

EDITORIAL

Open Access

# Editorial



Tracey Bretag

Correspondence:

tracey.bretag@unisa.edu.au  
Tracey Bretag School of  
Management University of South  
Australia, GPO Box 2471 Adelaide,  
SA 5001, Australia

## Tracey Bretag, Editor-in-Chief

It is with enormous pleasure that I welcome you to Volume 11(1) of the *International Journal for Educational Integrity*, for the first time being published under the 'Springer Open' banner. After 10 years as an independent journal, published by the Open Journal System, this new development in the journal's history heralds both a maturity in academic integrity research and an increasing global awareness about the critical role of academic integrity in all aspects of education.

This year has already been marred by numerous academic misconduct scandals across the world. In Australia, more than 70 students are currently facing expulsion as a result of their involvement with the online essay mill, MyMaster, and students who have already graduated are at risk of having their degrees revoked (Visentin 2015). In India, headlines were made recently when it was revealed that hundreds of parents were enabling students to cheat during a high-stakes public exam in the state of Bihar. Seven hundred students were expelled, one thousand people detained and more than 300 people arrested (ABC News Online 2015).

In this context, many educational institutions are taking action to develop cultures of integrity on campus and assist students to develop the skills necessary for learning and scholarly engagement. (FutureLearn n.d.), in collaboration with the University of Auckland, has developed an outstanding MOOC entitled *Academic integrity: Values, Skills, Action* which is being used by students, teachers, administrators, researchers and institutions to explore how academic integrity is understood, promoted and practised in higher education.

The increased interest in academic integrity and the relevance of the topic to all educational stakeholders, regardless of cultural context, is reflected in this eclectic issue. Peter Coughlin, Director of EconPolicy Research Group, Ltd, provides an unique insight into the issue of plagiarism in Mozambique. Coughlin presents research based on an examination of 150 theses from five of Mozambique's largest universities. Using the text-matching software programs Turnitin and Urkund the author concluded that 75% of the theses contained 'significant' plagiarism (more than 100 word equivalents) and 39% contained 'very much' plagiarism (more than 500 word equivalents). Coughlin provides recommendations for combatting widespread plagiarism based on the literature which include the need to cultivate a consensus among faculty and students about the definition and types of plagiarism, the appropriate penalties, and the overarching need to nurture professional ethics.

Angelika Kokkinaki, Catherine Demoliou and Melpo Iacovidou from the University of Nicosia, Cyprus share an extended version of the paper they presented in June 2013

at the *Plagiarism across Europe and Beyond Conference* in Brno, Czech Republic. As part of the *Impact of Policies for Plagiarism in Higher Education Across Europe* project (IPPHEAE, 2010–2013) the authors discuss the findings of research conducted in Cyprus which aimed to explore university students' awareness of and perceptions towards plagiarism. In agreement with Coughlin's recommendations (and those repeated by numerous authors in the field), the authors conclude that there is a need for clear and uniform definitions of 'plagiarism' and 'academic dishonesty'. The authors call for systematic communication of these definitions to both students and faculty, and the means to ensure that the definitions have been understood. They maintain that policies, procedures and penalties for plagiarism and other breaches of academic integrity need to be consistently implemented and further suggest that the use of text-matching software has the potential to both detect and discourage plagiarism.

Nikunj Dalal, from Oklahoma State University, U.S.A., provides a fresh approach to academic integrity in the paper entitled 'Responding to Plagiarism Using Reflective Means'. Dalal contends that the predominant approaches to student plagiarism based on procedures, policies, appeals and sanctions are inadequate, punitive and unlikely to lead to 'transformative inner learning'. Dalal explores the use of an innovative reflective approach based on mindfulness, empathy and dialogue to mentor students who had been identified (using text-matching software) as having plagiarised on their class assignments. The goal of the study was to explore the usefulness of combining two reflective practices – an initial dialogue between instructor and student and a reflective essay subsequently written by the student. Dalal concludes that such an approach is 'sensible, feasible, and promising'. It encourages critical self-reflection on the part of the student and this in turn has the potential to reduce the incidence of plagiarism and other academic integrity breaches.

I trust that you will enjoy the first three papers to be published under the Springer Open banner, and welcome your feedback, as well as your own original contributions for consideration and review.

Tracey Bretag, Editor-in-Chief

Received: 7 April 2015 Accepted: 7 April 2015

Published online: 30 June 2015

#### References

- ABC News Online (2015) India arrests hundreds of people over widespread cheating in Bihar School Examination Board exams, <http://www.abc.net.au/news/2015-03-22/india-arrests-hundreds-over-school-exam-cheating-scandal/6338552>, 22 March 2015
- FutureLearn (n.d.) Academic integrity: Values, skills, action <https://www.futurelearn.com/courses/academic-integrity>
- Visentin L (2015) MyMaster essay cheating scandal: More than 70 university students face suspension, Sydney Morning Herald Online, <http://www.smh.com.au/nsw/mymaster-essay-cheating-scandal-more-than-70-university-students-face-suspension-20150318-14250e.html> 26 March 2015