INTEGRITY - THE CODE THAT DEFINES PERSONALITY IN THE EDUCATIONAL AND PROFESSIONAL ENVIRONMENT

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Abstract: *Integrity is the code that defines the personality of an institutional manager, a university teacher, a student, an economic agent, etc. Not coincidentally, the authors Ludmila Roşca and Constantin Lazari emphasize that the purpose of universities is to „seek and transmit the truth under the sign of science and morality." In the same vein, the authors Valentin Mureşan and Mihaela Constantinescu state that universities must also create a moral context, which can be created through seven organizational virtues: 1- clarity in moral requirements; 2- consistency in the ethical regulations of the university (ethical policies and strategies); 3- feasibility (feasibility) in implementing the moral requirements of behavior; 4- motivating university members in supporting the adoption of ethical behavior; 5- visibility in monitoring immoral behaviors; 6- evaluation of the formal and informal means through which the members can openly discuss the ethical problems and dilemmas they face in the academic environment; 7- the sanctionability of immoral behaviors. The integrity of an educational organization can be created through the prism of an „organizational culture", and the 360⁰ Feedback can serve as a way to re-evaluate the behavior of an employee / manager, etc. The integrity of an organization can also be quantified. For this purpose, for example, the IntegrityMeter Test can be applied. Integrity in the educational and professional environment can be cultivated through morality, reasoning, fairness, honesty, respectful treatment of all parties involved in educational and organizational processes, but also through the „Six-element model that can ensure integrity", namely: ethics organizational; corruption prevention and control; organizational and business skills; competitive effectiveness and efficiency; the possibility of external control; conflict resolution. An „Integrity Agreement" or „Voices of Academic Integrity" and „Voices of Corporate Integrity" can be a true philosophy of European integration.*

Key words: integrity, promoting and cultivating the integrity of the moral organization, moral university, organizational virtues, voices of academic integrity, voices of corporate integrity.

JEL Classification: I25, M14, M53

1 Introduction

This article aims to bring to the attention of the university environment and the entrepreneurial environment the dimension of INTEGRITY - the code that defines the personality of an institutional manager, of a university teacher, of a student, of an economic agent etc. In order to affirm meritocracy, ethics and academic integrity, it is necessary to cultivate certain organizational virtues and to promote *morality, reasoning, fairness, honesty, respectful treatment of all parties involved in the educational and organizational processes, the power of example.* Or, in the educational and professional environment, ***integrity*** must be conceived as a set of individual and organizational virtues without discrepancies between statements and actions. In this sense, the statement of James E. Faus is eloquent: „Integrity is the light that shines out of a disciplined consciousness" posted on the website of the *National Integrity Authority* [1]

The authors Ludmila Roşca and Constantin Lazari, in the monograph „Ethics and university integrity: experiences, achievements, problems", emphasize: „*University integrity* aims at uniting education with research, with production. As has been established historically, universities remain selective in their work today, and young people who go through a university experience remain profoundly transformed throughout their lives. The research recruits people exclusively through university training, which means that the license becomes only the basis for future selection for higher levels of personal training. And the wider the recruitment base, the greater the chances of discovering better and more endowed human resources. Today, elites, exceptionally gifted individuals, are not only trained in higher education institutions, they are trained more in masters and doctorates. And yet, the purpose of the universities remains the one established initially, from its appearance to seek and transmit the truth under the sign of science and morality. Universities should, like large companies, educate the demand, offer study programs of the future. In the 21st century, the university remains to be considered a stable institution of the future with the following characteristics: multidisciplinary, presupposes permanent education, integrates science, teaching and production, treats information appropriately and has a special work rhythm." [2, p.74]

2 Content and methods

In elaborating this article, the following methods were applied: *bibliographic documentation; question method 5W1H: Who? What? When? Where? How? Why? the method of analysis and synthesis of the literature in the approached problematics.*

How can be created the integrity of an educational institution?

Authors Valentin Mureșan and Mihaela Constantinescu state: „*A moral university is one that creates a moral context for its members by developing organizational moral virtues.*" [4, p.44]

And the authors also emphasize that this moral context can be created through the prism of ***seven organizational virtues*** necessary for a moral university, and namely:

- ***Clarity in moral requirements*** (Code of Ethics / Code of Honor / Academic Integrity Guide);
- ***Consistency in the ethical regulations of the university - ethical policies and strategies -*** (the model of conduct of teachers towards students, hierarchical superiors towards its staff must be one in accordance with the moral, ethical requirements of the university);
- ***Feasibility in implementing the moral requirements of behavior that can be realistically achieved by its members***, taking into account the availability of the necessary resources of time, knowledge, equipment, budget or authority (exaggerated requirements of research results should not lead to a possible violation of the moral rules, to the fabrication of the data of a study);
- ***Motivating university members in supporting the adoption of ethical behavior*** (encouraging members of the academic community to report the immoral actions of members of the academic community);
- ***Visibility in monitoring immoral behaviors*** (how the academic community evaluates / monitors the violation of moral rules and what measures are taken to identify and sanction);
- ***Evaluate the formal and informal means by which members can openly discuss the ethical issues and dilemmas they face in academia*** (for example, in the Ethics Committee, with the involvement of an ethics advisor, organizing ethics trainings etc.)

- ***Sanctionability of immoral behaviors*** (we evaluate the way in which moral rules are violated and sanctioning copying / cheating on exam / plagiarism / falsification of data / deviations, etc.) and rewarding the moral behaviors of members of the academic community. [4, p.47]

In support *of the first two organizational virtues -* ***clarity in moral requirements*** and ***consistency in the ethical regulations of the university*** *-* we also exemplify the position of authors Ludmila Roşca and Constantin Lazari who state: „The codes of ethics in higher education institutions must contain clear, explicit formulations of the values, ideals, principles and moral norms that the members of the university community agree and undertake to respect." They contain positive principles and norms that show the moral standards that need to be observed, and in case of their violation, the punitive norms apply. Among the essential values and principles that need to be promoted by higher education institutions are: *justice and fairness, professionalism, merit, honesty and intellectual fairness, respect and tolerance, responsibility, academic freedom, personal autonomy, goodwill and care.*" [2, pp.57-58]

Regarding *the third organizational virtue -* ***feasibility in implementing the moral requirements of behavior*** *-* the authors Ludmila Roşca and Constantin Lazari state: „It is necessary for them to possess not only the knowledge and skills required by employers, but also to manifest proactive behaviors and attitudes, able to generate as much added value for the customer as possible for employers. It is necessary to know and agree on the concepts of functional market economy, the role of the university as the main external client of the economic environment, provider of intangible products (competence, knowledge), services (training, research, consulting, training, design, etc.). (...) The process of customer satisfaction, the requirements of the customers in the process of selecting the product, service, manufacturer, provider, are increasingly directed not only to their meaning and identity, but to respect moral values and ethical norms. Under these conditions, the university must know completely and correctly the requirements / needs of the society and the economic environment, so that later, after providing the products / services, it can collect the reactions of satisfaction or dissatisfaction. If a university, for various reasons, does not accept these requirements, it will simply be overtaken by other universities that agree to enter this game, which will consequently have more and more customers willing to pay because they will be sure - after graduating from university they will be hired faster. The lack of such a practice in higher education also leads to the fact that, currently, more and more graduates cannot work or are forced to work in other fields, or to continue their studies in other fields, last but not least, to emigrate. In the member states of the European Union, the university has an important role in achieving **benchmarking** (the standard based on which something can be measured or assessed) not only in academia, but also economically. This technique of evaluating the performance of an organization in terms of its quality consists of an in-depth evaluation and detailed analysis of the practices, processes and results of a particular university (organization) considered as a reference leader, a strong competitor recognized in the market. The goal is to compare their own performances, practices, processes, services, products, etc. with those of the leader and to identify certain practical, viable solutions that would allow, consequently, to increase one's own competitiveness. Thus, there is an exchange of experience, the principle is applied *„If they could, we can too! If they succeed, we will succeed*

too!", and the university establishes new objectives, plans and action programs that allow it to gain the desired competitive advantages." [2, pp.89-90]

Regarding the *fifth organizational virtue - **visibility in monitoring immoral behaviors*** - the authors Ludmila Roşca and Constantin Lazari emphasize: „A necessary condition for the proper functioning of all activities in the university environment is the achievement of the principle of transparency. Thus, honest information is provided, meant to stimulate well-founded and constructive criticism. At the same time, the misinformation, falsification or distortion of the information to which the members of the university community, the general public, as well as any form of concealment or manipulation of the relevant information and facts are entitled, shall be prohibited." [2, p.85]

In regards to the *sixth organizational virtue - **the evaluation of formal and informal means by which members can openly discuss the ethical issues and dilemmas they face in academia*** - authors Ludmila Roşca and Constantin Lazari state: „For a Code of Ethics to be applicable, there must be a mechanism for its implementation, which involves the existence of a body (of people) responsible for supervising and controlling compliance with the code, creating and operating a system of complaints about code violations, familiarizing members of the university community about the provisions of the code, applying sanctions in case of code deviations, publicity of information about non-compliance with the code. The Commission of university ethics is the body that must supervise the practical application of the Code of Ethics. It includes persons with professional prestige and moral authority, representing teachers, students and administrative staff of the institution. The Commission must examine violations of the code, protect members of the university community from abuse, denigration, slander, and apply, as appropriate, sanctions to persons who violate the provisions of the code. The Commission operates on the basis of a statute (regulation) which is an integral part of the Code of University Ethics." [2, p.58]

Regarding *the seventh organizational virtue - **the sanction of immoral behaviors*** - the authors Ludmila Roşca and Constantin Lazari emphasize: „In the university environment, honesty and intellectual correctness are mandatory both for teachers and researchers, as well as for students and administrative staff. (...) Lack of academic honesty can be manifested by deception, facilitating deception, fabricating data, obtaining undue advantages, etc. The right to intellectual property needs to be defended, and the benefits and rewards to be granted strictly professionally and only to those who have proven and recognized merits. Intellectual property includes inventions and copyrights for different categories of works." [2, p.84]

So how can the integrity of an organization be created?

***Integrity** is essential for the organizational environment just as man needs air.* Or, practitioners are right when they notice that it is unlikely that a customer will agree to work with a company that does not have an ethical, moral behavior toward him (when misleading him) and, unlikely, that employee's pleasure to go to work in an environment where deviations from integrity (through inappropriate management and motivation practices) is the norm.

Here is an example quoted by the *HR Passion Blog*: „When the employee is subjected to pressure (especially verbal), without written coverage from the manager, in which he is asked to violate certain rules with more or less legal impact, to have inappropriate behavior is a „bullying game." How can the truth of what the employee said be proven without supporting documents and

what is the connection with what we call the „organizational culture" of that company? The situation can be reversed, but it will be a little easier for the manager, having more ways of coercion. In such a context, the truth is confused with the game of manipulation and no matter how right the person would be, in the absence of written evidence, his „truths" are null. He helplessly witnesses a real process, in which everyone is involved and few are those who do it in depth, in which to re-evaluate both the employee's skills, his integrity and the integrity of the manager, the criteria based on which he was elected manager. The connection with the dimension of *organizational culture* is obvious - the promoted people have or should have those values on which the organizational culture was built (for example, integrity, respect, decision-making regardless of their nature). *The 360 feedback* as a way to re-evaluate the two parties involved is obviously useful, but it is also subjective, each of us knows the other only in a certain situation and relates not to the case itself, but to their own experience with that person" [3]

### *How can the integrity of an organization be quantified?*

Undoubtedly, behaviors are the only ones that can be measured. Thus, in a collection interview with Daniela Corciova, one of the key managers of „Integrity Meter" (Romania) mentions: „Experience in the field of human resources and security has helped to immediately understand the benefits that the test can bring. I noticed a need of Romanian organizations to verify not only the skills and professionalism of a candidate, but also his integrity. In the past, the only way to do such a check was a background check or a polygraph test. The same need was identified 12 years ago in Israel by Menachem Gozlan, an expert in polygraph investigations and testing, and Dotan Shavit, an expert in software development. Together they created the **„Integrity Meter Test."** [3] According to Daniela Corciova, *the Integrity Meter Test* can be applied and can have significant results regardless of the field of activity and the position tested. It is assumed that most candidates are honest, but a single inappropriate employee can unbalance an organization.

So how can integrity be cultivated in the educational and professional environment?

Of course, ***cultivating integrity*** in the educational and professional environment requires ***morality, reasoning, fairness, honesty*** and ***treating with respect all parties involved in the educational and organizational processes***. One of the best ways leaders can promote this type of behavior in teams is by *the power of example*. An honest leader will make his team act and behave similarly, thus ensuring a working style.

Given the fact that companies are diversifying and employees are people with different backgrounds and values, it is recommended to reach an *agreement of conduct*, *an integrity contract*, especially when there is a risk of conflicts (similar to the *integrity pact* - objective and responsible monitoring of public money spending, being essential in ensuring transparency and, in the long run, democracy).

Oscar Daniel Franco Conforti, professor of *Legal argumentation and negotiation* (Universidad Oberta, Cataluña) proposes a ***model of six elements that can ensure integrity***: [5]
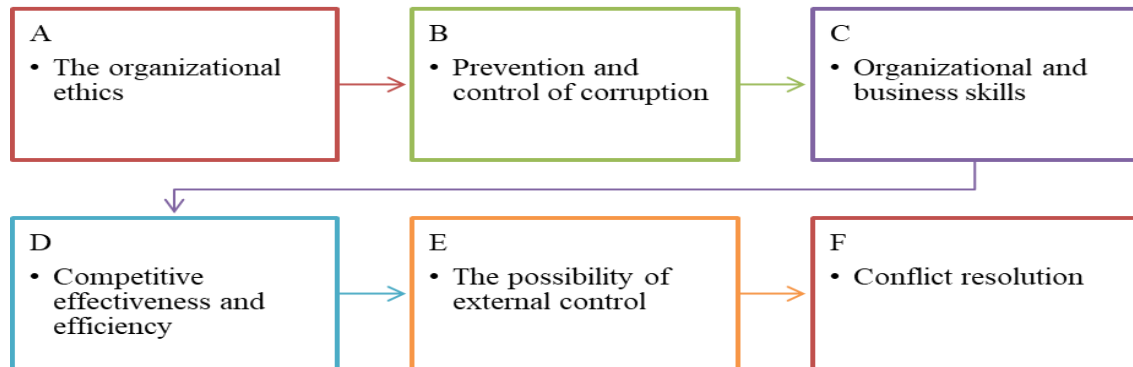
Figure 1 The six key elements of integrity

Source: based on Daniel Franco Conforti (2018)

3 Conclusions

Therefore, **integrity** *motivates us towards mutual respect, ethical educational environment, secure employment, fair wages, intellectual property rights, compliance with certain privacy policies, social media and the media, correct decisions and coherent actions in promoting innovation, diversity and inclusion, improving the quality of life, serving the community*. The elaboration and weekly publication of a ***Journal of Academic Integrity*** (intended for the university environment) and a ***Bulletin of organizational integrity*** (intended for employees) - would be a good premise for promoting and cultivating an ***„Integrity agreement"*** with a generic as valuable, so promising: „***Voices of academic integrity***", respectively „***Voices of corporate integrity***". [6] Or, the philosophy of European integration is also reflected in the principle: „***If they could, we can too! If they succeed, we will succeed too***!"

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