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## MOODLE in Context of Net Ethics

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***Abstract:** Growing popularity of MOODLE as a global educational facility along with its multi-cultural interface call for the need to consider the issue of net ethics applied to this widely used tool. Net ethics comprise a number of separate codes of ethics over the net, regulating certain internet communities. MOODLE as a unified system, yet peculiar in each case due to its nature which allows the users create a unique facility according to specific needs, require a unified code of ethics for its users which will both suggest the general and the most basic norms of behavior within the framework and give an opportunity to tailor its rules to a specific learning environment.*

***Keywords:** MOODLE, net (cyber) ethics, code of ethics, regulation.*

### **1 MOODLE as a Global Interaction Tool.**

MOODLE as a cross-cultural and global facility has proven to be an efficient educational tool which is reflected in the growing number of MOODLEs worldwide [6]. Educational benefits of the tool include numerous opportunities to enhance learning which have been widely discussed and studied. [8] One of the certain benefits offered by MOODLE is the fact that MOODLE as an educational facility offers within Web 2.0 a perfectly organized opportunity to engage in cross-cultural communication in the academic setting. Not only it allows the students to access the information and to acquire knowledge from distant parts of the world but also to interact with peers and educators worldwide. Under such circumstances, cross-cultural communication emerges as one of the most vital aspects of education. Students must possess a certain level of global competence to understand the world they live in and how they fit into this world. This level of global competence starts at ground level - the university and its faculty - with how they generate and transmit cross-cultural knowledge and information to students [2].

MOODLE is usually used as a tool to deliver knowledge or practice a particular skill: from the instructor (sender) to the student (recipient) and back in the form of feedback. However, along with that, MOODLE also contains an opportunity to generate knowledge which will be the movement in the opposite direction: from a student to the instructor. MOODLE as a knowledge builder is possible to activate as long as there is a cultural input required from a participant-student. Thus, MOODLE becomes a tool of learning while creating. Although many MOODLEs around the world are set up so as to encourage interaction within the representatives of the same country/culture due to the language it uses, but several world languages along with the popularity of foreign language learning make it possible to start a conversation between participants from all over the world.

## 2 Need for Regulation.

However, MOODLE by its nature is a part of a World Web and grants an access to information to a large number of people. Such exposure along with creativity component involved in the process of using this tool makes the tool subject to the issue of ethics. Different aspects of posting the material for general public or reusing this material require regulation. Such regulation should cover not only copyright issues but also issues related to topic-choice (tolerance, non-offensive writing, and etc.), word-choice (style, avoiding jargon or slang), and other widely accepted but mostly implied norms of behavior on the web.

Specialists acknowledge that in today's global, technology-driven society, net ethics are often overlooked by youth when it comes to the online use of intellectual property and only education on responsible use of the Internet can raise significant awareness among students and positively change their behaviors. [4] Thus, MOODLE as an educational resource requiring active interaction should not only offer extensive opportunities but also should impose certain obligations on its users. For instance, the students in MOODLE are both users and creators of intellectual property thus certain rules should be set to regulate this interaction.

A multi-cultural communication urges to reinforce universal communication regulations. Such regulations are common to many forms of international interaction embodied in various codes of ethics: for journalists, programmers, bloggers, and so on. Over the internet, such code as usually referred to as *net or cyber ethics*.

## 3 Net Ethics.

Net or cyber ethics is a term used in regards to general principles regulating behavior of the internet users. More specific rules are referred to as '*code of net ethics*'.

### 3.1 Codes of Ethics for Communities.

Internet users can generally be divided into different groups of people according to their primary activities on the net: programmers (those who develop internet facilities), contributors (those who contribute content, including bloggers), and common users (who the content is aimed at).

The very first calls for the code of ethics came on behalf of IT professionals. Like any other group of professionals (lawyers, physicians, engineers) they recognized the need to be aware of who they are responsible to. Although individual organizations offered individual codes of ethics, a need for a unified code has long been under discussion among professionals. [7] Many urge to create and debate code of ethics for the developers and programmers insisting on that ethical behavior should be a cornerstone of programming. [9]

Blog hosting services also admit that responsible bloggers (content contributors) should recognize that they are publishing words publicly, and therefore have certain ethical obligations to their readers, the people they write about, and society in general. [1]

The usual point of reference in creating a code of net ethics for groups of users is considered to be various codes of ethics for professional journalists ratified in each

country separately and brought together by Media Accountability Systems. [5] For instance, an adapted and modified version of *Society of Professional Journalists Code of Ethics* into A Bloggers' Code of Ethics reinforces such vital components of internet communication as integrity, fairness, respect and accountability. [1] The authors of the code urge other internet communities to adopt this code as well or create their own, thus reassuring the very need for such phenomenon.

### **3.2 Codes of Ethics for Individuals**

Along with codes of ethics for groups, some internet consulting services offer advice to individuals on net ethics as well: on how to create and maintain a positive internet identity because it is up to all users to maintain and help ensure professionalism, courtesy, and ethical behavior. [3] Some of the guidelines include the following:

- properly addressing others;
- respecting proprietary rights;
- behaving courteously and professionally;
- if asking for assistance, showing hard work done by oneself before turning for assistance;
- using appropriate language, avoiding foul language, slag or jargon. [3]

Such guidelines seem to be common sense and in most cases implied rather than stated directly, but numerous cases of internet abuse and disrespectful behavior urge for the need to impose such codes of ethics in order to make all the inhabitants of a certain web space feel comfortable.

## **4 Recommendations.**

The very existence of separate codes of net ethics over the web along with the nature of MOODLE as an educational facility call for discussion and creation of a unified code of ethics for MOODLE users (meaning both educators and students) based on existing codes. The possible suggestions for the issues covered in such code include the following aspects.

### *1. Privacy guarantee.*

Each user should be notified of the scale of exposure of the certain MOODLE: whether it is available for a limited number of people or it has an unlimited access. Along with that, users should be aware of the fact whether their private information might be shared with the third parties.

### *2. Copyright statement.*

The copyrights for all contributions within a particular MOODLE should be transparent along with the copyright for the information contributed by the students. Also the code should promote anti-plagiarism raising awareness among users on what plagiarism is.

### *3. Accountability.*

The information provided within the framework of a certain MOODLE should be reliable thus the code should discourage the users from publishing inaccurate or doubtful pieces of information.

#### 4. *Respect and tolerance.*

The code should promote respectful attitude to individuals, their opinions and feelings, even their time. Tolerance to other people's opinions, level of education or background should also be reinforced in the code.

#### 5. *Appropriate language.*

Language regulation is important in connection to multi-cultural environment most MOODLEs generate. The users should be reminded of avoiding foul language, slang, jargon, uncommon abbreviations or simply biased and offensive language.

#### 6. *Peculiar norms of net behavior for a particular MOODLE.*

Finally, the code should reflect some specific guidelines tailored to a particular MOODLE. For instance, if the MOODLE is organized in the form of a chat-room, the code can foster an appropriate way of address (which varies in different cultures) or the frequency and length of the entries so as to prevent abuse of time and space.

Along with a core components mentioned above, which can come automatically with each newly created MOODLE and offered to users on agree/disagree/amend basis, there can be an optional variable part which consists of amendments to the code from the users themselves for each particular MOODLE, thus making it open for discussion and flexible and customized in accordance to the needs of specific users.

## 5 Conclusion

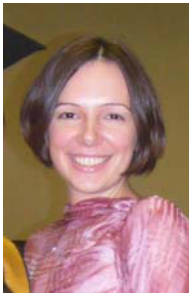
An ever growing popularity of the net as a global recourse and MOODLE as one of its leading educational facilities attracts a large number of users worldwide. Such scale determines the need for a unified yet transparent code of ethics which can make the work of the system more efficient and make the users feel more comfortable within the facility. Such code can be based on existing separate codes for different internet communities and integrate basic rules of behavior on the web along with customized rules peculiar in each case so as to contribute to the global system of net ethics.

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