Chapter IV
Ethics in the Ambit of Distance Education

J. S. Dorothy
Indira Gandhi National Open University, India

Ugur Demiray
Anadolu University, Turkey

Ramesh C. Sharma
Indira Gandhi National Open University, India

Ashwini Kumar
Indira Gandhi National Open University, India

ABSTRACT

In an era when the distance teaching institution, irrespective of their type, namely single mode, dual mode, mixed mode and consortium, is involved in distance education, for the benefit of the aspirants targeted for each programme of study, which are on offer, this chapter discusses the ethics in the ambit of distance education. After citing reasons for adopting ethics in distance education, the chapter discusses about eight spheres of concern for ethics in distance education, namely Student Support Services (Administration, Admission, Eligibility Criteria/Calibre, Academic counselling and Medium of Instruction); Collaboration (Learner Support Centre, How, why they are selected); Credibility (Employability vs. Continuing Education); Duplication of Efforts (Material Production, Launch of Programmes, Course Writing); Provision of intersystem transfer (Lack for interface to aim transfer); Expertise (Academic activity and Administrative activity); and Resources and Research (Who does, How it is done). Genuineness, originality, copyright/patent, Memorandum of understanding kept, and causative agent made predominant are the advantages of facilitating ethics in distance education. The disadvantages of facilitating ethics in distance education are the rules viewed as hindrances, human elements given a preference over the

credibility, and lack of buffer time. Distance education laid in the foundation of ethics, as viewed from the optimistic person, is that it will become more accommodative without diluting the standards. Irrespective of any comments from the critics, for any distance educator, ethics should be the signpost beyond which things should not go wrong at any cost. Ethics coupled with the scientific method of doing things will spin off the effectiveness of quality maintenance.

INTRODUCTION

The education systems globally improved during the mid-1990s, when the services were introduced and adopted information, communication and educational technologies in order to develop teaching and learning processes with an aim of providing world-class or an excellent "on-click" education on demand to the learners. With the growth of the technologies, online delivery of programmes became more popular worldwide. Format of online delivery of programmes through this was quite effective for learners placed geographically at distant places.

Distance education has become one of the most effective, economical, and productive ways of delivering instruction by the corporations, institutions, colleges and universities, when properly and timely used. Historically, distance education has continuously evolved as technology has improved. From the early 1800s to present day, educators have utilized this method of instruction to reach those unable to interact face to face due to various circumstances.

In other words, distance education and its related educational components are a media of teaching and learning that have grown significantly in the past decade. This is indicated by the amount of higher education institutions that offer courses or full degree programs via distance learning methods. According to the National Center for Education Statistics-NCES (1999), the number of degree-granting higher education institutions offering distance education courses increased from 33% in 1995 to 44% in 1997-1998. More specifically, the use of computer-based

technologies has increased from 22% in 1995 to 60% in 1997-1998 and more than 80% in 2000s. The growing dimension and ratio and the rate of increase in the delivery of distance education should be carefully examined under contemporary circumstances.

The Open and Distance Learning System (ODLS) has emerged as an alternative to the number of aspirants of education, specifically higher education that overloads the delivery system of education in the South Asian part as a conventional system. Different distance education theorists like Börje Holmberg, Charles A. Wedemeyer and Michael G. Moore have essentially identified the centrality of the learner in ODL. Otto Peters and Desmond Keegan have been concerned with organizational aspects. The emergence of ODL has thus affected the use of technology to reach mass audience, typology of distance teaching systems, emergence of post-industrial education, learner autonomy and organizational structures. The numbers in ODL have also increased many folds over a short span of 2 decades. The emergence and developments in ODL methodologies have brought certain theoretical and pragmatic approaches to the field. The numbers in ODL have also indicated many faults in applications over a short span of 2 decades. The emergence and developments in ODL methodologies have brought certain theoretical and pragmatic approaches to the field.

Distance education has been a fair option of not only the aspirants of education but also education managers/administrators in the government/private and nongovernment sector. The main reason for this is that education is being considered as

an investment and the consumption involved for education by means of the money spent, the time utilised for studying and the efforts involved in channelising the resources are viewed in the angle of the spin off benefits reaped after the successful completion of the programme of study. The distance teaching institution, irrespective of their type, namely single mode, dual mode, mixed mode and consortium, is involved in distance education, for the benefit of the aspirants targeted for each programme of study, which are on offer.

The concept of virtual learning includes the perspective of study in a virtual medium. The virtual learning environment is seen as an environment for the teacher and learner's activities within which learning is seen as an active process in multi-informational, cooperational network environment. The concept of virtual is associated with telematics networks, as well as with flexibility in study situations, learner mobility and possible independence from time and place as it can be exemplified through the glass of modern information and communication technologies. Virtual study is often associated with open and distance learning, but especially with flexible study and learning.

The beauty of virtual learning environment technology is that it can repeat the simulation as often as the learner wants. While it is impossible for interactive videoconferencing to repeat the teaching conferences, virtual learning environment technology can do this in a WBDL environment. Winn's recent study showed that "artificial environments can help students to reify abstractions, can scaffold students to solve complex problems, and can immerse students into dynamic phenomena. When artificial environments apply to WBDL, the empowerment effect in learning can be explosive" (Winn, 2002).

As with any other new phenomenon, this online communication for education has brought up new emotional, physical and psychological issues to the agenda of education science. The teaching and learning through this new medium exposed the learning community to such experiences where the teacher and students normally do not see each other face to face. The electronic communication occurs through synchronous and asynchronous means like e-mail, discussion forums, list-serves, electronic chat, bulletin board systems, WebCT, and other Web-based communication. Thus, the virtual classroom faces issues like humanizing, role conflict, or other problems about norms, ethics, privacy and socio-psychological deficits.

By the use of speedily growing and expanding ODL the ethical issues become significant, as it is usually read in magazines and newspapers about misuse or abuse of e-mail. Electronic voyeurism is also common in online communication. Obtaining unauthorized access to someone's electronic mails, Web page, e-book, electronic materials breaking passwords, or presenting oneself with a fake identity over electronic chat is treated as unfair conduct.

WHAT IS ETHICS?

Aristotle, Socrates and Plato take the virtues to be central to a well-lived life. According to Wikepedia, ethics (via Latin *ethica* from the Ancient Greek meaning "moral philosophy," from the adjective of *ēthos* meaning "custom, habit"), a major branch of philosophy, is the study of values and customs of a person or group. It covers the analysis and employment of concepts such as right and wrong, good and evil, and responsibility. It is divided into three primary areas: *meta-ethics* (the study of the concept of ethics), *normative ethics* (the study of how to determine ethical values), and *applied ethics* (the study of the use of ethical values). According to Gearhart (2001) there are four norms to follow in one's day-to-day ethical practices for both instructors and learners in the distance education and are part of the "golden rule" for both classroom and distance course behaviors. They are honesty, keeping your word, respect for others and fairness. In short, the eth-

ics reflect the moral character of an individual rather than the academic or physical character of an individual. Ethics talk about what people do when not noticed or unwatched and it speaks about the heart of an individual.

WHY ETHICS IN DISTANCE EDUCATION?

Distance education, aimed at inculcating education to various types of individuals aimed at various educational goals with the view of the mass approach, targeting each and every aspirants by diversification of the methods of approach used without differing in the efforts of maintaining optimum quality in the output, necessitates adoption of values for the following reasons.

1. The values governing the philosophy of distance education are at risk in proportion to the rising numbers opting to study in the distance education mode.
2. Distance education is a field where rapid growth is experienced and scope for development is enormous.
3. Distance education is a service sector with the clients being the human being whose potential is either shaped/channelised/improved during the period of association for study with a distance teaching institution.
4. Distance education necessitates collaboration, networking, partnership and linkages for its implementation and the temptation to commercialise the activities involved is very high.
5. Distance education, even though it adopts cost effective methods for production of the self-instructional materials, many times the clientele met are either very low or nil, questioning the viability of the programme and running the programme to meet the needs of a meagre percentage of the learners. The cost of launch and implementation

increases the economic liabilities at the cost of the economic assets, which may or may not be experienced by the learners.
6. Distance education mainly provides avenues either to improve the current educational status or equip with an educational status, and mostly does not create avenue for career placement.

The ethical issues become significant as it is usually read in magazines and newspapers about misuse or abuse of e-mail. However, ethics is a debatable and controversial area. The university administrators, teachers and students are often faced with such issues where the commercial use of institutional resources, illegal use of facilities and invasion of privacy are reported. Sexual issues are perhaps the most common breaches of this medium. The recent reported news about Multimedia Messaging (MM) scandals in some institutions, where some people uploaded a multimedia clip over a commercial site for sale, can be counted as an example. Hacking is one of the most controversial areas. Some people realize it for remedial solutions while some others do it for destruction or for mental satisfaction.

Plagiarism is one of the most common misuses of the facilities among students. Copying assignments from other people's work or taking material from the Web is found as the easy way out for the students. Privacy of the messages is very difficult in online communications. Although encryption technologies have been developed, such as defense forces or commercial houses, educational institutions are using them insufficiently. Honesty, which is one of those rare attributes of the human characteristic perhaps, remains again a rare phenomenon in online environments.

This honesty may take the form of providing trust to the learner by the teacher, or can be exemplified as honest feedback to the researcher by the respondents for the right conclusions of research questions. One of the most significant features of the open or online distance education compared to traditional education is opening the doors of global education to the student at his desktop. What is critical to the success of this mode of education is to have ethics in place; it is

a different field based on mutual trust and respect. The ethical codes that are mainly brought up by the traditional education to the distance education form a very significant base for the future of online education. The authors of this chapter will discuss how the issues of ethics affect the teaching and learning over online distance modes. Suggestions are also given on how values can be rendered and why there remain strong and urgent demands for a code of ethics that are constructed by various online universities.

SPHERES OF CONCERN FOR ETHICS IN DISTANCE EDUCATION

Under this title, we will emphasise from the point of student support services (SSS), collaboration, credibility, duplication of efforts, provision of intersystem transfer, expertise, resources and research subtitles.

Student Support Services (SSS)

The aspects of administration, admission, eligibility criteria/calibre, and academic counselling fall within the gamut of student support services.

Administration: Distance learners often learn amid the other family, personal, social and employment commitments and the distance teaching institution is expected to serve them with the motto "Learner first." Many times, this motto is exploited by the learners by way of expecting the distance teaching institution to accept the application form very late (even after the session commences), to render personalised services, to use the personal belongings of the distance teaching institution officials like phone/mobile number for resolving official problems. The expectations of the learner may seem genuine but the line to be drawn rests again with the officials of the distance teaching institution. This leads to an unanswerable question of how the work-life balance of the distance teaching institution officials has to be maintained

and still projects the view of whether the distance teaching institution is a friend or foe.

Admission: An aspirant for a particular programme of study decides to enrol for that programme either because of his/her interest or due to the probable gain envisaged after the completion of the progamme. The distance teaching institution adopts either a closed admission norm or an open admission norm, which basically depends on its policy. In addition, the phase of admission, as evident from the various cycles of admission, also determines the time for which the admission is called for a particular programme. In other words, it can be said that there may be a lag time for the aspirants who have missed the previous cycle of admission and a hibernating period for the enrolees who have enrolled late into a programme. The state of both these cases calls for attention of what and how the distance teaching institution officials will engage these two categories of the learners. Many times, they were left to be managed by themselves.

Eligibility Criteria/Calibre: Most of the entry criteria are closed in the sense that they are based on certification obtained and not on the calibre of the person seeking the admission. This contradicts the philosophy of distance education, which talks about openness and flexibility. However, on the other hand, if everyone is made eligible to pursue a programme of study either based on the fulfilment of the certification required or through their ability to prove their potential to pursue a programme of study, this may pose a threat, the dilution of the academic standards. Thus, a dilemma exists among the distance teaching practitioners of how much a programme can be made open and how much a programme can accommodate the clientele who aspire to pursue a programme of study on offer.

Academic Counselling: Tutors to handle academic counselling are generally drawn from the academic fraternity of the host institution. Nepotism is common while choosing the tutors. This is mainly because the coordinator who heads

the Learner Support Centre agrees mainly with "Team move" rather than individual academic/ professional excellence. In addition, due to the prevailing unemployment many individuals who qualify to be an academic gets underemployed- thereby creating "academic drain" and thus, they are noneligible to serve as tutors. Professional ego exists due to preference clashes and is also prevalent in the academic counselling for a distance teaching institution. For example, faculty of an engineering degree college feel it below their dignity to handle classes for a certificate programme in engineering. One of the objectives of academic counselling is to optimise learner interaction. However, there are programmes which invite fewer learners and in such a case, either the learners of various learner support centres are clubbed under one or the learners are requested to move to the nearest learner support centres of their choice. The learners of less enrolment programmes invite a new problem of ethics in distance teaching as they are exposed to the threat of isolation from other peers (who are scanty) and from the institution, besides being a potential to drop out of the programme of study.

Medium of Instruction: Even though English for distance education purposes is the main stand taken by most of the distance teaching institution, the question of usage of the regional language and dialect for effective reach of the target group remains unanswered. At times, translation of materials in the regional language and dialect needs more staff for moderation, implementation and evaluation purposes. Distance teaching institution officials need to think globally so that the theme is not left out and act locally so that the relevance of the programme on offer besides the specific target group is never missed.

Collaboration

The way by which the activities of the distance teaching institution are implemented is by means of collaboration with other educational institu-

tions. The main issue which is criticised is the Learner Support Centre.

Learner Support Centre: Many at times collaboration for Learner Support Centre are initiated by the distance teaching institution and facilitated by person specific designations. Continuity of the collaboration for Learner Support Centre suffers when there is change in the persons irrespective of the designation being perennial. Even though the memorandum of understanding between the collaborators depicts a win-win situation, most often the horse-rider approach is being adopted where the distance teaching institution is expected to serve as a horse.

How, why they are selected: Even though specific norms and guidelines exist to select a collaborator to establish a Learner Support Centre, scope or gaps exist for the element of discretion to be exerted. The person who signs the memorandum of understanding on behalf of the distance teaching institution can use the discretion to collaborate with an institution which whom liaison exist on a personal basis rather that with that which fulfils the eligibility criteria.

Credibility

The worth of the system as viewed by the academic standard of the course materials, and the degree of the student support provided culminate in the credibility of the system. The main issue viewed here is that of employability of the learners after the successful completion of the programme.

Employability vs. Continuing Education: As the case of any educational institution, the distance teaching institution paves ways for the certification of an educational qualification as it serves as a tool for continuing and lifelong education. However, it would not be apt to say that all candidates who have qualified through the distance teaching mode are employable. Employability depends on various factors. The employability of the distant learners is viewed by sceptics as the noncredibility of the distance

teaching institution, which sometimes is a never ending debate.

Duplication of Efforts

Efforts replicated to do the same task either in the same institution or in two or more similar types of institutions lead to duplication of efforts, which can be manifested generally in production of materials, launch of programmes and in course writing.

Material Production: The course materials, which are generally self-instructional materials, have to be provided by the distance teaching institution to the learners who have enrolled for the programme of study. Generally, the self-instructional materials are institution-specific and are identifiable with the institution by the cover design and layout of the content in the booklet. In spite of the availability of the same type of programmes in various distance teaching institutions, each distance teaching institution prefers to produce its own materials as it represents one of its identifications and thus leads to duplication of efforts and multiplicity of the availability of resources.

Launch of Programmes: The same types of programmes are on offer by two different distance teaching institutions. In addition, the same content of the syllabi exist in two different programmes offered by the same distance teaching institution.

Course Writing: Generally, the course team approach is used to write course materials. The members of the course writing team are generally drawn through acquaintance and accessibility. However, the probability of the availability of better qualified course writers in a remote place is equally high and this aspect is often ignored.

Provision of Intersystem Transfer

The two main systems of education are the conventional educational system and the distance education system. Both systems supplement and complement each other. However, in reality, the distance education system is considered as the system for the underprivileged and those who missed their first opportunity for education. In spite of the syllabi being the same, both the systems remain as two parallel lines that never meet. The issue that inhibits the existence of the provision of intersystem transfer is mainly the lack for interface to aim transfer.

Lack for interface to aim transfer: A bridge is necessary to cross the banks on either side of a river, so also an interface is essential to ensure movement of learners from one system of education to the other. In addition, acknowledging of one's strengths and potential for excellence are necessary to arrive at mutual consensus about the possibility of the shift from one system of education to the other.

Expertise

Distance teaching institutions need expertise for academic and administrative purposes. Both these activities can be viewed as the two eyes of the individual. Generally, the personnel for these services are drawn from the conventional educational system.

Academic activity: Activities associated with academic purpose are academic counselling, evaluation of components for continuous evaluation like assignments, practical sessions, project work and term-end evaluation like evaluating answer scripts. Even though all the personnel engaged in academic activity in the conventional educational system are eligible for the academic activity in the distance teaching institution, not all are selected, as only the snowball technique is followed to generate the resource pool for all academic activities. In addition, internal academic drain, as evident by academics taking up a job other than that related to an academic activity and the preference of the personnel to be nonassociated with a distance teaching institution, still remains

a problem to be solved to ensure quality of the academic staff for distance education purposes.

Administrative activity: For effective quality maintenance, administration of the activities related to pre-enrolment of a learner, learning process, placement-post certification guidance for successfully completed learners and fee payment/help desk for dropout learners are mandatory.

However, in practice, the learner at the entry stage is given a red carpet welcome, but the same cannot be said to be rendered to those who drop out of the programme.

In addition, the quantity factor as reflected by high enrolment also hinders the distance teaching institution to provide quality services to the learners on rolls and to provide placement-post certification guidance for successfully completed learners.

Resources

Resources can be either physical/financial or human resources. Ethics in distance education demand optimum utilisation of the resources. The areas which highlight the existing lacunae are the following:

1. There exists a lack of facilities to share the resources (physical/financial or human);
2. There exists a lack of facilities to lend the resources (physical/financial or human);
3. There exists a lack of system identity and preference for individual institution identity; and
4. Allocation of financial resources by the same funding agency for the same cause to two different distance teaching institutions.

Research

Research activities are important assessment indicators for the growth and development of the institution. The two significant signposts are: who does the research activities, and how is it done?

Who does: Mostly, research on distance teaching institutions are undertaken by those who are interested in the subject rather than by those who are practicing the same.

How it is done: The means by which the research activities are carried out are because of the objective of the funding agencies rather than to arrive at the need-based field research. In addition, research is done on themes which reflect quality rather than which ensures direction points for further course of action. Concurrent results are important in any type of research to prove the validity of the findings. Most often, the fluctuations in obtaining concurrent results are attributed to cultural and regional differences.

ADVANTAGES OF FACILITATING ETHICS IN DISTANCE EDUCATION

Facilitating ethics in distance education pave a way for the following advantages.

1. **Genuineness:** Integrity of the content and mode of operation in distance education pave way for the flow of genuineness in the conduct of the activities of distance education.
2. **Originality:** Ethics encourage original behaviour amid the various players in the distance education and prevent clash of efforts and duplication of efforts for a common task.
3. **Copyright/Patent:** Ethics in distance education prevents academic theft and usage of materials without copyright/patent.
4. **Memorandum of Understanding Kept:** Distance education thrives mainly due to collaboration, networking, partnership and linkages for its implementation. Ethics enables the memorandum of understanding signed to be kept with sanctity by both the parties.

5. **Causative agent made predominant:** Ethics in distance education enables to keep the causative agent alive irrespective of the hurdles faced to meet the set objective. Many times, the causative agent is targeted at the social upliftment and ethics make the social cause prominent among the prevalent practices.

LIMITATIONS OF FACILITATING ETHICS IN DISTANCE EDUCATION

Facilitating ethics in distance education pave a way for the following limitations.

1. **Rules viewed as hindrances:** Because ethics is viewed as what is the best that won't elicit any contradiction/confrontation, many times the rules which are the speed breakers and regulate the steady flow are viewed as hindrances in the eyes of the spectators, which in turn make the participators of the distance teaching process, namely the learner and the administrator, to keep their fingers crossed especially when the requirement in the rule is not complied with.
2. **Human element given a preference over the credibility:** Because ethics view the importance of the human element, many times dilution of the standards is viewed as the compromising platform to invite more learners to enrol into the programme. Because the quantity of the learners is used to depict the success of the programme, various techniques are undertaken to invite more learners, which in the long run affect the credibility of the system.
3. **Lack of buffer time:** For any activity in a distance teaching institution, time limit is set before the initiation of the activity. This time frame is to ensure the flow of chain of activities and have to be adhered to maintain smooth flow. However, due to the involvement of the human element, the last date for an activity is extended into the processing time, which prevents having a buffer time (the intentional time lag created after an activity) for an activity.

THOUGHTS ON CODES OF DISTANCE/VIRTUAL EDUCATION ENVIRONMENTS

In spite of the number of serial universal ethics code rules, some institutions and especially science institutions regulate their "Institutional Scientific Ethical Codes" or "Rules of Scientific Ethical Codes" in their bodies. They try to insert some additional rules for the reason that regional originality and society-based limitations should be given.

The Brazilian Association for Distance Education, approved by the General Assembly of the Association on August 17, 2000, in Sao Paulo, dealt with "A Code of Ethics for Distance Education." The institutions affiliated with the Brazilian Association for Distance Education agree to comply with the 23 principles.

Although institutions of distance learning vary greatly as to their objectives, types of activity, resources and size, it is important to attempt to establish a set of principles applicable equally to all of them, and respected by all of them, thereby guaranteeing the orderly and qualitative development of DL in Brazil. Such principles can serve various functions: as internal policies of institutions for the task of continuous qualitative improvement; as specifications for quality standards permitting the evaluation of DL courses; and as indicators serving to protect the interests of students who are the consumers of such educational services. This code should be revised frequently because the development of new pedagogical strategies and technological advances is a permanent phenomenon, and rules and criteria can easily turn obsolete and become barriers for progress

in the practice of distance learning (Details of these principles are available from http://www.friends-partners.org/GLOSAS/Global_University/Guideline/List_of_Materials.html).

Now, it is time to give brief information about the developments of distance education in Turkey. Approximately 80 years of DE experience will be summarized here. Today, almost 2.5 million people are attending the distance education programs/courses in Turkey at primary, high school and university level. Now, only Anadolu University remains one of the mega universities in the world.

FUTURE OF DISTANCE EDUCATION ON THE BASIS OF ETHICS

Distance education, laid in the foundation of ethics as viewed from the optimistic person, is that it will become more accommodative without diluting the standards. However, critics view that distance education on the basis of ethics will be a puppet in the hands of everyone who wants to have the right to know/use and review the entire process of distance education. However, for any distance educator, ethics should be the signpost beyond which things should not go wrong at any cost. Ethics, coupled with the scientific method of doing things, will spin off the effectiveness of quality maintenance.

DIRECTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

A student support service is an integral part of the distance education system where a host of resources are to be provided to assist the learners. These resources pertain to academic support, educational and career planning, psychological and emotional health and so forth. Therefore, research needs to be oriented to address ethical dimensions of academic, social, psychological,

career, preventative, and developmental issues. The future research programmes will be designed to examine the ethical dilemma of students, faculty, staff, administrators, parents, and alumni, as well as other community organizations. And also, these programs should serve by harmonicating with the marketing and media ethics dealt with cultural and social values. The authors propose the following directions for future research.

1. Experience of the learners about the student support services of the distance teaching institution, specifically in terms of administration, admission, eligibility criteria/calibre, academic counselling, and medium of instruction.

2. Case studies of misuse of the customer protection laws, marketing and media ethics rules, especially on electronic medium enforced for the service sector by the learners on the distance teaching institution.

3. Documentation of collaboration models prevalent for the Learner Support Centre of distance teaching institutions.

4. Studies tracing the credibility of distance teaching institutions with special reference to employability and continuing education.

5. Models for convergence and consolidation of activities of distance teaching institutions aiming to prevent duplication of efforts mainly in material production, launch of programmes, and course writing with provision of intersystem transfer.

6. Opinion of the personnel rendering expertise for academic activity and administrative activity about the distance teaching institutions.

7. Case studies of distance teaching institutions where facilities to share/lend the resources (physical/financial or human) exist with emphasis on system identity and at the same time highlighting the individual institution identity.

8. Work-life balance of employees of the distance teaching institutions.

CONCLUSION

Incredible growth of ODL and virtual learning programs on the Web environment have led to unethical practices in the growth of diploma mills. Faculties are being asked to do more and more teaching at a distance. Many are put in the fast track, often with little to no training, and ethical practices take a back seat in the rush to be prepared each semester. The suggestions are given as follows.

- ODL and virtual learning programs faculty and administrators need to become ethical leaders in the field.
- ODL and virtual learning programs educators must interact with others honestly, fairly, respectfully and consistently and develop policy that is ethical in practice.
- ODL and virtual learning programs educators must interact with the ICT sector administrators honestly, fairly, respectfully and consistently and develop policy that is ethical in practice.
- An individual ODL and virtual learning programs educator should work with administrators in close contact in order to develop policy.
- Faculty need to consider ethical practices in course design and development and with interaction with learners.
- In particular, faculty need to make sure that learners, especially if dealing with high school or traditional-aged learners, understand what ethical behaviour is as a learner.
- Distance education administrators need to consider ethical practices in managing programs and developing policies and procedures.

- It is our ethical responsibility as ODL and virtual learning programs educators to strive to reduce this digital divide.

To conclude, it can be said that ethics in distance education is important not only to launch a need-based programme, but also to implement the outcome of action research for sustainable development in the field. Besides this, ethics will inculcate more valued moral character in the officials of the distance teaching institution and will provide potential to act after getting a feel of what is wanted rather than what has been planned for action. Ethics in distance education will also help individual distance teaching institutions to arrive at a common platform and agree/accept each other as potential collaborators rather than viewing one another as competitors who must be ousted.

The authors of this chapter tried to consider how the issues of ethics affect the teaching and virtual learning over online distance modes. They also give suggestion on how values can be maintained and why there is a strong and urgent need for a code of ethics developed by various online universities. Also, Ethical Codes of Anadolu University Guide is summarized at the end of presentation.

But, this question still remains in my mind: Are distance educators and administrators following ethical practices in due course?

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