CALLING OUT THE ELEPHANT IN THE ROOM: INTEGRITY AND ETHICAL PRACTICES IN TIMES OF CRISES – EXPERIENCE FROM THE MIDDLE-EAST

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As a result of COVID-19, institutions around the world scrambled to move teaching and assessment online. Academics realized they no longer had traditional face to face modes to invigilate, proctor and could not develop lasting impressions on their students through traditional means of engagement. Some grappled with contract cheating sites, seemingly taking advantage of students studying remotely; others faced issues of assessment design; others had to decide whether to use proctoring services at all.

Initial responses took the form of crisis management and over time, from a position of more reasoned understanding and awareness. Prior awareness and understanding of integrity values such as honesty, fairness and responsibility was of immense value but was firmly underpinned by innovative assessment and lesson delivery techniques. This was not a constant however as not every classroom or campus (school or HE) prioritized values of integrity.

Encouraging conversation and dialogue around issues of academic misconduct can sometimes be like calling out the elephant in the room; it can be one of frustration, caution and sometimes outright denial as faculty either under-report or do not report cases (Khan, 2017; McGlynn, 2019; Morris, 2018; Stoesz et al., 2019). The objective behind this session is to identify the national barriers to academic integrity and to identify possible responses in order to establish a culture of integrity in educational institutions (K12 – HEIs) that can act as good practice guide for stakeholders within the academic community such as faculty, management, policy and decision makers, students and parents.

As a result of years of awareness campaigns, publications, formal and informal activities in a middle-eastern country, a group of colleagues established a national-level centre for academic integrity. The aim of the Centre was to highlight and discuss an array of good practices in the wake of the COVID19 pandemic, some well-established and some introduced in response to the crisis, and how they have helped address challenges of integrity in education.

This session traces the Centre's activities and initiatives and attempts to develop a framework for engagement and activity and explore ways in which the focus can be on proactively instilling values of academic integrity rather than the more traditional punitive treatment or even just the focus on prevention. The session draws upon key issues such as awareness of cheating, learned behaviour from an early age, established parameters of interaction, informal and formal interaction, community engagement and building, and place these within the research framework mentioned below and discuss the role of inspiration and how best we can seek to alter the pattern of understanding and activity.

Based on the past and current experience of the researchers independently and through the Centre, we explore the concept of inspiration and the impact that this can have on establishing an environment of integrity, particularly through the development of a training module for K-12 and HE faculty and staff based on a proposed model that uses the Spectrum of Prevention by Cohen and Swift (1999). Although the spectrum was more geared to looking at injury prevention, the concepts of looking at individual knowledge and skills, promoting community education, fostering networks, changing

practices and influencing policies are all applicable to the education sector, as has been posited by Stephens (2016). Existing literature highlights models to boost academic integrity culture such as the Stephens (2016) Three-level Model of Intervention; Wangard and Stephens (2011) Toolkit to create culture in secondary school and Stephens and Wangard (2016) academic integrity seminars to train teachers on prevention and response; and Lane et al. (2009) handbook on school-wide programmes to prevent and manage behaviours. Authors felt these existing models largely looked at prevention, detection, moral judgement and penalty; whereas the AWARE model by Rogerson (2016) positioned itself as a training and management of misconducts.

Authors will present the IEPAR model in this session as a holistic approach to developing a culture of integrity within an institution, whether a school or university, with a focus on classroom, teacher role, pedagogical considerations, assessment designs, policy and procedures, community role, and rehabilitation and response. This proposed model situates its analysis within an explanatory framework that draws on elements of Activity Theory (AT), Theory of Intended Behaviour (TIB) and Social Cognitive Theory (SCT). The framework posits that how people act and interact depends on the environment, personal experience and perceived value of the approach/technology they are using.

The session incorporates components of Activity Theory (Portnov-Neeman and Barak 2013; Davies et al. 2009) as a conceptual framework for investigating student perceptions. The focus of this theoretical approach is tools, rules and community as forming the foundation of perception and use. TIB identifies three levels of explanatory definition: personal beliefs are shaped by personal characteristics and experiences; social determinants and normative beliefs impact behavioural intentions; performing a specific behaviour is predicted by behavioural intentions, situational conditions and past experience (Taherdoost, 2018). SCT incorporates three main factors: behaviour, personal and environment to explain and predict group and individual behaviour (Middleton et al. 2018). In SCT, behavioural outcomes are linked to usage, performance and adoption. The session aims to discuss the theoretical underpinning of why and how we learn, how perception is created and the manner in which an environment of practice is established.

While the Centre has organised key events such as webinars discussing online assessment, student voices in integrity and the sharing of good practice, and most notably, the creation of a Student Board of youth champions to support and embed an environment of integrity and ethical practices in the United Arab Emirates; the presentation aims to present a background to integrity, how it links to learning theory and practice, Centre's formation, what it does, and what it is going to do next including launching the IEPAR model and how that will inform professional development for teachers and staff, and help to develop a culture of integrity nationally.

These findings presented are country-specific and by no means an attempt by authors to indicate otherwise.

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