Chapter 9

Ethical Information and Communication Technologies for Development Solutions: Research Integrity for Massive Open Online Courses

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this chapter is firstly to build on the existing literature in the field of research methodology, especially as applicable in the emerging areas of information and communication technologies for development (ICT4D) and massive open online courses (MOOCs). This chapter is further aimed at enabling readers to understand why ethics is important in research relating to ICT4D and MOOCs, as well as identifying other elements critical to the responsible conduct of research in the areas of ICT4D and MOOCs. The chapter specifically discusses research integrity in the context of a MOOC entitled Ethical Information and Communication Technologies for Development Solutions.

[Sub-Saharan] Africa has an economy the size of Belgium’s. Should we be concerned? Simple ethics says we should: developing an e-business solution to squeeze out a few extra ounces of profit or timesaving for the world’s privileged population living in the global North pales in ethical importance compared to applying new technology to the [mega-problems of the bottom billion]. (Heeks, 2009a, p. 22)

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INTRODUCTION

The author of this chapter was the team leader in terms of the design and initial presentation of a Massive Open Online Course (MOOC) with the title ‘Ethical Information and Communication Technologies for Development Solutions’. Students in this course study how Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) can be used ethically for development solutions. Aligned with what was detailed by Bidwell, Winschiers-Theophilus, Koch-Kapuire & Chivuno-Kuria (2011), the purpose of the course discussed in this chapter is to enable students to participate in critical discussions and arguments around ICTs for Development (ICT4D). Similar to what Bass and Heeks (2011) reported regarding a course with the title ‘Civics & Ethical Education’, in terms of attitudes and values, the graduates will be inspired to, amongst others, be ethical. The ICT4D MOOC further covers concepts including, but not restricted to, agriculture and poverty reduction, education, health, gender and sustainable livelihoods.

The chapter will discuss aspects relating to the following, all in the context of ICT4D and/or MOOCs:

- Ethical Issues in especially Quantitative Data Collection, but also Qualitative Data Collection, Data Reporting and Considerations in Data Management
- Managing Ethics in ICT4D and MOOC Research
- Ethical Concerns in Research Methods, Data Sharing and Privacy Considerations
- Ensuring Data Privacy and Research Integrity
- Intellectual Property Rights

Therefore, the objectives of this chapter will be to:

1. build on the existing literature in the field of research methodology, specifically as applicable in the emerging areas of ICT4D and MOOCs,
2. Enable readers to understand why ethics is important in research relating to ICT4D and MOOCs,
3. As well as identify other elements critical to the responsible conduct of research in the areas of ICT4D and MOOCs.

BACKGROUND

This section of the chapter will provide broad definitions, drawing on “important debates at the interface between ethics and development” in discussions to support,
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