

# Educational Research Ethics

based on *AERA Code of Ethics* and  
*BERA Ethical Guidelines for Educational Research*

**Education research** is the scientific field of study that examines education and learning processes and the human attributes, interactions, organizations, and institutions that shape educational outcomes. Scholarship in the field seeks to describe, understand, and explain how learning takes place throughout a person's life and how formal and informal contexts of education affect all forms of learning. Education research embraces the full spectrum of rigorous methods appropriate to the questions being asked and also drives the development of new tools and methods.

## **Responsibilities to participants**

The participants in research may be the active or passive subjects of such processes as observation, experiment, auto/biographical reflection, survey or test. Educational researchers should operate within an ethic of respect for any persons involved in the research they are undertaking.

***Voluntary Informed Consent.*** All participants of the research have to understand the process in which they are to be engaged, including why their participation is necessary, how it will be used and how and to whom it will be reported as well as to be agree to their participation without any duress.

***Right to Withdraw.*** Researchers must recognize the right of any participant to withdraw from the research for any or no reason, and at any time, and they must inform them of this right. Researchers have to accept the participants' decision to withdraw or persuade them with care without coercion or duress.

***Non-discrimination.*** Researchers should be treated fairly, sensitively, with dignity, and within an ethic of respect and freedom from prejudice regardless of age, gender, sexuality, marital or parental status, race, ethnicity, nationality language, cultural identity, partnership status, religion, faith, disability, health conditions, political belief, socio-economic standing or any other significant difference.

***Non-exploitation.*** Education researchers do not exploit persons over whom they have direct or indirect supervisory, evaluative, or other authority (students, supervisees, employees, or research participants) as well as do not directly supervise or exercise evaluative authority over any person with whom they have a romantic, sexual, or familial relationship.

***Harassment.*** Education researchers do not engage in harassment (single intense and severe act or of multiple persistent or pervasive acts which are demeaning, abusive, offensive, or create a hostile professional, workplace, or educational environment. Harassment may include unnecessary, exaggerated, or unwarranted attention or attack, whether verbal or nonverbal) of any person included in research process.

***Bribery of research participants.*** Researchers should not allow financial incentives or other incentives for research participants, especially when it affects the results of the research or the subject's decision to participate in it.

***Inviolability of private life.*** Researchers must recognize the participants' entitlement to privacy and must accord them their rights to confidentiality and anonymity, unless they or their guardians or responsible others, specifically and willingly waive that right. Participants are entitled to know how and why their personal data is being stored, to what uses it is being put and to whom it may be made available. Researchers must have participants' permission to disclose personal information to third parties and are required to ensure that such parties are permitted to have access to the information. Private citizens to have access to any personal data that is stored in relation to them: researchers must ensure that data is kept securely.

***Children, Vulnerable Young People and Vulnerable Adults.*** Children who are capable of forming their own views should be granted the right to express their views freely in all matters affecting them, commensurate with their age and maturity.

In the case of participants whose age, intellectual capability or other vulnerable circumstance may limit the extent to which they can be expected to understand or agree voluntarily to undertake their role, researchers must fully explore alternative ways in which they can be enabled to make authentic responses. In such circumstances, researchers must also seek the collaboration and approval of those who act in guardianship (e.g. parents) or as 'responsible others' (i.e. those who have responsibility for the welfare and well-being of the participants e.g. social workers).

Researchers must make known to the participants (or their guardians or responsible others) any predictable detriment arising from the process or findings of the research. If participants experience distress or discomfort in the research process or unanticipated negative consequences occur researchers must desist immediately from any actions that cause emotional or other harm, including, if necessary, terminating the work.

### **Research planning, implementation, and dissemination**

In planning and implementing research, education researchers do not encourage activities or behave in ways that are health – or lifethreatening to research participants or others.

***Conflict of Interest.*** Researchers should disclose financial and other conflicts of interest that could compromise the trustworthiness of their work in research proposals, publications and public communications as well as in all review activities.

Also, education researchers select research participants with whom they have no other relationship (e.g., teacher, supervisor, mentor, or employer). If research opportunities or circumstances require selection of research participants with whom education researchers have another such relationship, researchers take particular care to ensure that consent to participate is voluntary and free of coercion. Education researchers also take particular care that information used, gathered, or reported as part of the research is handled in such a manner to ensure that risk of harm to the research participants is minimized and does not exceed

what otherwise would be anticipated for research participants in similar circumstances where there is no such dual relationship.

**Methods.** Researchers should use a set of methods appropriate to the research objectives, base their conclusions on a critical analysis of the facts, and report the results and their interpretation objectively and fully. Those scientists who prefer to use specific methods, theories, and hypotheses must be aware of alternative approaches in order to convince the research client of their necessity.

**Fabrication, Falsification, and Plagiarism.** Education researchers do not engage in fabrication, falsification of data, data sources, findings, claims, or credentials as well as plagiarism in proposing, performing, or reviewing research, or in reporting research results.

Researchers must not bring research into disrepute by, for example:

- \* Falsifying research evidence or findings;
- \* 'Sensationalizing' findings in a manner that sacrifices intellectual capital for maximum public exposure;
- \* Distorting findings by selectively publishing some aspects and not others;
- \* Criticizing other researchers in a defamatory or unprofessional manner;
- \* Exploiting the conditions of work and roles of contract research staff;
- \* Undertaking work for which they are perceived to have a conflict of interest or where self-interest or commercial gain might be perceived to compromise the objectivity of the research;
- \* Undertaking work for which they are not competent;
- \* Using work carried out with co-researchers as the basis of individual outputs without the agreement of the co-researchers concerned;
- \* Using research for fraudulent or illegal purposes.

**Data Sharing.** Education researchers are responsible for making known their research findings fully and openly and do not omit relevant data. If education researchers discover significant errors in their publication or presentation of data, they take reasonable steps to address such errors in a correction, a retraction, published erratum, or other public forum as appropriate. Education researchers make their data available after completion of the project or its major publications for verification or other analyses by other researchers. In sharing data, education researchers take appropriate steps to protect the confidentiality of the data and the identity of research participants.

**Authorship.** The list of authors should indicate the persons who have made a significant contribution to the scientific research presented in the article. Academic status, position, or other seniority should not determine the order in the list; the order of authors should indicate the relative leadership and value of the researchers' contribution to this scientific work.