Abstract

Today it is considered important that modern digital technology be implemented and that all citizens learn to use it. Students already use mobile phones, personal digital assistants, computers, and their applications to do much of their work. This includes searching for and retrieving information, and collaborating on assignments and writing. Recently, claims have been made in both the media and academic research that student technology use is an important factor underlying an increase in student attempts to deceive on exams and other graded work. For example, it is assumed that students sometimes use the Internet to download other people's essays, then handing them in as their own, and to make patchwork compositions of other people's texts using the copy and paste functions. Such claims, however, risk not considering other changes that have occurred, for example, changing forms of exams/assessed assignments.

Accordingly, one aim of this thesis has been to go beyond the categorization of students as cheaters and their use of digital technology as the use of unauthorized aids when discussing student use of technology in exams/graded assignments, and consider what rights and duties and what other subject positions are being made available for them. Four studies have been conducted, the first into the work of high-school students on research reports and the other three into interaction in disciplinary inquiries. These studies illustrate how exams/graded assignments and assessment in general introduce dilemmas for students and how it is important to consider how these dilemmas are solved in practice before making assumptions about technology use as cheating.

As a contribution to the debate about students' moral values and their use of technology, this work has demonstrated the importance of distinguishing between actions and the meaning ascribed to them as acts. A general observation is that student use of technology is generally met with suspicion. Cheating functions as a device for making good texts appear as possible downloads, texts with uneven quality as possible patchwork, inadvertent textual overlaps (i.e., unintentional near reproduction of the wording of a source) as intentional plagiarism, and student

references to technical problems as probable rationalizations. From a methodological perspective, the utility of investigating cheating as an interactional accomplishment is demonstrated. This approach has made it possible to investigate how students reason about using existing texts and asking others for help. As well, the application of a dynamic perspective on subjectivity has made a theoretical contribution. Through this perspective, it is possible to criticize the normalization of students as cheaters based on how they use technology. That their actions could as easily make other positions available to them is shown.