From critical pedagogy to critical methodology: a 'detective' approach for examining offensive practices in higher education

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Abstract

Recent studies in education attempt to 'criminologise' some of the current practices and policies of higher education institutions – that is, to deconstruct certain philosophies and practices which may be discriminatory, offensive, and biased to certain social groups. Recent theoretical frameworks problematize current higher education policies, many of which are taken for granted. This paper adopts a critical perspective, shedding light on some practices as they occur in higher educational institutions, by human and non-human agencies. The study applies a 'detective' approach examining some problematic uses of technology a higher education institution. In this proposed approach, researchers play the role of 'detectives', investigating possible breaches of good practice (possibly discriminatory) committed by higher education actors (referred hereafter as 'defendants'). Most of these offences are committed through the use of educational and institutional technologies. The purpose of this theoretical approach is to empower alienated social groups against such practices by identifying 'defendants' and the implications of their acts. The study uses empirical data from interviews, visits, and observations to explain the ways in which defendants respond to the accusations levelled against them by other users of educational technologies. The investigation revealed that technology was used, among many other functions, to manoeuvre around the legal and ethical system serving the interests of some stakeholders. Then, the study categorises these manoeuvres, explaining the legal implications of each category, and recommending consideration of important academic and institutional issues.

Introduction

This study is grounded in the discourse of 'critical pedagogy' (Cooper, 2015; De Lissovoy, 2008; Freire, 2000; Giroux, 2003; Giroux, 2014). It revolves around the theoretical perspective held by most critical pedagogists (such as Paulo Freire, Henry Giroux, Peter Maclear, Michael Apple, bell hooks, and Ira Shor) that all social rules, resources, and acts in educational context can be politicised to benefit specific parties or individuals within educational organisations (Apple, 2004; Baptiste, 2008; Freire, 2000; Giroux, 2003; Giroux, 2014). The fundamental assumption underlying such perspective is that education "always represents an introduction to, preparation for, and legitimation of particular forms of life" (McLaren, 1989, p. 160).

In addition to critical pedagogy, the current approach draws upon the field of '*micropolitics*', which considers modern organizations (e.g. educational organizations*)* as micro-political systems that are characterised by diversity, scarcity, and personal interests that may result in organisational conflicts and offensive activities (Ball & Bowe, 1991; Cropanzano, Howes, Grandey & Toth, 1997; Hochwarter, Witt & Km, 2000; Ladebo, 2006). Henceforth, it is politics at micro-organizational levels that is under investigation in this research, exposing the will for power by certain individuals and groups to achieve their goals within educational institutions, both consciously and unconsciously (Blase & Roberts, 1994; Blase, 1991; Grissom, Kalogrides, & Loeb, 2015). Such micropolitics affect decision-making structures and processes within the organisational setting. According to Blase (1998), that includes:

> …conflictive and cooperative-consensual, group-level and individual, and formal and informal. It treats overt behavior as well as subtle and submerged processes (e.g., socialization) and structures. (p.454)

Understanding of education, from an epistemological perspective, can become *deeper and clearer* through problematising and destabilising previously stable structures: questioning existing presuppositions, underpinnings, structured values, frames of reference and all other elements of organisational reality (Breidenbaugh, 2010; Habermas, 1993). Therefore, critical pedagogics strive to explain the ways in which knowledge and power can justify and legitimate dehumanising conditions (Burbules & Berk, 1999). In other words, they attempt to "make problematic what is taken for granted" (Nichols & Allen-Brown, 1996, p. 1), to "debunk the old" (Ellis, 1990, p. 6), to expose the covered-up (Derrida, 1984), and to engage in the act of what Freire calls "*conscientizacão,*" which conceptualises the cognitive practice and critical observation that allow social and economic contradictions and encourage peaceful action to change the offensive elements of human circumstances (Freire, 2000).

Similarly, this research highlights the conflicts and offenses that can take place within an educational organisation in hope to disrupt the conventional forms of understanding of such activities (Scott, 2008). It could be argued that pedagogic means offers an approach to highlight and, in the process, to disrupt conventional practices which produce current racist, sexist and unjust social relations (Scott, 2008).

Several educational studies have examined the theorisation of power in education (Apple, 2013; Giroux, 1979; Giroux & Willis, 1980). Political sociologists have questioned the political interests of educational policies and activities at a micro level within a given organization (Selwyn & Facer, 2013; Whitworth, 2005), seeking to '*criminologise*' some of these educational activities, viewing them through the lens of criminology. In this approach, analysts examine higher education actors as 'suspects' with respect to offensive acts (Marshall, 2002). Giroux (2015) carefully analyses the economic and political factors that influence education in order to "gain a critical understanding of the criminalisation of dissent that is becoming even more prevalent in today's society" (Thomas, 2015, pp. 258–259). Terms such as 'disposable knowledge' and 'disposable bodies' indicate the way in which critical pedagogy discourse criminologises these educational practices. Some recent studies have classified educational actors as either repressing or repressed, highlighting surveillance and government oversight in educational institutions (Freire, 2000; Nocella, Best & McLaren, 2010, Olssen, 2002).

The current study introduces a new methodological framework to conceptualise the recent paradigm of theoretical *criminologisation of education.* It proposes a criminology-based model that investigates these theoretical claims (Lankshear, Peters & Knobel, 1996). The proposed model follows a 'detective approach' to the investigation of the possible unfairness of educational technologies, as reported by the complaints of participants at one higher education institution in Saudi Arabia.

The research interconnects theories in education, technology, and sociology in order to examine how technological tools can serve the political interests of dominant actors in educational institutions; namely technology as a "double-edged sword" (Smith, 2016, pp. 44–58) that can be exploited for the "dehumanisation" and repression of certain social groups (Rivituso, 2014, p. 73).

Theoretical framework

Social reality can be depicted and analysed in terms of theatrical performance, or as Lyman and Scott (1975) explain, "reality is a drama, life is a theatre, and the social world is inherently dramatic" (p. 3). To this end, life becomes essentially a large stage where humans act their way in any situation or activity in which they find themselves. Educational spheres are no different. Faculty, students, administrators, policy-makers, parents, and alumni can be seen as educational actors.

This paper recognises some of these educational actors as 'suspects' in respect of offensive acts they commit against less dominant social groups within the same educational institution to advance their

own interests. These offences are often committed through the design and use of educational technologies. These technologies include university electronic communication systems, learning management systems, online libraries faculty and student online profiles, and distance learning services. This study shows that educational activities conducted using these educational technologies are in a sense political, as power dynamic is embedded in their construction, implementation, and use. This section provides the theoretical groundings of such a claim, explaining the latest theories on the social politics of practices and activities in higher education institutions.

Politicisation of technology

While technology is ontologically neutral, it is amenable to use or abuse depending on the intent of users (Bijker, 2009). The construction and execution of technological applications is not always a purely scientific endeavour (Jonassen, Howland, Moore & Marra, 2003), but a social and political reality. Technological channels and templates serve the social and political ambitions of designers or users (Winner, 1977). Therefore, educational technologies, like any other technologies, are products, not only of technological and educational ambitions, but also of organisational, historical, economic and political goals (Feenberg, 2012). The construction and implementation of these educational technologies are intertwined with the same social values (Agalianos, 1996) that govern the way participants in higher education live and organise their educational or professional experiences (Koetting, 1993). Therefore, these technologies become politically charged. This political reality is embedded deep within their structures, which extends through them into (and at times is forced upon) the daily educational activities of faculty and students (Whitworth, 2009a). This means that users can utilize educational technologies as much as the original constructors and implementers: they have the ability to manipulate and repress other users. Therefore, the use of technologies can be socially contested (Whitworth, 2009b).

Similarly, users of educational technologies may attempt to 'make sense' of them (Riseborough, 1993). Even after the implementation of a certain technology, the 'end-user' still has the ability to reconstruct the meanings of the technology and to appropriate it for unexpected purposes (Gasser, 1986). Users may redefine the original purposes of such technologies, modify their features, or come up with new uses (Pollock, 2005). Users (or controllers) of technologies can and do circumvent technologies, ignoring or shutting out certain components of them, working around them, or inventing new elements. When faced with an educational technology that limits them, users may employ certain tactics to circumvent or surmount the limitations imposed by the technology.

However, the use of any given technology can be controlled by regulations (i.e. sanctions) and/or by a micropolitical system governing within the institution. In many cases, institutional sanctions are applied against those who 'misuse' the educational technology at hand, thus reducing possible misuse (Hope, 2007). These regulations come up out of continuous investigation and observation of the current use of a certain technology. The current study provides a platform to empirically identify the socially contested nature of technology use in one educational institution in Saudi Arabia, examining possible micropolitical tensions between users and recommending some institutional improvements.

Methodology

The current study attempts to develop a model that allows for the investigation of the offensive capacity of technology use in higher education institutions. The study exemplifies a new methodological framework, which follows a *detective approach* to the investigation of possible political unfairness in the use of educational technologies, as reported by the complaints of some marginalized social groups at one higher education institution in Saudi Arabia.

The researcher loosely employs legal terms and labels to explain how these offences are committed, reported, and investigated. Offences were reported by hundreds of students and faculty who felt neglected, left out, or discriminated against by some agency at the institution through the exploitation of the current technological systems. In this paper, these complainants are referred to as the 'plaintiffs'. On the other hand, there are the 'defendants', the agencies that are accused of these offences. The term 'agency' is used because, in all the complaints that the researcher examines, the accusations are not levelled against individuals but against agencies. Defendants are referred to in their collective groups (e.g., teachers, college administration, department of contracts, deanship of distance learning). However, in the study interviews, representatives of these agencies volunteered to answer and respond to the complaints made against them.

The investigation took place at one representative higher education institution in Saudi Arabia. 'Representative' here means that the university under study uses the same administrative and legal system of a higher education institution as defined by the regulations of the Saudi Ministry of Education. These regulations define the duties and responsibilities of all university affiliates, regulate all the university activities, and control all university policies and protocols. Execution of these laws falls under the review of assigned committees, administrative and academic, that range from a department committee at the micro level to supreme university committees at the highest level. The legal structure also includes supervising agencies that assess the execution of these regulations and investigate shortcomings. I call this group the 'detectives'. They include disciplinary committees, legal councillors, financial audits, quality control, accreditation agencies, and researchers.

The researcher in this study plays the role of an unofficial 'detective', collecting statements from plaintiffs and defendants, examining evidence, and analysing legal documents. Still, most of the time, the researcher limits his role to that of a court transcriber, objectively describing these encounters and documenting the implications. The researcher is a participant-observer, aware of the implications of being a part of the investigation, which means questioning biases and judgements at every step of the research and taking nothing for granted. However, being an insider helps the researcher navigate the data in the study and earn the trust of the study participants, a task an outsider could only achieve with difficulty because of the sensitivity of the data and the privacy concerns of participants (Bonner & Tolhurst, 2002).

The data included a collection of written complaints from plaintiffs and university legal documents as well as unstructured individual interviews with 76 plaintiffs and 13 defendants. The process of data collection began by collecting 400 complaints received by the university legal department in the fall of 2016. This legal department is supervised by the University Vice-President's office under the Academic Advising Unit (AAU) and is responsible for receiving the different kinds of complaints. As the complaints reach AAU, they are classified into categories (for example, educational, financial, faculty, and student) based on their nature and the agency that should investigate. Out of these 400 complaints, 127 complaints involved the use of technology. These 127 complaints included accusations against 13 university agencies. Complaints were sent to these 13 agencies for clarification.

The researcher, after receiving written permission from AAU to conduct the research and interview parties in these cases, contacted the plaintiffs in these cases and requested their consent to participate in the research, assuring their privacy and safety. Of the 76 plaintiffs who agreed to participate in the study and signed the consent form, there were 26 faculty and 50 students. All the supervisors of the 13 university agencies freely agreed to meet with the researcher and answer the study questions. The researcher interviewed the plaintiffs first, then the defendants. Then, he conducted a second round of interviews with the plaintiffs to collect their responses to the defendants' statements.

Two stages of analysis have been conducted. The first is a thematic analysis of the written complaints of plaintiffs, the university's legal documents, and the unstructured individual interviews of 76

plaintiffs. The researcher in this stage has utilised the parameters of Grounded Theory described by Glaser and Strauss (2017). This technique begins by grouping together the data according to central features they share with one another – what Holliday (2005) called 'natural analytical divisions'. Next, it involves creating categories, based upon the identification of relations of similarity and difference (Dey, 2007). Then, the research applies a theoretical coding paradigm to examine the ways these categories could be linked to one another, generating themes that are developed later into theoretical propositions. However, these prepositions are compared and analysed during the second set of interviews with the plaintiffs to test their validity.

The second stage is a deductive analysis. The researchers started by analysing the cases, case by case. After 83 cases had been analysed, it became clear that the analysis in each case followed one of a set of patterns, and this was when the researchers made the decision to stop investigating more cases. Having analysed the 83 cases inductively and deductively, the patterns in Table 1 emerged. This table was then peer-reviewed by three managers and three specialists in organization and management. Each case (i.e. each offensive act) was then assessed individually according to this standardized table, thereby ensuring analytical consistency across all the cases.

Table 1: A Standardised Table According to Which all Cases Were Assessed

Question	Yes/No	Question	Yes/No	Question	Yes/No	Question	Yes/No
Did the defendant deny the existence of the offence?							
Did the defendant acknowledge the existence of the offence?		Did the defendant ignore the offence?					
		Did the defendant undo the offence?					
		Did the defendant defend himself?		Did the defendant underplay the offence?			
				Did the defendant blame others of committing the offence?		Did the defendant counter-accuse the plaintiffs?	
						Did the defendants pass the accusation on to a new agency?	

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Similar to other studies in micropolitical sociology, this study provides no verdict; rather, it conducts a thorough investigation of the politicisation of educational technology and a theoretical explanation of the implications of these acts for the quality of education and performance of actors involved.

Findings and discussion

This section consists of two parts: first, it provides a theoretical analysis of the plaintiffs' accusations against certain agencies at the university. All of these accusations involve the use of educational technologies. The second part examines the defendants' responses to these accusations. As explained in the methodology section, the analysis of both the plaintiffs' and defendants' statements follows the parameters of grounded theory where the data is classified into categories based on similarities and differences. Once the researcher establishes the natural analytical division of data in these categories, the researcher generates codes that are grouped into themes to make theoretical propositions.

Analysis of plaintiffs' accusations

The analysis of the plaintiffs' accusations regarding the technological offences they experienced generated three main themes: discrimination, control, and doubt (Table 2). Each one of these themes emerged from a number of categories and codes, which are explained as follows.

Table 2: Themes in plaintiffs' accusations

Discrimination	Control	Doubt
Gender	*Surveillance*	*Administrative Scepticism*
Class	*Discipline*	*Authenticity and originality*
Race	*Silencing*	
Rank	*Escape*	

Discrimination

The theme of discrimination emerged from the classification of accusations into four categories: Gender, Class, Race, and Rank. Each of these categories consists of similar codes as they are discussed below.

Gender: This category consists of many codes that have a similar ground, which is the patriarchal nature of the university and the technology in place. The question of gender in education is a very complicated issue because it is connected to the social and cultural practices outside education. In traditional Saudi society, women's movements, dress, and voice are closely controlled by their society. Generally speaking, Saudi women must cover their faces and cannot speak or interact with any male member outside the family. This creates social and cultural restrictions for female students and faculty. Unlike their male counterparts, female students and faculty face many technological restrictions, especially in online classes where they cannot use any audio-visual features during the lecture. Female students cannot speak to their male teachers during online lectures, or to use the camera. Thus, most of these online classes are reduced to a recorded audio. Male faculty members can communicate with female students only through the university's official email, which is accessible to many university administrators, while male students can call their professors and have online groups on social media or WhatsApp.

Class: This category includes many codes that deal with the students' social class, geographical location, and ability to own technological devices. A large number of complaints came from students

who have no access to the technological services that the university provides and subsequently feel at disadvantage. The university provides limited technological resources such as open-access computer labs and technological libraries for faculty and students. Students and faculty have to purchase their own equipment, which makes it difficult for those students who cannot afford the costs. Moreover, many students and faculty who live in remote areas outside the main cities (many cannot afford to rent housing in the city) complained about the weak internet connection that makes them miss most of the online activities with their peers.

Race: Many of the codes in this category relate to offences pertaining to the plaintiffs' language, identity, and nationality. Many plaintiffs believe that the current technological system is insensitive to race. For example, the main communication system of the university is designed in one language only, Arabic, as all administrative personnel are native Arabic speakers. This means that all requests, notifications, or formal communications have to be in Arabic. Non-Arabic speakers have to find someone to translate their requests, usually the head or secretary of their department. In many cases, their names or cities are mispronounced and miswritten.

Rank: This category highlights the biases of the institutional technology in disputes related to the hierarchy of the users. The technology provides more services to users of higher ranks in the university administration or academic system. For example, in the university communication system, the faculty can report only to the Department Head as his highest and only access. The Department Head then reports to the Dean, and the Dean to the President. Therefore, if a faculty member wants to submit a maintenance report, he/she cannot submit it directly to the Maintenance Department. Instead, faculty members must submit such reports to the Department Head, who can forward it to the Maintenance Department. Similarly, if faculty members need to send a simple document such as a copy of an ID to the Finance Department or the Contract Department, they must send it through the Department Head's account and then to the Dean's account. The Dean must then forward it to the Head of the Administration Department, and it travels for days until reaches the responsible party.

Control

The second main theme that emerged from the data is the use of technology as a means of control. This theme is generated from four categories: Surveillance, Discipline, Silencing and Escape, which are explained separately below.

Surveillance: It seems clear from the observations and complaints of the plaintiffs that the administrative and academic technological systems were designed (alongside their educational affordances) to offer higher authorities the ability to supervise, observe, and watch all the activities of people below them. Codes that emerge from this category include privacy, restriction, punishment, and scrutiny. Higher-level members of the university administration had access to every communication; university supervisors can use technology to check on faculty performance; lectures are recorded, which makes faculty very conscious about what they say in class. Students' emails and texts are openly accessible for any future investigation. All of this scrutiny makes both teachers and students suspicious of the technology that they use in the classroom.

Discipline: The plaintiffs, in the interviews, repeatedly stated that some higher agencies at the university use current technology as a way to discipline. For example, the communication system is used to store the memos, alerts, and warnings that were issued against faculty and students, keeping this information as evidence to use if the same issues recur. Similarly, supervisors track the performance of faculty and report against them if they miss one of the activities or lectures that are in their course schedules. All of this top-down patronization can contribute to a sense of resistance and negativity among faculty members regarding the use of technology.

Silencing. Several complaints reported that some higher agencies use the technology to silence inferior social groups of faculty or students. As all activities of students' admissions, registration and

transfer are done through the admission electronic systems, administrative personnel may use this as excuse to refuse to receive students' requests in person or to try to understand students' individual situations. Instead, they request students away to submit their requests through the system. However, some students have irregular cases that the system fails to understand. For example, one student complained that he could not register for classes because he missed the due date of registration on the system (usually registration and transfer requests end by the first week of school) because he was hospitalized during that week. Similar cases included faculty and students who lost a financial compensation for an academic credit because they failed to submit their requests into the system in time or because they did not receive a notice.

Escape Responsibility: The technological system is designed in a way to allow users an escape from responsibility. Many complaints were ignored because the defendants presented some technological evidence that cleared them from the accusation. Based on the researcher's analysis of many complaints and interviews with both plaintiffs and defendants, there seems to be more effort to use the technology to protect oneself from responsibility and legal questioning rather than a desire to participate in solving the issues at hand. Administrators often forwarded applicants' requests to other agencies with no clear instructions regarding what should be done to resolve them. The system provides them with responsibilities that are vague and non-binding. For example, a member of the senior administrative personnel may forward the applicant's request to the person in charge and use a phrase such as "do the needful." This phrase may be useful in routine or simple requests, but in unusual or controversial cases, it has no meaning. Thus, the request keeps being forwarded among different agencies in a vicious circle until the applicant loses interest because no one is willing to take action.

Doubt

The theme of doubt emerged from the classification of accusation into two categories: Administrative Scepticism, and Authenticity/Originality. Each of these categories consists of similar codes as they are discussed below

Admin Scepticism. Although faculty or students' requests are applied through the university communications system, still there is little faith in the system by many of the system's supervisors and superiors. Topics such as forgery, originality and ingenuity were recurring in many of their statements. In all of the university's bureaucratic rules regarding circulations and requests, signatures have to be placed manually on hard copies and then scanned into the system. Grades have to be tabulated in the registration system, but before they publish the results on students' accounts, faculty have to provide hard-copies of hand-written rosters of students' grades and get them signed by the Department Head and the Dean. Faculty submitting promotion requests must send all their supporting documents through the system, but they have to hand over original copies of all those documents, especially hard copies of books and journals they published.

Authenticity/Originality: Many participants complained that all academic activities, certificates, and transcripts must be submitted in hard copies in person. Therefore, any request they submit through the system has to be followed up by several visits to those departments and agencies to show evidence of originality of the documents submitted. They wondered why the university cannot improve the current technological system through the creation of one department of authentication to authenticate the originality of faculty credentials at the time of their hiring and to serve as a reference in all future authentication requests.

Analysis of defendants' statements

The defendants' statements were analysed and categorized using a similar process as the Plaintiffs' accusations: Data -> Codes -> Categories -> Themes. These themes are presented below in the form

of Scenarios to contextualize and to exemplify the criminological methodology that this study aims to promote. Similar cases were combined to generate a scenario. After that, scenarios of the same sort were assembled to generate a theoretical model that explains the ways in which defendants react to accusations. There were found to be four main scenarios, which are described below. The generated model is presented after the descriptions of these six scenarios.

Scenario 1: Denying or underplaying the accusation

Defendants denied the existence of 10 offences that they were accused of (Table 3). Their denials overruled the accusations because their academic or administrative rank was higher than that of their accusers. Examples of these cases include students' complaints that they sent their assignments by email on time but did not get the grade, or requested extensions but never heard back from their professors, or applied for sick leaves but did not get them. Their professors and Department Heads responded that they did not receive those electronic messages and cases were closed. Most of these cases go unnoticed because decisions are finalized (for example, grades already entered and published on the registration system). Moreover, the rechecking process (a process where the student challenges his grade and requests his assignments or exams to be rechecked by a committee) requires a lot of paperwork and permissions.

Table 3: Summary of Scenario 1

Question	Yes/No
Did the defendant deny the existence of the offence?	✓

Question	Yes/No
Did the defendant acknowledge the existence of the offence?	X

Question	Yes/No
Did the defendant ignore the offence?	X
Did the defendant fix the offence?	X
Did the defendant defend himself?	X

Question	Yes/No
Did the defendant underplay the offence?	X
Did the defendant accuse others of committing the offence?	X

Question	Yes/No
Did the defendant counter-accuse the prosecutors?	X
Did the defendants pass the accusation on to new people?	X

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Scenario 2: Ignoring the problem or passing the blame to a different actor

In 14 cases, the defendants acknowledged the existence of the offences, but they chose to ignore them. Table 4 summarises the reactions of these defendants. Accusations in this category included faculty complaints about maintenance problems in computer labs that interrupted their educational activities and students' complaints about communication problems in online courses related to weak networks at their locations. In these cases, defendants chose to ignore the accusations because, according to them, they could do nothing about them. Department Heads acknowledged that they received many maintenance requests from faculty and students, which they forwarded in vain to the Maintenance Department. In fact, they seem to care less every time they receive new requests.

Table 4: Summary of Scenario 2.

Question	Yes/No	Question	Yes/No	Question	Yes/No	Question	Yes/No
Did the defendant deny the existence of the offence?	X						
Did the defendant acknowledge the existence of the offence?	✓	Did the defendant ignore the offence?	✓				
		Did the defendant fix the offence?	X				
		Did the defendant defend himself?	X	Did the defendant underplay the offence?	X		
				Did the defendant accuse others of committing the offence?	X	Did the defendant counter-accuse the prosecutors?	X
						Did the defendants pass the accusation on to others?	X

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Scenario 3: Admitting the accusation

In five cases (see Table 5), the defendants acknowledged their shortcomings. Some defendants confessed their unawareness of these problems and were pleased to discover them. Many of these problems happen because of lack of communication that existed between defendants and plaintiffs. Accusations in this category include students' complaints about times of makeup lectures and exams that professors chose in online courses regardless of the students' convenience or schedules. Cases were closed after defendants promised to consider these elements in their future activities as long as they are alerted to them in advance.

Table 5: Summary of Scenario 3.

Question	Yes/No	Question	Yes/No	Question	Yes/No	Question	Yes/No
Did the defendant deny the existence of the offence?	X						
Did the defendant acknowledge the existence of the offence?	✓	Did the defendant ignore the offence?	X				
		Did the defendant fix the offence?	✓				
		Did the defendant defend himself?	X	Did the defendant underplay the offence?	X		
				Did the defendant accuse others of committing the offence?		Did the defendant counter-accuse the prosecutors?	X
						Did the defendants pass the accusation on to new people?	X

Scenario 4: Counter-accusing the plaintiffs

In 11 cases, the defendants defended themselves by counter-accusing the plaintiffs (see Table 6), i.e. the defendant blamed the plaintiff. In this sense, the plaintiffs became defendants. This turned the case into a game of claims and counter-claims. These accusations included students complaining about times or structures of exams in online courses. For example, some students complained about a new policy stating that teachers can make quizzes inside the virtual lecture, using the feature of

"Polling" in the Blackboard system. Still, students find this procedure unfair, especially if they are not ready to take the quiz. Then, the defendants explained that they use this feature to confirm that the students are attentive during lectures.
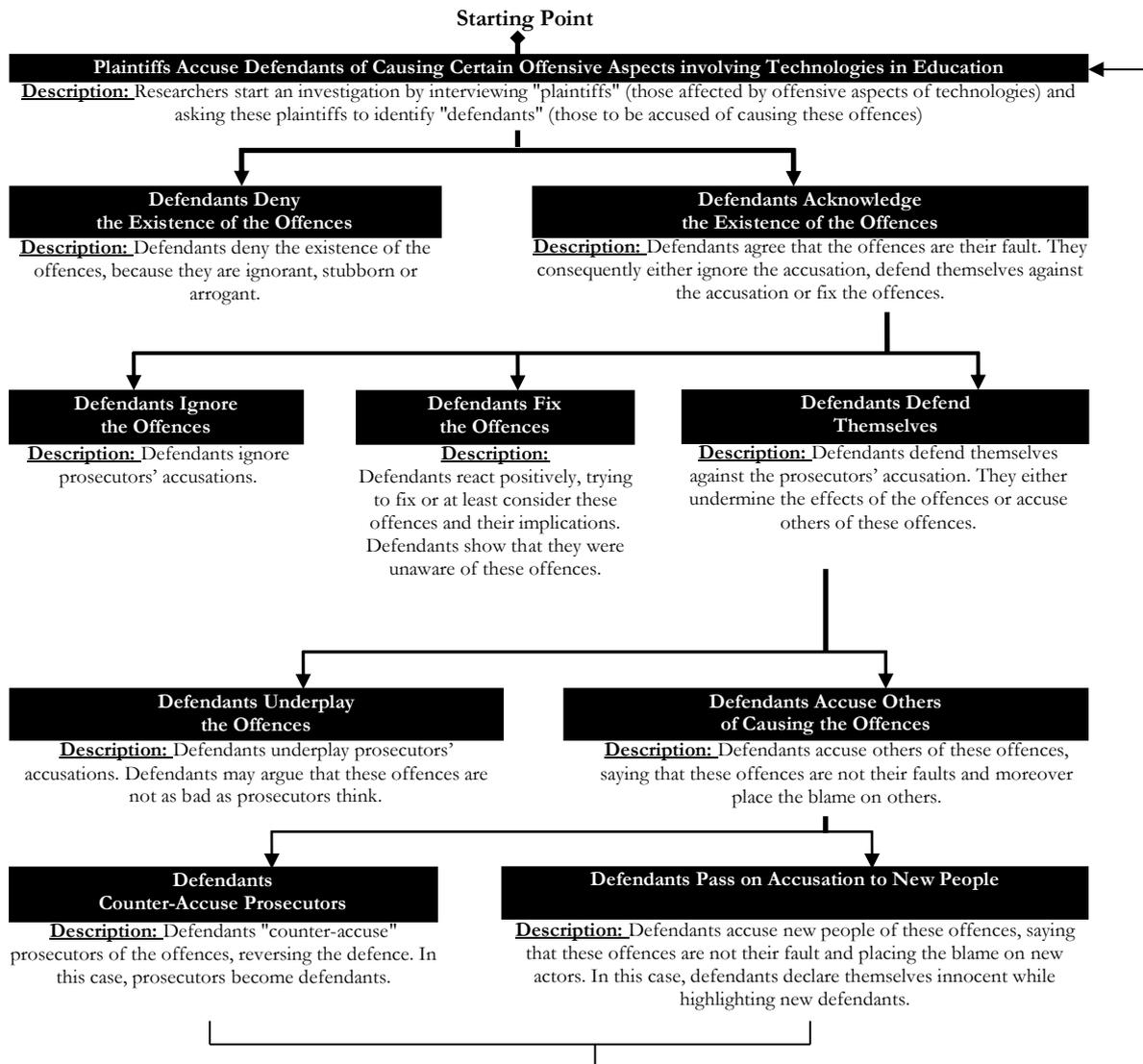
Table 6: Summary of Scenario 4

Question	Yes/No	Question	Yes/No	Question	Yes/No	Question	Yes/No
Did the defendant deny the existence of the offence?	✖						
Did the defendant acknowledge the existence of the offence?	✔	Did the defendant ignore the offence?	✖				
		Did the defendant fix the offence?	✖				
		Did the defendant defend himself?	✔	Did the defendant underplay the offence?	✖		
				Did the defendant accuse others of committing the offence?	✔	Did the defendant counter-accuse the prosecutors?	✔
						Did the defendants pass on the accusation to new people?	✖

Cross-Scenario Analysis.

The four scenarios that emerged were combined to make sense of them concurrently. This process of combining led to the emergence of a theoretical model that captures the defendants' possible responses to the plaintiffs' accusations. Defendants either deny or acknowledge the existence of a problem. If they acknowledge these problems, they tend to accept responsibility and solve these problems, ignore them, or defend themselves by finding another outlet. To defend themselves against these accusations, defendants either underplay the gravity of the matter or redirect the accusation to other agencies. Defendants may also "counter-accuse" plaintiffs. Figure 1 illustrates this model.

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Figure 1: A Methodological Model for the Detective Approach to Research

Starting Point

Plaintiffs Accuse Defendants of Causing Certain Offensive Aspects involving Technologies in Education
Description: Researchers start an investigation by interviewing "plaintiffs" (those affected by offensive aspects of technologies) and asking these plaintiffs to identify "defendants" (those to be accused of causing these offences)

Defendants Deny the Existence of the Offences	**Defendants Acknowledge the Existence of the Offences**
Description: Defendants deny the existence of the offences, because they are ignorant, stubborn or arrogant.	**Description:** Defendants agree that the offences are their fault. They consequently either ignore the accusation, defend themselves against the accusation or fix the offences.

Defendants Ignore the Offences	**Defendants Fix the Offences**	**Defendants Defend Themselves**
Description: Defendants ignore prosecutors' accusations.	**Description:** Defendants react positively, trying to fix or at least consider these offences and their implications. Defendants show that they were unaware of these offences.	**Description:** Defendants defend themselves against the prosecutors' accusation. They either undermine the effects of the offences or accuse others of these offences.

Defendants Underplay the Offences	**Defendants Accuse Others of Causing the Offences**
Description: Defendants underplay prosecutors' accusations. Defendants may argue that these offences are not as bad as prosecutors think.	**Description:** Defendants accuse others of these offences, saying that these offences are not their faults and moreover place the blame on others.

Defendants Counter-Accuse Prosecutors	**Defendants Pass on Accusation to New People**
Description: Defendants "counter-accuse" prosecutors of the offences, reversing the defence. In this case, prosecutors become defendants.	**Description:** Defendants accuse new people of these offences, saying that these offences are not their fault and placing the blame on new actors. In this case, defendants declare themselves innocent while highlighting new defendants.

Study Implications

Technology, like any other resource, remains a political instrument that can be exploited and used in many ways based on the user's intentions, a process that seems to favour some social groups over others within the same institution. This means that the structure and implementation of educational technology can be extended to maintain the hierarchy of social power, resulting in more supervision, surveillance, and control. Moreover, this politicisation of educational technology intensifies ideological and political biases from the social context surrounding the institution. For example, in the case of this study, accusations and complaints related to race, religion and gender seem to reflect the social and political controversies that surround the academic institution. This can mean that technological reform highlights broader social and cultural issues, potentially prompting broader reform.

Moreover, most of the current regulations and policies that govern academic institutions have been established long before the introduction of technology, and their influence has been clear in the design and implementation of these educational technologies. Such technology includes, for example, the language used, the list of commands provided to the users, the amount of access, and the ability

of higher authorities to supervise and control. However, these regulations and policies can be revisited from a modern, liberal perspective that supports equality, subjectivity, and personal privacy, with implications for the use of these technologies to meet students' and faculty's ambitions and aspirations.

Conclusion

The current study shows that educational technologies, much like other technologies, are responsive to human interests — irrespective of the political motivations of these interests (Whitworth, 2005; Wajcman, 2004). Constructors, implementers and users of these technologies have their own agendas; therefore, these tools can be areas of tension and offence. Moreover, individuals tend to use these technologies to prioritise their own interests, which causes conflicts and often marginalises others' interests. These encounters on technological platforms are essentially "locales" in which victims are often ignored, and many offences are overlooked. This means that educational institutions should periodically examine their usage of these technologies and improve the areas where a certain technological feature may be misused.

Similarly, educational technology should streamline bureaucratic red-tape, encourage creativity and respect difference. It should empower students and faculty to design their own profiles, schedules, courses, and learning styles which might require more training workshops to faculty and students. There should also be periodic maintenance for university labs, projectors, and smart rooms, facilitating both students' and teachers' endeavours to use that technology in an atmosphere of cooperation and friendliness.

Finally, a reform of the educational technology in place requires periodic evaluations of the institution's policies and regulations, considering the social and political changes that take place outside the institution, especially as the country is modernizing many of its social and cultural domains. These social reforms should be reflected in the educational technologies and policies in place. This would be assisted by more research on the social changes that take place in KSA, and how these changes affect the current educational practices and technologies.

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