Reflections on Academic Integrity and Educational Development During COVID-19

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The pivot to remote teaching and learning in mid-March came with an influx of instructors reaching out to me about various components of teaching and learning online. Some faculty members had no idea that I existed before the pandemic, and the majority certainly did not know the scope of my role. Some had discussed pedagogical aspects such as clarity of instructions and alignment of rubrics to assessments with me before the pandemic, but there were few academic integrity discussions unless the course was a blended or hybrid course.

The switch to remote learning happened around final exam time and the number one question that instructors now had was, "how do I ensure academic integrity of my exam?" The answer to this question and the pedagogical pieces aligned to that question became my priority in mid-March and all of April. My area of expertise and support is Universal Design for Learning (UDL) (CAST, 2018), accessibility, and inclusion. Therefore, I used UDL as a framework for a conversation about academic integrity and pedagogical design.

I emphasized the use of choice in assessments to support academic integrity but also to support inclusion at a time where everything is very much in flux. In some instances, this use of choice was implemented through the learning management system (in our case a Canvas platform) to support shuffling the delivery of questions or the presentation of answer options. There were also many discussions about the tension between an academic integrity framework and an inclusive learning environment in regards to questions having a time limit or the use of the no-backtracking feature in the learning management system. Ultimately, what the instructors chose for their particular exams was very much about how inclusive and accessible pedagogy or academic integrity fit in their own teaching philosophies.

The one area that created the most discussion (and still does many months later) is around the need to move assessment pieces from lower-level Bloom's taxonomy (Armstrong, 2020) type questions that are simply recall questions and can be easily searchable online, to higher-order questions involving application or evaluation of concepts. Many courses were tethered to high stakes recall question type exams and instructors commented that there was simply not enough time or grading hours to modify questions because it was easier to automate low-level recall questions. Thus, for those courses, the use of e-proctoring technology was seen by instructors as

a default way to support academic integrity (though that has not been proven), even if it certainly did not support inclusive pedagogy. Jesse Stommel (@Jessifer) and Audrey Watters (@audreywatters) have written numerous Twitter threads during the pandemic reinforcing that the proliferation of e-proctoring is a direct result of institutional finances prioritizing technology over pedagogy and grading hours for courses.

Another area that created discussion in the early days of the remote transition was around multimodal choice in assessments to support academic integrity, specifically a move from purely textual assessments to audio, video, or oral assignments. Similar to the comments about not enough teaching assistant time or funding to grade such assignments, many instructors were concerned about how to grade assignments in different modalities. Discussions around group assessments and rubric creation and alignment for the most part helped bridge these gaps and doubts.

I continue to have conversations with faculty about how academic integrity and inclusive accessible pedagogy can be concepts that work together and are not necessarily at odds. If there are positives to the pivot to remote learning, it is that instructors are now aware of both Universal Design for Learning guidelines and that educational developers exist on campuses and are there to support them with academic integrity and pedagogical design at this difficult time.

References

Armstrong, P. (2020). *Bloom's Taxonomy*. Vanderbilt University Center for Teaching. https://cft.vanderbilt.edu/guides-sub-pages/blooms-taxonomy

CAST. (2018). Universal Design for Learning Guidelines. http://udlguidelines.cast.org