“Safety” v “Privacy”: a 21st century clash of ideals?
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Abstract:
In recent times, especially since September 11, 2001, much intellectual debate has centred on the dilemma confronting western democracies which seek to keep their citizens safe without entirely abandoning the liberal belief in human rights and individual freedom.

This debate has tended to be played out on a global, macro level, involving increased powers for intelligence organisations involved in combating terrorism and the threat this presents to individual freedoms, especially privacy. However, the same issues confront educational systems and individual schools, colleges and universities who are charged with the apparently conflicting duties of ensuring the safety of their staff, students and visitors, while at the same time protecting the personal information and privacy of individuals.

This presentation will argue that, in fulfilling these duties, both society as a whole and we as educators need to examine what we mean by the concepts of “safety” and “privacy”, how to weigh the value of each concept against the other and only then to set out to maximize the protection of both. The presentation will encompass both a theoretical examination of the concepts of “safety” and “privacy” and a survey of the legal protections of each which apply to educational institutions in a range of jurisdictions. This will lead to a discussion as to whether these protections can operate in a way that leads to reasonable levels of both safety and personal autonomy.

Key Words:
Safety; Privacy; Human Rights; Education

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