

Reflection on Social, Ethical, and Legal Issues in Education

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FALL15-A-8-OTL504-1 Social, Ethical, and Legal Issues in 21st Century Learning

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August 30, 2015

There are a number challenges I face as an educator in South Korea that have been emphasized during this class on technology. The social and cultural differences in educational philosophy seem magnified as I explore American educational practices while teaching English speaking and debate in South Korean academies. However, some of these issues transcend ideological and cultural differences. Issues such as cyberbullying, plagiarism, and copyright infringement have become prevalent in both cultures, and as an educator I need to be prepared to deal effectively with these negative aspects of technology.

Teenagers everywhere can be affected by cyberbullying; however, text messaging and social media facilitates this behavior in South Korea due to a social hierarchy that promotes dominance and submission. According to Yonhap News (2014), "nearly one in three South Korean teenagers has experienced cyber bullying on the Internet, online games, text messages, emails or other digital technology" (para. 1). As an educator it is imperative that I exercise best practices by teaching my students to treat each other with respect. Even though cyberbullying can be difficult to identify, I can also control it on my end by monitoring any social media groups that I use for my classes, fostering positive online interactions during group work, and by personally engaging my students so that I can look for signs of negative behavior.

Plagiarism is also a massive problem in South Korea. My students are under constant pressure to perform, and often they turn to plagiarism in order to reduce their workload and boost their scores. I do not feel like I am adequately equipped to deal with plagiarism due to my academy's technological deficiencies and a widespread acceptance of cheating. Volodzko (2014) notes Korean Ethics Professor Heo Nam-kyeol as stating, "under the Confucian tradition, pupils were taught to copy the words of their teachers...instead of writing their own opinions." (para. 4) Websites like Turnitin.com can provide some help, but often my students will plagiarize Korean

sources and translate the information into English before turning it in. The translation process can make it difficult to track original sources. Point Loma Nazarene University (2012) offers eighteen ways to prevent plagiarism, notably, "give students a set of topics from which to choose and change topics frequently" (num. 3) and "assign narrowly focused topics, rather than broad, general ones" (num. 11). Tips like these help but besides teaching my students to write in an ethical manner and cite their sources, technology has yet to provide an easy solution to the problem of plagiarism in South Korea.

Lastly, copyright infringement runs rampant in South Korea. To address this problem in 2009 the country employed a three strikes law intended to put a stop to illegal uploading and downloading. According to Electronic Frontier Foundation (n.d.) "The Korean Minister of Culture, Sport and Tourism can order online service providers to suspend Internet users' accounts for up to 6 months, after giving three warnings to remove or block allegedly infringing content." (para. 3). However, my students and my academy universally ignore this law. My academy's debate textbooks, for example, have been created using text taken directly from idebate.org, and in several informal polls I have discovered that almost all of my students illegally download music and movies on a regular basis. I have been able to make some impact by teaching my students that illegal downloading is unethical, but it is difficult to change the cultural mindset that stealing and using material for financial and personal gain is acceptable behavior.

Korea enjoys some of the fastest, cheapest Internet service in the world but unfortunately the country is struggling to overcome the perils that can accompany this benefit. My job as a teacher is to help my students understand that cyber bullying, plagiarism, and copyright infringement are unacceptable, while at the same time coming to terms with the fact that I am fighting an uphill battle. My goal in the future is to continue to apply what I have learned in this

class about the social, ethical, and legal issues that accompany the use of technology and explore new methods and techniques that I can use to effectively communicate ethical behavior to my students whenever they use technology.

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