment(s) you can influence
- Recognise the limits of one's own knowledge and the possibility of unconscious bias

Professionalism

- Demonstrate accountable, evidence-led practice
- Commit to ongoing professional development and enhancing your skills
- Act with integrity and honesty
- Ensure practice complies with relevant laws and institutional policies
- Apply knowledge and research to advocate for and enhance ethical approaches

Care and Community

- Practice care of oneself and others
- Promote collegiality and mutual understanding
- Minimise the risk of harms
- Recognise responsibilities and influence beyond your institution
- Share and disseminate best practice

Values

- Support the agency and development of learners
- Promote fair and equitable treatment, enhancing access to learning
- Develop learning environments that are inclusive and supportive
- Celebrate diversity as a route to innovation
- Design services, technologies to be widely accessible
- Be accountable and prepared to explain decision-making
- Be as open and transparent as is appropriate



Association for Learning Technology (ALT) 2021 go.alt.ac.uk/EdTechEthics

The advent of ChatGPT

And what happened outside of education?

Scalenut

Generate High Quality Long-Form Content Faster With AI

Scalenut's AI content generator helps you write and optimize long-form blog posts, articles and headlines to engage your audience and boost SEO

Become 2x better at writing in 10 Minutes

MicroBlogger AI - We give you everything you need to write like a top form poster. Say goodbye to writer's block and write like a famous blogger w/out any...

TRY MICROBLOGGER FOR FREE

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Using industry leading text based artificial intelligence, we offer a premium product to help marketers, copywriters, writers and businesses of all sizes make better content, faster.

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Use cases Pricing Resources What's new Start Ryting →

A better. 10x faster way to write product descriptions

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Michael Webb

Jisc

AI – education and ethical educational research

What next?

It's not going to go away.

The way we work is going to continue to evolve.

We're going to find lots of great use case

(there are things that GPT-3 tech is great at – just not facts or maths!)

We're creating a working group to work through the issues we discussed today.

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Michael Webb



Earney, L. (2020) Jisc response to Demos report, Research 4.0: Research in the Age of Automation, 15 Sept 2020 [JISC blog post](#)

Fox, A. (2022) Chapter 2: Educational research and Artificial Intelligence in Education: Identifying ethical challenges, in W. Holmes and K. Porayska-Pomsta (Eds) *The Ethics of Research about Artificial Intelligence in Education: Challenges, Practices and Debates*, London: Routledge, pp. 47-73.

Inclusivity in digital research involves educational researchers in...

1. Being attuned to the uneven nature of technological development and digital practices in different parts of the world or even within societies
2. Being aware that digital research might reproduce unequal power dynamics and marginalisation
3. Reviewing whether the exclusionary nature of digital research meets the aims of the study, being mindful of who it might exclude
4. Not relying on Western assumptions of whose knowledge will be heard digitally
5. Considering alternative ways to recruit participants to facilitate voice
6. Challenging the idea that recruiting online is straightforward: not assuming the same 'rules' as recruiting participants offline
7. Considering possibilities of over-recruitment: potentially identifying possible selection criteria and wording recruitment information accordingly.

International and intercultural contexts



Decolonising Research Ethics: direction of travel? [\(Fox and Busher, 2022\)](#)



Where have we come from?

Authors positioned in the global North need to:

- Question our assumptions
- Overturn our historical hypothetico-deductive approach to ethical risk assessment
- Reach towards democratic and inclusive approaches
- Learn about social, political, ethical and cultural diversity within research settings (Kara, 2018; Stark, 2012)
- Challenge our tools, frameworks and our processes

Where are we heading?

1. Argue that ethical consideration to be built into design AND conduct
2. Seek to empower researchers to make situated cases to their ethical review committees
3. Recognise that this involves challenging ethical review committees' current practice
4. Advocate for epistemic justice, which recognises 'south in the north' and 'north in the south' (Ballestrin, 2020, p1) and a pluriversality of perspective

How can Ethical Research Committees (ERCs) effectively support educational researchers?

This requires:

1. Researchers to guide and educate one another
2. ERCs to be open to reciprocal learning
3. Shifts in agency and power towards a community of practice
4. Dialogue and system adjustment
5. Ethical support throughout the lifetime of a project
6. Input from those in the research settings
7. Codes of ethical practices developed with rather than on communities



ERCs in a mentoring and advisory role

ERCs as a portal to offer support for research and in an ongoing supervisory role throughout projects

Both ERCs and researchers to grow in knowledge about appropriate and valued ways of ethical practice to guide ethical regulation

Situated ethical practice modelled

*Government of Canada (2018)
Chapter 9 Tri-Council Policy Statement:
Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans*

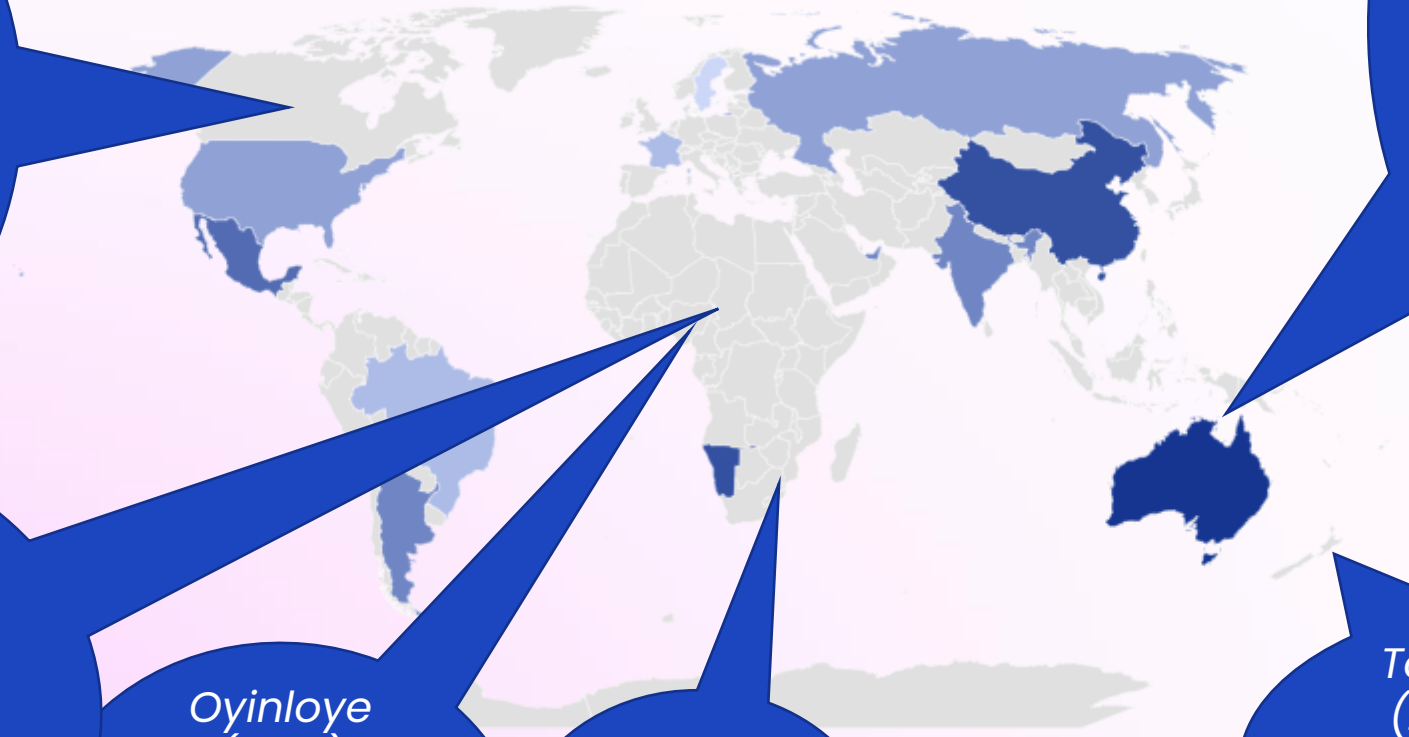
*Ebubedike et al (2023)
Ethics for educational research in regions of protracted conflict and crises: a Community Based Participatory Project*

*Oyinloye (2021)
'Towards an Ọmọlúàbí code of research ethics'*

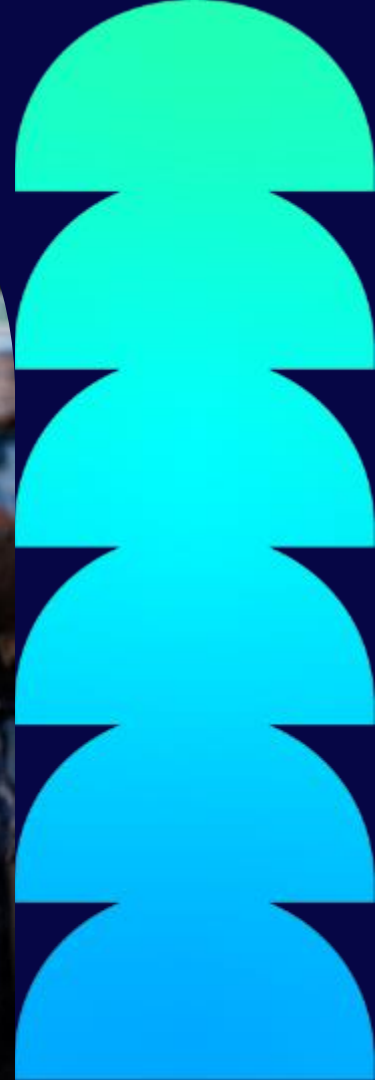
San Code of Research Ethics (2018)

Tolich and Smith (2014) 'Evolving ethics envy' NZ Journal of Social Sciences Online

*Molla et al (2022)
'Educational Research in 'Fragile Contexts': Ethics-in-Practice for Higher Degree Research Students and Supervisors' project*



Relevance to practitioners and independent researchers



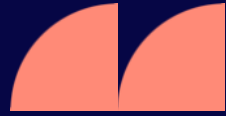
Reimagining academia, inclusively

- Practitioner and independent researchers share a common experience
 - often having no institutional body overseeing the ethical aspects of research decision-making
 - not necessarily being linked to a particular organisation
 - being self-funded
- Acknowledge the advantages e.g. apolitical of being independent countering negative view of independence
- Recognise teachers/educators' rights to research their practice as mechanism for CPD
- Rights as much the case for researchers in Higher Educational Institutions as in other settings, hence link to scholarship as a valid form of research which should be covered by ERCs
- Recognise that insider research, particularly researching one's own workplace/social groups, comes with additional risks, including:
 - transparency of aims and risks,
 - recognition of power imbalances,
 - reconciling multiple hats,
 - avoiding temptations to recruit because readily available,
 - potential for individuals to be identified,
 - pressure to be reported in a certain way/challenges in reporting difficult findings

Equality, diversity and inclusion

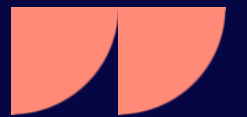
With particular
recognition of the
contribution of Nicole
Brown



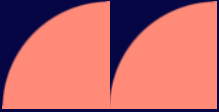


Is not only about
one protected
characteristic

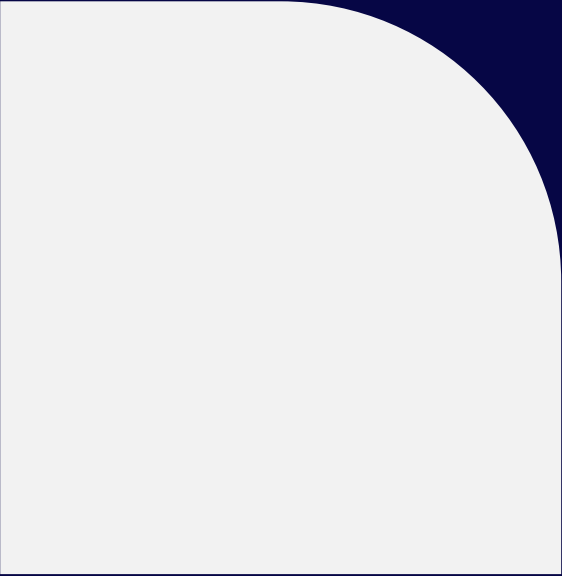
'All people, irrespective of sex, age, race, colour, ethnicity, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property or birth, as well as persons with disabilities, migrants, indigenous peoples, and children and youth, especially those in vulnerable situations or other status, should have access to inclusive, equitable quality education and lifelong learning opportunities' ([UNESCO, 2015: 25](#))



Including rights
to access to
research



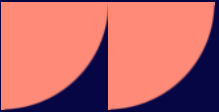
Is complex and context specific – and hence inclusion is not always fully achievable



'...It should be noted that the list... is not exhaustive and that countries and regions may identify and address other status-based vulnerability, marginalization, discrimination and exclusion in education opportunities' (UNESCO, 2015: 25)



Is not only about research participants



Embrace (neuro)diversity

- Recognise equal rights of neurodiverse people and their families in design and conduct of research especially on topics relevant to them (Camarata, 2022).
- Avoid forcing conformity, inducing masking of identity or worse – potentially inducing or exacerbating mental health issues (Camerata, 2022)
- Create a supportive environment
 - Challenge language used to refer to neurodiversity
 - Modify physical spaces to enable participation
 - Draw on neurodiverse representatives
 - Be encouraged by the community approaches taken by others
 - Advocate for a participatory research agenda (Fletcher-Wilson et al, 2018)
- Address methodological challenges
 - Grow skill set with early career researchers
 - Explore effective ways to capture the voices of neurodiverse peoples, especially the nonverbal and those with communication and interactional needs
 - Address how to balance individual and collective opinion in ways which embrace and represent diversity (Fletcher-Wilson et al, 2018)

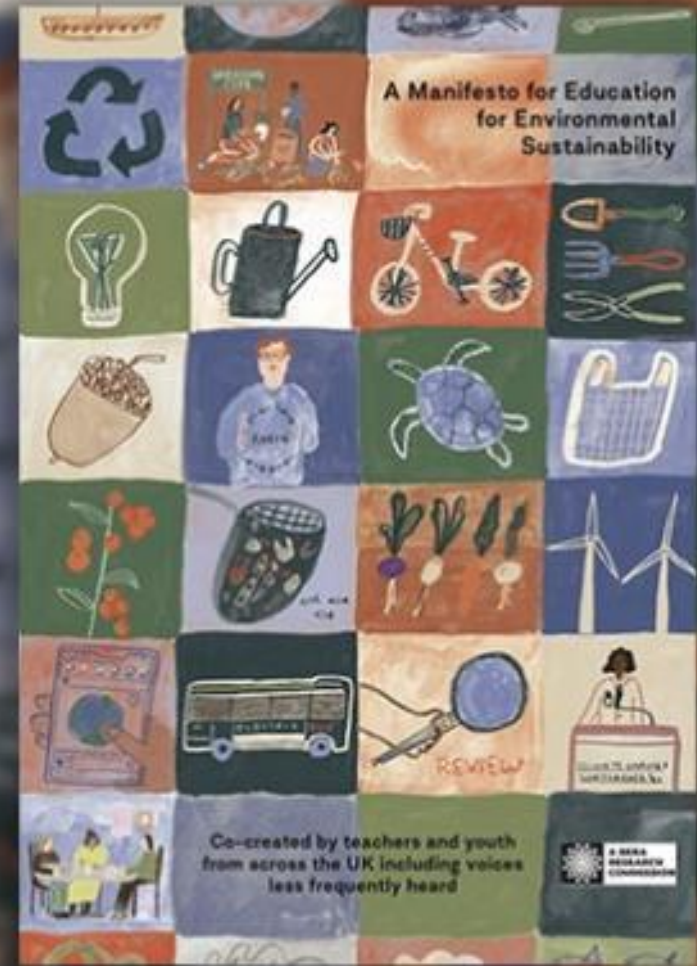
Towards participatory research



Figure 1. Current topics in participatory autism research. With thanks to Fletcher-Watson, et al, (2019) p946

Sustainability and environmental responsibility

With recognition of the contributions of Lizzie Rushton, Lynda Dunlop and Sin Wang Chong



Sustainability and ethical research

- Introduce the notion of sustainability as relevant to educational researchers
- Define sustainability and sustainable development
- Develop an awareness of how their research exerts an impact on environment and sustainable development
- Explain the relationship between educational research and the environment.
- Support in thinking through options for sustainable decision-making.

(Chong, 2022)

Environmental impact assessment by researchers:

1. What can be done to minimise the environmental impact of research data collection?
2. Is it possible to use online spaces or low-carbon public transport options and to avoid flights to data collection sites?
3. For sites further away, could there be mutual benefits from local collaborations with researchers and communities?
4. Which appropriate working location has the lowest environmental impact?
5. How can the environmental impact of research meetings and events be minimised? Is it possible to minimise travel, and use locally sourced plant food products in catering?
6. Can merchandising or gift incentives be justified?

Incorporating the environment into ethical codes of conduct e.g. the BPS

3.1 RESPECT

Respect...

- Communities and shared values within them;
- Impacts on the broader environment – living or otherwise;
- Issues of power;
- Consent;
- Self-determination;
- The importance of compassion, including empathy, sympathy, generosity, openness, distress tolerance, commitment and courage.

3.3 RESPONSIBILITY

Through...

- Professional accountability;
- Responsible use of their knowledge and skills;
- Respect for the welfare of humans, non-humans and the living world;
- Potentially competing duties

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