

Ethics of the Use of Technologies in the University Environment: Challenges and Perspectives

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Abstract—This article explores the ethical challenges linked to the increasing use of information and communication technologies (ICT) in Guinean universities. Three main challenges are identified: protection of student privacy, equity in access to digital resources and the fight against online academic fraud. To address these challenges, robust privacy policies, measures for equitable access to digital resources, and academic fraud prevention strategies are necessary. By adopting a holistic and collaborative approach, Guinean universities can promote responsible and ethical use of technologies, while maximizing their benefits for teaching and research.

Keywords— Ethics, Information and communication technologies (ICT), Higher education, Guinean universities, Student privacy, Equity, Access to digital resources, Online academic fraud, Ethical policies, Prevention.

I. INTRODUCTION

The growing use of information and communication technologies (ICT) in Guinean universities raises important ethical questions. While these tools offer undeniable advantages for teaching, research and academic management, they also pose challenges in terms of privacy protection, equity in access to digital resources and guarantee of academic integrity. This article examines the specific ethical challenges encountered in the context of Higher Education in Guinea and offers perspectives for addressing these issues in an ethical and responsible manner.

1. Protection of Student Privacy

One of the main ethical concerns in the use of technology in academia is the protection of student privacy. Students' personal data, such as their grades, academic performance, and personal information, are often stored and processed through computer systems. It is essential to have robust privacy policies and appropriate security measures in place to protect this data from unauthorized access or misuse. Additionally, it is necessary to make students aware of potential risks to their privacy and give them control over their own data.

The protection of student privacy is a major issue in the use of technologies in a university setting. With the increasing collection and processing of student personal data through IT systems, it is essential to ensure that this sensitive information is secure and used responsibly.

Guinean universities must put in place clear and transparent privacy policies, clearly defining what data is collected, how it is used and with whom it is shared. These policies must be easily accessible to students and regularly updated to take into account technological developments and new data protection regulations.

Additionally, appropriate security measures must be in place to protect student data from unauthorized access or misuse. This includes securing computer networks, identity and access management, encryption of sensitive data, and educating users on appropriate security practices.

Additionally, it is crucial to ensure that students have control over their own data. Universities must allow students to access their personal data, modify it if necessary and provide informed consent for any further use of their information. This approach builds student confidence in using technology in academia and fosters a culture of respect for privacy.

Protecting student privacy requires a proactive, multi-faceted approach, combining robust privacy policies, effective security measures, and a commitment to student control and consent over their own data. By adopting these measures, Guinean universities can ensure ethical and responsible use of technologies while preserving the rights and confidentiality of students.

2. Equity in Access to Digital Resources

Another major ethical challenge is ensuring equity in access to digital resources for all students. While technologies can improve accessibility to online courses, virtual libraries and other educational tools, it is important to ensure that all students, regardless of their socio-economic level or geographic location, have equal access to these resources. This requires investments in IT infrastructure, equitable access policies and initiatives to bridge the digital divide.

Equity in access to digital resources is a crucial aspect of the use of technologies in academia in Guinea. As information and communication technologies (ICT) provide unprecedented learning and research opportunities, it is essential to ensure that all students, regardless of their socio-economic background or geographic location, can benefit equally from these resources.

To achieve this objective, several measures can be put in place. First, universities need to invest in IT infrastructure to ensure stable and fast connectivity across campuses. This includes installing Wi-Fi hotspots, expanding wired networks and establishing data centers equipped with adequate equipment.

Next, policies for equitable access to digital resources must be developed and applied. This may include providing computing devices such as laptops or tablets at affordable prices or even setting up equipment loan programs for disadvantaged students. Additionally, universities can develop partnerships with government organizations or private companies to provide grants or scholarships to students in need to purchase computer equipment or access.

3. Fight against Online Academic Fraud

With the proliferation of technology, online academic fraud has become a growing problem in Guinean universities. Digital tools facilitate unauthorized copying and sharing of academic work, as well as cheating on online exams. To maintain academic integrity, it is essential to implement strict policies against academic fraud, educate students about academic standards and the consequences of cheating, and develop effective monitoring and detection systems to identify cases of fraud.

The fight against online academic fraud represents a major challenge in the context of Higher Education in Guinea, where the increasing use of digital technologies sometimes facilitates malicious and deceptive behavior. To maintain academic integrity and promote a culture of intellectual honesty, rigorous measures must be put in place to prevent, detect and sanction online fraud.

First, it is essential to develop clear and strict policies against academic fraud, precisely defining what constitutes a violation of academic standards and specifying consequences for violators. These policies must be communicated effectively to all students and faculty members to ensure a common understanding of expectations for academic integrity.

Then, prevention measures can be put in place to deter fraudulent behavior before it occurs. This can include developing varied and creative assessment strategies that make online cheating difficult, such as using open-response questions, group projects, and remote proctoring methods. Additionally, educating students about the consequences of academic fraud and the importance of academic integrity can help promote ethical and responsible behavior.

Alongside these prevention efforts, it is also necessary to put in place effective detection mechanisms to identify cases of online academic fraud. This may include using plagiarism detection software, analyzing student behavior patterns during online exams, and working with IT experts to spot anomalies in digital submissions.

Finally, appropriate sanctions must be applied to students guilty of academic fraud, to ensure justice and deter future misconduct. These sanctions may range from loss of credit for the affected assignment to expulsion from the university, depending on the severity of the offense and institutional policies.

In summary, combating online academic fraud requires a holistic and coordinated approach, involving clear policies, prevention and detection measures, as well as dissuasive sanctions. By adopting a proactive and resolute approach, Guinean universities can maintain the integrity of their education system and promote a culture of intellectual honesty among their students and staff.

4. Perspectives for Ethical Use of Technologies

To address these ethical challenges, it is necessary to adopt a holistic and collaborative approach. Guinean universities can develop codes of ethical conduct specific to the use of technologies in academia, involve stakeholders in decision-making processes, and invest in awareness-raising and training on ethical issues related to ICT. Additionally, research and development of ethical technologies, such as designing privacy-friendly data systems and integrating data control mechanisms for students, can contribute to responsible and ethical use of technologies in academia.

It is therefore crucial to establish awareness and training programs on technology ethics for students, teachers and administrative staff. These programs could address topics such as online privacy, academic integrity, cybersecurity, and responsible use of social media. By educating the academic community about the ethical implications of technology use, universities can encourage more responsible and ethical behavior.

Next, universities should develop strong institutional policies that guide the ethical use of technologies. These policies could include guidelines on the collection and use of data.

Finally, Universities should collaborate with other stakeholders, including governments, businesses and civil society, to promote ethical use of technologies nationally and internationally. By working together, these partners can develop common policies and standards, share best practices and address emerging ethical challenges in the field of information and communications technology.

Adopting a proactive and collaborative approach is essential to ensure ethical use of technologies in Higher Education in Guinea. By combining awareness programs, institutional policies, research and collaboration with other stakeholders, Guinean universities can play a leading role in promoting ethical and responsible use of technologies in their academic environment.

II. CONCLUSION

The ethics of technology use in academia is a complex and constantly evolving area, but it is essential to recognize and address the specific ethical challenges encountered in the context of Higher Education in Guinea. By adopting ethical policies and practices, raising awareness among stakeholders and investing in ethical technologies, Guinean universities can promote responsible and ethical use of technologies, while maximizing the benefits of these tools for teaching, research and academic development.

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