Challenges of implementing the ethics through the use of information technologies in the university

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Abstract

In university premises where we live, despite the social development which allegedly is compatible with the European one, the principles related to ethical use of Information Technologies (IT) differ in many cases. Therefore, often we find actions that are contrary to the code of ethics and legal infrastructure, during which some of the following dilemmas are posed:

▪ How ethical is to have installed a software without a license in our computers, justifying that it costs quite especially for students?
▪ Does this mean that avoiding the conflict with the code of ethics, the computer should not be used, or should be used partly only with the licensed software?
▪ In the other hand, are we going against the code of ethics if we buy licensed software and do not give its copy to the other students, when we know that in our computer we have installed copied software?

Students that use IT face other dilemmas, which are analyzed in this paper. Some of them are mentioned below.

▪ The case when our students or members of academic staff travel in Europe with computers that have installed unlicensed software, as well as facing the law.
▪ Another is the ethical dilemma that currently relates to the use of Facebook in the global space, when we know that through the same private content are published, without the consent of the persons involved?!
▪ We can state the same about the multimedia recordings that are posted on YouTube or in other sites with private or free access!

Case study was conducted at the SEE University (SEEU, 2010) in R. Macedonia, where students and academic staff discussed and debated issues regarding ethic dilemmas.

Keywords: Information Technology, University, Ethical Code, Software, License;

1. Introduction

Ethics is a discipline that is concerned with the principles of morality, i.e. what in our action is moral and what is immoral, or what is good and what is bad. But, related to the ethics usually the following questions can be posed:
▪ What are the ethical principles?
▪ How many such ethical principles are?
▪ Is there a universal code of ethics that would apply to everyone?

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- What is the level of acceptance of ethical principles in different countries and cultures?
- Do the same ethical principles apply in different areas of human action?

To find answers to these and other questions we are focused in the field of Information Technology and the case study was conducted at the Faculty of Sciences and Technologies at the SEE University.

2. Basic knowledge

In order to create a more realistic view of the material included in the paper, we will briefly mention some of the basic concepts (Kenneth, 2002) encountered in the field of IT.

- Computers are electronic devices that can be programmed and can enable fast calculation and storage of large amounts of data.
- Communication is the process of transferring information from one entity to another by the use of broadcasting equipment.
- Communication technologies are the systems and the media for distance information transmission.
- Information Technology is a combination of computers and communication technology.
- The Internet provides a global system of computers that are connected to a network.

3. Ethical issues related to IT users

The ethical code (Larry, 20090) which is used when working with IT equipment is based on the principles of common ethical code (Nicholas, 2009). But since the internet has made possible the real time communication with IT users from around the globe (Hamiti, 2010), with different levels of cultural development, with different religions, who work under different legislation, or even without any relevant legislation etc., it is for sure that are used different ethical principles (Dika, 2010). Here we are focused on ethical issues related to IT users in:

- Communication using electronic mail (e-mail)
- Teaching in laboratories with IT equipment,
- Exams through IT equipment,
- Distance studies,
- Use of licensed software,
- Communications through Facebook and
- Publications on You Tube.

3.1. The use of e-mail

Today, nearly every computer user has his electronic address, through which he communicates on the Internet. But while using this email, the ethical principles often do not apply, namely from different users the internet is being abused. Thus, without the desire of e-mail users, very often are sent to their addresses:

- Various commercial materials
- False information for illegal benefit,
- Files containing viruses, etc.

The Internet is also used for student-professor communication. Here we present the following ethical dilemmas:

- Is it ethical for students to write e-mails to professors regarding various questions about the lessons?
- Are professors obliged to respond to any e-mail received from the students?
- Is it unethical if professors do not answer students' questions asked by e-mail?
- How to select the students that professors need to respond?

These are serious dilemma because it can affect the relationship between professors and students (Moutlana, 2007). According to the logic of the work at the university, students should get a good communication with the professor, which is offered through the electronic communication. On the other hand, professors have to answer any

questions raised by students. But such electronic communication is common if we are dealing with a limited number of students, which does not apply to circumstances in which we work in SEEU, where the number of students is relatively large.

3.2. Lectures in laboratories with IT equipment

The use of computers in teaching, in lab, provides an interactive work in which students implement directly on the computer the explanations of their professors. But this, this way of explanation is followed by a series of problems, some of which are numbered below.

Students without the knowledge of the professors connect to the Internet, and:
- Require different information,
- Send or read e-mails,
- Listen to music, or watch various multimedia materials,
- Play different games,
- They send messages to different colleagues via the local network present in the lab, or even to their campus colleagues.

Since most mobile phones now offer Internet access using the wireless network which covers the entire campus, they can also be used for the purposes mentioned above, which presents an additional problem.

Actions mentioned above are certainly unethical. But during this, towards the professors and the university leadership, the current ethical dilemmas arise (Pajaziti, 2008).
- Should these students be excluded from school?
- Should the university take disciplinary measures against students who do such acts?
- Are punitive measures justified, or it should be found other ways to correct student behavior?

3.3. Exams by IT equipment

In a number of courses, especially those linked to computers, it is necessary to have the exam via computer. During this, students can misuse opportunities which are provided by the computers (Ismaili, 2008), in order:
- To get the answers through their colleagues by the local network,
- To find the answers by approaching the university servers, or different servers on the Internet,

For the same purpose, the mobile phones that have internet access to wireless network that covers the complete campus can be used.

Here, the ethical dilemma is how to act in order to ensure fair exams by using computer:
- To use technical solutions for disconnecting gadgets from the network?
- Take disciplinary action against students?

Publishing grades and names of students in public displays by the professors, or on the Internet is unethical.

3.4. Distance Studies

Currently, in the Internet you can see many offers about getting degrees in various fields through distance learning. During this, students are offered:
- Lessons to be developed through electronic lectures (e-learning)
- Tests and exams should take place through the Internet.

In these cases there is no direct contact between students and professors. This form of studying and graduating raises several ethical dilemmas, which may include the following questions:
- Are such actions in accordance with university (Moutlana, 2007) ethics?
- How can we be sure that the given answers during the test truly belong to the student who is being tested?
- How is it possible to verify the level of knowledge of students who receive diplomas?
- Is this a form of misuse of the internet and IT equipment for the benefit of universities?

▪ How much the Distance Studies are in conflict with ethical and legal norms?

3.5. Distance Studies

A necessary component of any computer is the proper software though which it becomes possible to work with computer. But mainly this is software that must be purchased, meaning that in order to operate with it, you must have appropriate licenses. Therefore, the licensed software is protected by international laws. But there are still many countries where laws for protection of licensed software do not apply.

In our premises, we use copied software (no license) which can be purchased for a symbolic price (such as the price of empty DVD disc). Such action is considered "normal behavior". On the other hand, if we do not give a copy of the program to someone, such action is considered as an act that is contrary to the (local) ethics. Users of unlicensed software justify their actions with the high prices of the software. But at the same time they are wondering whether it is logical that for not going in conflict with the code of ethics, they should not to use the computer, or they should use it partly - only with the licensed software. Meanwhile, we are examining the code of ethics if we buy licensed software and do not give its copy to the other students, when we know that in our computer we have installed copied software?

Dilemmas that arise from professors or students that have on their computers (Dika, 2010) the copied software (unlicensed) while traveling abroad, e.g. in Europe is:

▪ Is it ethical the use of computer in these cases?
▪ How firm is the explanation that the computer user is based on ethical norms of the country from where he comes?

On the other hand, manufacturers of licensed software during our Internet connection, approach to update the software installed on the computer. The question arises whether such actions are correct and in accordance with the privacy ethics or how can we be sure that in such approaches private files and documents, programs, or different data from our computer are not being copied?

3.6. Communication through Facebook

Currently almost all students, but also and a number of professors are participating in social pages as Facebook, in which we can say that everyone has access. In these pages are published photos of the life at the university, various multimedia materials and messages, publications that contain names and grades of students, and lots other. Such actions certainly represent serious violations, because they violate the privacy, which can be seen as a serious violation of ethical norms.

Where is the respect towards privacy, when everything private is published?

3.7. Publications on You Tube

We are witnessing how popular are the websites where everyone has the opportunity to place various multimedia data, which then freely are visited by anyone who has Internet access. Such site, as it is You Tube, in which there are endless multimedia presentations revealed. Such sites are used by students as well, which presented data from classes, exams or other recorded media presentations on campus. These presentations are often chosen without regard to ethical norms, which represents a misuse of freedom of expression and privacy, damaging the dignity of teachers, students, and with it the reputation of the University.

4. Conclusions

In the field of IT, there's no particular code, but the behavior in this area relies on the ethical code which is used in everyday life. In the paper we are concentrated on the challenges facing all those that in their work use IT. For this purpose, we stopped in analyzing concrete enforcement of code of behavior in education, i.e. university.

The main dilemmas encountered during the implementation of the code of ethics at the university are those which relate to behavior when using e-mail, lectures and examinations in laboratories with IT equipment, distance learning, use of licensed software and use of Facebook and You Tube.

When using e-mail, the main dilemmas are in explaining how reasonable the student's communication with the professor through this link is, then how much is the professor obliged to respond to all students at a time when there are more students, and whether to choose which students he will respond, how he will select them.

Lectures and exams in the labs equipped with IT are followed by the possibilities that the students can use these opportunities to access the Internet, in order to search different information, listening to music, playing different games, or copying.

Getting degree through distance learning also is accompanied with the dilemma of verifying the student's actual knowledge, when we do not have control who takes part in the exam. This is a serious dilemma because there is likely to misuse IT for distribution of degrees without proper cover, in order to provide material benefits to universities that offer such studies.

Facebook is also a great ethical challenge because everything that is private could become public. The worst is that online publications are made without the consent of those who engage in photos, or even different multimedia recordings.

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