A CONSIDERATION TO TWO MAIN ETHICAL ISSUES IN EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH, AND HOW MAY THESE BE ADDRESSED

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ABSTRACT

This paper has firstly discussed the topic of Ethical Issues in Education, and has accordingly highlighted the fact that ethics are not something to deem at the commencement of a research project or fieldwork, but rather throughout the entire research process. Furthermore, two of the most important ethical issues have been given consideration - Informed Consent and involvement of children in research. The first element is informed consent, which is concerned with the question of being part of the research process, whereby the result is an informed option concerning the voluntary contribution in a research. In addition, some of the different issues raised from it and alongside suggested ways of addressing them have been discussed. The second element is the involvement of children in research. Moreover, the significance of the ethical issues regarding the right of children in research participation in order to express and report their views and experiences in more detail with regard to parental consent and confidentiality has been stated.

Keywords: Ethical Issues, Informed Consent, Parental Consent, Confidentiality.

INTRODUCTION

Generally, social science and particularly educational research have turned out to be increasingly concerned with the propriety of ethics and there is necessity of universally satisfactory codes of conducting ethics (Iltis, 2006). This level of consciousness partially stems from various criticisms relating to modern research methodologies currently adopted, and the apprehension that they might be at odds with definite primary principles of ethics. This has subsequently resulted in the integrity and validity of some new modern research styles, which are debated by adherents to the traditional research methodologies (Somekh & Lewin, 2005). Therefore, this paper emphasises that there is a need to ensure that educational researches in particular, as well as social science researches in general, are to be practiced based on the principles of ethics which are not open for debate. Furthermore, these principles are considered crucial when certifying that, the findings of researches are valid, and the integrity of the adopted methodology in reaching these conclusions is far from suspicious (Dancy, 2004).

It is important to firstly discuss the meaning of 'ethics'. However, it is important to bear in mind that there are no universally approved definitions of such a term. The term 'ethics' 'usually refers to the moral principles, guiding conduct, which are held by a group or even a profession (though there is no logical reason why individuals should not have their own ethical code)' (Wellington, 2000). The concern surrounding ethics in relation to research is originally found in medical research; however, such concern has expanded to comprise all human subject-related researches. Nevertheless, a number of researchers in social science have argued that ethical medical research approaches do not necessarily translate well to social science-related researches, partially for the reason that the dilemmas relating to ethics, especially those which occur in social science related researches, are context-specific.

Moreover, it is significant to take into consideration the fact that ethics is not merely something to consider at the commencement of a research project or fieldwork but should be rather borne in mind throughout the entire research process as concerns about the ethics ought to be the leading consideration of any research study, and therefore ought to be maintained during the write-up and dissemination phases (Wellington, 2000). Furthermore, it is also significant that researchers feel that, there is no method considered as entirely safe for either themselves or their respondents. Therefore, 'the ethics of social science are situation ethics' (Humphreys, 1975, p. 170).

British Educational Research Association (BERA) (2004) sets out some guidelines which aim to guide researchers under the following three different headings: Responsibilities to Participants; Sponsors of Research; and the Community of Educational Researchers. However, there are some problems associated with ethical conduct codes. For instance, they are merely still relatively finished products and not constantly desirable (anonymity), achievable (fully informed consent) and compatible (avoidance of deception) (Small, 2002). Therefore, a researcher ought to make choices, 'weigh up competing ethical and other methodological considerations and produce ethically and methodologically defensible position'. However, there is nevertheless disagreement concerning whether or not research ethics is a priority (Wellington, 2000) or otherwise considered essential (Chabon, 2007), which further highlights movement from the past to the present.

ESRC (2005) provides some key principles for ethical research. For instance, research projects ought to be designed, undertaken to be reviewed in order to ensure quality and integrity to be maintained. Moreover, in terms of Educational research, there are some underlying principles for consideration. For example, 'a commitment to honesty' (Sammons, 1989), 'avoidance of plagiarism' (Berger & Patchner, 1988) and 'respect for the dignity and privacy of those people who are the subjects of research.' Furthermore, subjects of the research should be fully informed regarding the purpose of the research, methods and future probable utilisations of the study, and involved risks of the research for their participation (Lo & Field, 2009). In addition, ESRC (2005) provides some suggested ways of implementing those principles. As a case in point, the accountability for making certain research is subject to suitable ethical monitoring and approval by the institution to the researchers. Therefore, institutions ought to ensure clear transparency, and suitable and efficient actions that should be prepared for ethical approval, as and when necessary. Therefore, approval ought to make different things clear, such as the aims, scientific background design, methods and the number of participants identified, as well as whether such numbers include vulnerable groups, etc.

On the other hand, the benefits and the risks for both participants and researchers, on procedures also need to be considered. However, it is important to bear in mind that 'fieldwork is inherently problematic by virtue of the conditions that makes knowledge production as possible. where personal relations and social interactions are the context for unearthing meaning' (Laine, 2000). Therefore, researchers should make decisions regarding the way in which they carry out research in such a way that ultimately make the progression as ethical as probable within the project frameworks, whilst also considering time and financial restrictions in place and budgets available to them (Burgess, 1989).

However, in the literature, there is a disagreement concerning what is considered to be the most significant of ethical issues for consideration within the educational research arena. For instance, whilst Gray (2004) regards confidentiality as one of the most vital ethical necessities, which fundamentally requires observation by each researcher. Fraenkel and Wallen (2008), on the other hand, consider that participants' protection from harm is the most essential ethical concern. However, this paper aims to discuss the issues of informed consent and involving children in research, both of which are regarded by many researches as the most significant, debatable and controversial issues; furthermore, these elements of consideration are also fundamentally related to the writer's future research.

Informed Consent

In case of social research, informed consent is defined in two ways, as in medical research. In the ethics of medical research, informed consent is envisioned as including three fundamental sufficient information (whereby participants are acquainted with what they are consenting to); voluntariness (participants are conscious that they are under no compulsion to take part, and have the complete right to withdraw during any phase); and competence (whereby participants are able to understand what consent will involve and when making the decision as to whether or not they wish to take part) (Beauchamp & Childress, 2001).

Whilst ethical issues which social researchers commonly experience are frequently dissimilar to the ethical issues of researchers in the medical arena. The guidelines of social research nevertheless directs them toward the broader elements in terms of informed consent management, in spite of the fact that the ways in which such issues are managed are rather diverse. Thus, informed consent in social science research is defined as ' a procedure for ensuring that research participants understand what is being done to them, the limits to their participation and awareness of any potential risks they incur' (Social Research Association, 2003: p28).

Social science research guidelines are purposely vague, and provide researchers with the ability to interpret them in ways which are considered to fit the specific needs of the research being undertaken (Hansen, 2007). However, researchers are subject to legal and regulatory frameworks which, to some degree, determine how informed consent issues are managed, mainly in various key research areas (for example, in research involving children) (Johns, McGrath & Mathur, 2008).

The informed consent principle arises from the right of subjects to freedom, self-determination and to refuse to participate (Cohen et al., 2000). In other words, informed consent is the process whereby the result is an informed option concerning the voluntary contribution in a research. Furthermore, it ought to be made completely understandable that participants are voluntarily entering into the research, and they are therefore free to withdraw at any time (Mauthner, Birch, Jesssop, & Miller, 2002). Moreover, it also ought to be completely apparent to participants that, throughout the research process, they are not considered as subjects but co-researchers (McNiff et al., 2003). An additional point is that, prior to any tape recording of meetings or conversations being carried out, consent ought to be obtained from the respective participants (Fenner, 1999).

Essentially, there is a multitude of reasons behind conducting the process of informed consent. For example, it comes beneath the 'Respect for Persons' principle. Moreover, it has been acknowledged that, without such a process of efficient informed consent in place, a signed document is not worth the paper on which it is written.

Moreover, within the research project and also when findings are offered, it is significant to ensure that the participants' anonymity is protected, possibly through the utilisation of numbers or letters, rather than utilising real names. However, when real names of places or people are utilised, consent should be obtained from the pertinent source for the reason that, during the research, the participants comprise an integral part, and it is therefore significant that data is shared with them (Tomal, 2003). Essentially, this assists in letting individuals believe that they are engaged in the research study.

Importantly, participants ought to be requested to check any interviews transcripts (Mertens & Ginsberg, 2009). In addition, if uncertain concerning the subject of any point, the researcher ought to then clarify with the originator of the information that they are not misrepresented (McNiff et al., 2003). Furthermore, reports of progress ought to be completed in order to ensure that the participants are continuously kept informed (Eckstein, 2003).

Moreover, there are three significant elements to be addressed in the process of informed consent which are, firstly, 'information about the research study' (e.g. complete disclosure of the research nature and the participation subjects), as the information of an effective informed consent should contain details of the Purpose, i.e. why the research is carried out, and the expected duration for which the researcher will require the subject (Vernekar, 2010). However, it is believed that, at times, a large amount of information is not as beneficial as a little amount, and consideration of utilising pictures or videos should be considered in addition to contact information, which also ought to be provided. Secondly, 'comprehension' (i.e. the potential participants' full understanding of the information offered, although it is the investigator's responsibility to ensure comprehension, and that participants should ask when not understanding) (Roy, 2007). Furthermore, 'voluntariness' (i.e. the process has to be free from any undue influence or form of coercion) (National Commission for the Protection of Human Subjects of Biomedical and Behavioural Research, 1978). Moreover, there is some degree of basis for informed consent, which states that participants must be old enough to recognise the decisions they make, and that research participants are, at any time, permitted to withdraw from any research study (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2003).

Whilst informed consent initially emerges as being a comparatively simple issue involving the provision of the most appropriate information with the aim of allowing people to make informed decisions regarding research project participation, following closer examination of the issues engaged, the process is ultimately far from simple (Alderson & Goodey, 1998). It has been argued that the realistic notion of true informed consent requires participants of the research study to be provided with complete clarification of the study, to the extent that they are then deemed capable of reaching an obvious considerate of what participation actually comprises in reality and not only theory. Moreover, a number of practical grounds concerning why this may be the case are considered, such as providing details of complexities of full research explanations in a way that a participant can recognise, and the impracticality of knowing the entire participating consequences previous to the initiation of the research study (Carmi, 2003). However, it is argued that, as a consequence of the tension between the right of the participant to decline and the researcher's own motivation to attain a high reply rate, researchers utilise diverse approaches at their disposal including providing less detailed information as a means of promoting participation (Homan, 1992).

There are different important issues raised from informed consent, which should be usefully considered by researchers when reflecting on the processes of their own information and consent (Punch, 1998). Social researchers obviously have to strike a balance between several factors in terms of managing informed consent issues. Moreover, they clearly have to fulfil any legal frameworks and regulations; however, such researchers have to find a balance for a variety of occasionally competing interests, such as research aspirations, considering the best participants' interests in the research, and the formal or informal interests of gate-keepers; furthermore, operationalising and being reflexive concerning 'information', 'consent' and 'competence' issues is considered absolutely fundamental. The discussion of the ways in which these issues could, and have been, managed is briefly detailed below.

Researchers are required to negotiate a delicate balance in terms of information provision. They obviously necessitate providing adequate information in order to allow participants to make informed decisions in relation to participation. In fact, several would argue that providing information should comprise the inclusion of the views of the researcher him or herself, and the research funding (Scraton, 2004). On the other hand, researchers should also try to actively avoid giving information in such a way that may suspend people's participation (Harris and Dyson, 2001).

Decisions regarding information provision styles and means ultimately play a role in influencing people regarding participation agreement. There are some psychology researches which exemplify the ways in which diverse information provision methods affect the understandings of people (Kent, 1996) which, in sequence, might ultimately influence their willingness to participate (Pokorny, Jason, Schoeny, Townsend, & Curie, 2001). Providing information in general includes written information in combination with oral information (Truman, 2003). The significance of ensuring participants are not overwhelmed with information, and striving to make information pages pleasant and easy to read, are considerations which have all been recognised (Alderson, 2004). The significant message arising from the previous points is that it is vital that researchers appreciate the needs of information of the group which they intend to investigate, and that they make use of this knowledge so as to provide information in a means which ultimately facilitates possible research participants to know what is involved in terms of participation.

However, whatever the level of 'capacity' of the participants, various researchers nevertheless note that, it is the researcher's own responsibility to identify the methods which facilitate people of different ages and capabilities to consent to research participation by providing information which is considered suitable for each individual, and subsequently checking that the information is understood. For a number of researchers, this process involves increasing possible participant partnerships in order to ensure that their vision is appreciated (Alderson, 2004). With the aim of accomplishing this goal, a number of researchers have intimately worked alongside peer researchers, such as children or services users, in order to assist and ensure they are giving information in suitable ways (Tarleton, Williams, Palmer & Gramlich, 2004). This raises the issue that several researchers present financial or material rewards to the participants who are included in their research (Wright, Waters & Nicholls, 2004) and, where this happens, such information is, in general, integrated in the provided information to participants of the study (Tarleton, Williams, Palmer & Gramlich, 2004). However, these may be regarded as inducements or incentives, which includes a coercion form which is known to have an effect on the nature of the voluntary of the study participation (Homan, 1991).

There is a little agreement on the subject of the suitability of payments and other rewards offered to study participants, as a number of researchers ultimately sight such practice as fundamental, whereby participants ought to be paid for their effort and time, whilst others deem that this may encourage possibly vulnerable people to take part for the wrong reasons. The situation is mainly difficult when participants derived from poor groups (Smyth, 2004). One way a number of researchers manage this is through not informing participants that they will be paid, and to accordingly offer payment after participation in the study as a 'thank you'; however, the complexity with this is not probable to ensure this remains as a surprise for a long time, as such results are voices quickly amongst other people, particularly in specific societies (Ensign, 2003). Moreover, incentives aren't essentially restricted to money or gifts, as several researchers might offer other incentives for time and effort, such as food (Smyth, 2004). Moreover, some may argue that, focus group researches usually offering lunch or refreshments on attendance, are utilising a form of inducement (Truman, 2003).

Moreover, information may be either deliberately or not deliberately given to all research participants (Mulhall, 2003). It has been argued by a number of researchers that it is not constantly suitable to provide information and request consent from participants, since people recognise that someone is observing them and their behaviours will consequently alter (Miller & Wertheimer, 2010). Therefore, there have been substantial discussions in the literature of social science regarding covert research ethics; for example, a study which is performed amongst participants where some, or all, are not conscious that they are participating in a study (Coomber, 2002). However, although proponents argue that covert study is not essentially harmful to participants (Homan, 1991) generally, rising levels of research study governance severely limit the ability of researchers to perform covert research or to otherwise provide oral information devoid of signed consent. This ultimately causes apprehension for a lot of researchers (Scraton, 2004).

An additional difficulty for researchers is the apprehension of when to provide information and when to ask for consent. One of the difficulties with regards to information provision is that, in the case of qualitative research, the research study focus and its corresponding results maybe even the precise data collection phases that are frequently not identified at the beginning of the study (McNamee & Bridges, 2002). Consequently, at the outset of a research study, general focus and questions of research will have been generally designed; however, the figure of participants of the study, the figure of interviews to be achieved with every individual, and the exact research direction will ultimately be frequently reliant on the collected data and the rising analysis. This is mainly the case for ethnographic research (Lawton, 2001). Therefore, providing information and obtaining people consent in order to participate at the start of a research study is regarded as unsuitable, mainly for the reason that people are, at this stage, unaware of to what they are consenting (Grinyer, 2002). Furthermore, it is argued that researchers ought to provide information and ask for consent each time they gather data from participants so as to make sure that they are conscious that data is being collected, and that they are still willing to continue with the research study's participation (Wellington, 2005). However, the process whereby this could be attained might be difficult, and it is noted that participants might be irritated with being constantly requested if they would like to continue with the participation (Lawton, 2001).

With the aforementioned in consideration, it is therefore deemed significant that researchers strike the necessary balance to provide sufficient information by suitable means; however, they should also simultaneously ensure that provided information does not prevent people from participating.

Research Involving Children

There are some risks to participants which might be included in research; for example, research might generate possible discomfort or stress or psychological harm. Moreover, such research project risks might arise at any stage, such as with regards to the research nature itself, the context, procedures, data collection methods, participants' nature, type of data collected, etc. (Cohen et al., 2000: 49). Furthermore, there is more than minimal risk to participants when research projects are carried out involving vulnerable groups, such as children, young people, and those with learning difficulties or cognitive impairments, etc.. However, risks can potentially be reduced by protecting the participants' rights, i.e. 'privacy maintained, anonymity and confidentiality guaranteed, and harm and deception avoided' (Cohen et al., 2000).

The limitations of research including children occur as a result of protecting children from research which might be considered harmful. Essentially, it is important to mention that, there has been growing acknowledgment regarding the significance of listening to and considering the views and experiences of children in research, policy and practice, and decision-making, all of which have an influence in their lives (Hallett & Prout, 2003). Consequently, additional and keener attention has been given to the ethical issues inherent in children's involvement in research processes (Alderson & Morrow, 2004). More recently, however, children's participation and the inclusion of their views in social matters and public policy in the United Kingdom have noticeably increased (Stafford, Laybourn, Hill & Walker, 2003). In fact, with regards to the rights of children, there is concern surrounding the consideration of ethics of the involvement of children in hearing their views and as researchers (Lindsay, 2000).

Some researchers (e.g. Carroll-Lind, Chapman, Gregory & Maxwell, 2006) report the significance of ethical issues regarding the rights of children in research participation, in order to express and report their views and experiences. Furthermore, as highlighted by Knight et al. (2005), when a research is being conducted, concerns regarding the abuse and neglect of a child might be one of the most social science difficulties. Moreover, the Belmont Report (1978) emphasises three basic ethical principles concerning the use of human participants, including children: first, Respect for Persons (e.g. acknowledging individuals' autonomy); second, Beneficence (maximising probable benefits as well as minimising probable harms); and third, Justice (children, not merely adults, should benefit from research). Children are considered as a vulnerable population and, as a result of this, the correct age of consent has not yet been widely determined. This issue will be discussed in more details later.

The consideration of ethics appears to be given even more significance when attempting a research study with children. This partially occurs for the reason that children have little understanding of protocols of the research and the participation risk which might be involved. However, in spite of this fact, there are many benefits of research including children, such as valuable and desirable results, although some of which involve the possibility of harm, varying from minimal to major. In this way, an excess of literature concentrates on conducting ethical research with children. In particular, exceptional consideration can be seen to be assigned to different significant, issues such as Protection (Barnen, 2004), Informed Consent (Milne, Munford & Saunders, 2001), Privacy (Mauthner, 1997), Confidentiality (Punch, 2002), Addressing Power Imbalances (Davis, 1998), and Importance of Reflexivity (Mason and Urquhart, 2001). However, this paper will focus in much detail on the issues of 'informed consent' and 'confidentiality', which are viewed by the researcher as being two of the most important issues to be raised when including children in research (Gunther & Diekma, 2006).

The Necessity of Parental Consent

Parental consent is a debatable issue, and it has obtained prominence in consequence of the wide alterations occurring in research study governance in the UK, as well as the gradually more regulated frameworks in which social and educational researchers work (Tinker & Coomber, 2004). This is one of the controversial issues, particularly the likelihood that the absence of parental consent might prevent the views of children from being heard in research (Carroll-Lind, Chapman, Gregory & Maxwell, 2006); essentially, parents and/or legal guardians might use their right to decline consent for researches which they may potentially perceive as not being in children's 'best interests'; however, they might also do this in order to protect the family's privacy and to otherwise prevent children from enlightening troubles inside the family effectively, to edit or control the children's expression of views (Masson, 2000). For this reason, the literature demonstrates that, parental consent process ought to be negotiated in such a way that respects the competence of a child and empowers him or her to make choices for him or herself (Thomas and O'Kane, 1998).

The researcher's particular concern is on the consequence of such control bias on the existing sample representativeness, and the research results' validity. As a way to tackle this, utilising the procedures of 'passive consent' has been suggested. This is done more willingly than going after the conventional condition of committees of research ethics, which give parents 'active' informed consent for participating of their children (Wagener et al., 2004). 'Passive consent' permits children to become involved whilst their parents do not reject consent. The aim in this scenario is to make sure that parents be acquainted with and have an understanding of the process (Hughes & Gutkin, 1995). Moreover, there is no evidence to support the notion that, by utilising this procedure, children are harmed. In actual fact, several children have been positively reported to have the chance to converse regarding different issues (Mason & Falloon, 2001). However, there are few studies concentrating on the influence of children being understanding of the rules of ethics governing the research conduct (Fisher, 1993).

On the subject of research involving children, the law is complex and is connected with the idea of competence (Alderson & Morrow, 2004). for instance, in England, Wales and Northern Ireland, children under 16 years of age are not automatically assumed to be officially capable of providing consent; however, if a child could be judged to comprehend and fully realise what research participation involves, then the consent of parents is not essential (Ensign, 2003). This derives from the supposition that a child with adequate understanding could provide consent and that, in such circumstances, parents do not have the right to overrule the wishes of their child (Wiles, Heath, Crow & Charles, 2005). However, assessing the competence of children is not simple; understandings and attitudes toward competence differ amongst researchers, and competence assessments are obviously reliant on the difficulty and risks inherent in the being conducted research (McCarthy, 1999). However, who is to judge children's capability? Obviously, with consideration to researchers, there is a conflict of interest, whether they are determining the competence of children when they, too, desire to include them in their study (Cashmore, 1997).

It has been presumed by Alderson (1996) that school-aged children are competent, which then enforces the responsibility to prove incompetence onto those parents who disagree. In the United States, Federal regulations, reviews and principles of ethics leading research with children point to a more careful legal competence interpretation and more stringent necessities for the consent of parents or third-party. For instance, parents or legal guardians are obliged to consent in support of children and adolescents under 18 years of age for the reason that 'informed consent can only be given by a decision maker who is both morally autonomous and legally competent' (King & Churchill, 2000, p. 719). However, it is argued that, a researcher ought to not be resent at legal proceedings risk brought by children's parents via engaging a child under 16 years of age in social research without seeking the permission of parents, despite the fact that a researcher could possibly be at risk of harming claims made by children (Fraser, 2004).

Moreover, it is noteworthy to mention that parents are not merely the 'gate-keepers' (Homan, 2001). The issue of the gate-keepers is significant for the reason that the participation of children in any research study is dependent upon their adult gate-keepers (Harden et al., 2000): unless the participants of the research are the researchers' own child, then somebody is to perform as a gate-keeper; most of the time, the direct gate-keeper are the parents or carers of the child. Someone else might consecutively perform as an indirect gate-keeper to parents and carers for instance, in the context of schools, this might be the head teacher, governors of a school, or Local Educational Authority; however, depending on the research concentrate, it might, in addition or as an alternative, be legal and/or social service agencies (Mauthner, Birch, Jesssop, & Miller, 2002). Moreover, there are ethical committees and protocols designed in order to guard children from undue interference by probable researchers (British Educational Research Association, 2004).

Furthermore, the consent for children between 7 and 18 years should be Written Verbal, and depends on the child's ability in terms of Maturity, Psychological, Social and Cognitive however, it is significant to bear in mind that a child can dissent at any time, even if he or she has previously provided assent (Broome, 1999). The reasons for supporting the exception of children's assent or consent is concerned with the child's limited capacity in terms of providing it; therefore, in order for research to benefit the child's well-being and provisions, parental informed consent should be provided and deemed adequate (Diekema, 2006). In order to overcome risks arising from parental consent, the Belmont Report (1978) states that participants, or their legal representatives, should be given the opportunity to choose whether or not to participate. Moreover, as children (i.e. persons under 18 years of age) are not legally deemed capable of providing informed consent, their parents or guardian are therefore required to make the choice and decide whether or not the child participates. Similarly, participation consent should be voluntarily given and should be free from coercion and undue influence (Kopelman, 2006). Additionally, the process of content gradually comprises of sharing findings with participants; however, when sharing the findings, it is significant to consider both benefits and risks, both of which can be varied according to the child's age.

Confidentiality

The privacy and confidentiality of the responses of children to questions of research could be coped via administering questionnaires through test-like conditions in a classroom location (but telling the pupils that there are no right or wrong answers). Parents, or others exterior to the research study, should not know what is being said by children except if they choose to tell them. Some researchers state that, the promise of being capable of stating their views in confidence is appreciated by children with no attendance of parents or others. Moreover, anonymity ensures confidentiality (Amaya-Jackson et al., 2000). However, it is emphasised that providing the opportunity to self-identify by writing down their names if they request help, and so the researchers would be able to notify the teacher and/or the principal (with the knowledge of the child), which is vital (King & Churchill, 2000). Conversely, this raises the issue about the degree of understanding of children of confidentiality, particularly the meaning relative to the research, and that there are confidentiality limitations (Williamson, Goodenough, Kent & Ashcroft 2005).

The confidentiality issue in the context of ethical duty to report the pertinent authorities any revealed risk or harm to children for the duration of their involvement in the study, is an on-going debatable issue and emerges to be substantial deviation of opinion and practice, even in the case of similar major projects (Amaya-Jackson et al., 2000). On the one hand, a number of researchers hold the view that a child is owed, and has equal right as adults to, confidentiality and autonomy, and that the children's discussions and interaction tenor is changed via any confidentiality caveats (Knight et al., 2005). Some other researchers, as a way of helping children and following-up with them who want to disclose harm or any other problems in the research project course by putting procedures in place, prefer empowering children in order to make decisions and take actions in the information light concerning the probable outcomes of reporting to the pertinent authorities (Carroll-Lind, Chapman, Gregory & Maxwell, 2006). This alternative is preferential by most of adolescents aged 12-17. Furthermore, telling a concerned adult is favoured as well, although a lack of taking action is not (Fisher et al, 1996).

Therefore, it has been presumed that confidentiality could, by no means, be entirely guaranteed to children. It is stated that 'confidentiality is an important value, but it does not over-ride the duty to protect the welfare of respondents' (Laws & Mann, 2004). Consequently, the 'limited confidentiality' notion has been frequently utilised when working with children. In spite of this, best guidelines practice, it necessitate to the previous research interaction beginning, that children ought to be completely conscious of how information is going to be collected, documented and reported, as well as what kind of information may, and may not, be reserved as confidential (Save the Children Fund, 2001).

Recommendation

Moreover, when considering ethical issues in the educational field, there is the need to clarify that education is a study field which draws upon a varied variety of disciplines (e.g., psychology and sociology, etc.), and consequently provides opportunities for researchers to decide amongst several disciplines in terms of designing, performing, and presenting their works (Shulman, 1988). Researchers in education draw upon a number of disciplines perspectives, each one with its own associated set of concepts, methods and procedures (Bruner, 1996).

It is further highlighted that, there are three areas of ethics which every researcher ought to consider, including participants' protection, research data confidentiality, and the avoidance of research subjects' deception (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2008). However, in the case of educational research, the main principles of ethics are anonymity, informed consent, openness, confidentiality and no harm. Other issues of ethics comprise the voluntary participation of individuals, integrity, intellectual freedom and the fairness of the researcher in relation to any judgment associated with collecting, analysing, presenting and discussing the questionnaire results, etc. (Blaxter, Tight & Hughes, 2006). Consequently, emphasis should be placed on the fact that researchers should be mindful of ethical issues, both professionally (Winch, 2002) and personally (Wolcott, 1995).

Conclusion

This paper has firstly discussed the topic of ethical Issues in Education, and has accordingly highlighted the fact that ethics are not something to deem at the commencement of a research project or fieldwork, but rather throughout the entire research process. Furthermore, two of the most important ethical issues have been given consideration. The first element is informed consent, which is concerned with the question of being part of the research process, whereby the result is an informed option concerning the voluntary contribution in a research; in addition, some of the different issues raised from it alongside the suggested the ways of addressing them have been discussed. The second element is the involvement of children in research. Moreover, the significance of the ethical issues regarding the right of children in research participation in order to express and report their views and experiences with more detail regarding parental consent and confidentiality has been stated.

Acknowledgements

This article was funded by the Deanship of Scientific Research (DSR), King Abdulaziz University, Jeddah. The author therefore, acknowledge, with thanks, the DSR for the technical and financial support.

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