Academic Dishonesty: Issues and Challenges

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Abstract : *Academic integrity refers to the ethical standards and policies that govern how different people work and interact in the academic enterprise at a school, college and university level. Academic dishonesty consists of any deliberate attempt to falsify, fabricate or otherwise tamper with data, information, records, or any other material that is relevant to the students' participation in any course, laboratory, or other academic exercise or function. In this paper, an attempt has been made to study the critical issues related to academic dishonesty, challenges ahead and some suggestions to address these issues. It is the need of hour, at this juncture, that all stakeholders, decision makers and policy framers to discuss about the strategies to cope with the problems in a more relevant and sustainable way. This article examines the nature of academic dishonesty and strategies to lessen incidences based on proven practices.*

Keywords: *Integrity, Academic Enterprise, Fabricate, Dishonesty.*

Introduction

Academic integrity is a virtue advocated by all educational institutions, teachers, administrators, students universally. Dishonest academic behaviour is prevalent in many colleges and universities across the globe (Brown 2002; Davis, Noble, Zak, and Dryer 1994; Magnus, Polterovish, Danilov, and Savvateev 2002; Mwamwenda and Monyooe, 2000; Vencat, 2006). Further, Meade (1992) revealed that a dishonesty rate among undergraduates at top universities in the United States is 87 percent. On the other hand, Diekhoff et.al (1999) found that Japanese students were involved in various acts of academic dishonesty at a rate of 55 percent. Lupton and Chapman (2000, 2002) reported a dishonesty rate of 64 per cent in Russia. The problem of academic dishonesty is not only prevailing in the above mentioned countries of the world, but in almost all the educational institutions of the globe. To curb the academic dishonesty, the Indian government passed an Act in 1992 providing for stiff punishments, including imprisonment, for cheating (The Economist, 1994). Despite the severity of the problem, a comprehensive literature research produced no systematic studies of academic dishonesty in India. It is, therefore, important that a serious effort has to be made to critically evaluate the factors that underlie academic dishonesty among students in India. Such an attempt will provide insights that can be used to develop a set of academic and administrative strategies to manage the problem of dishonesty both effectively and efficiently. The purpose of this article is to understand the problem of academic dishonesty in right perspective and identify the reasons for it.To ensure academic honesty is a challenge for traditional classrooms, but it is more for online course where we use technology for learning and

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instruction. This article examines why students cheat and plagiarize, types of dishonesty, and strategies to minimize violations. Academic dishonesty consists of any deliberate attempt to falsify, fabricate or otherwise tamper with data, information, records, or any other material that is relevant to the students' participation in any course, laboratory, or other academic exercise or function. Both faculty members and students have the responsibility of upholding the principles of academic integrity. The faculty and staff members should create an environment in which honesty is encouraged, dishonesty is discouraged and integrity is openly discussed. All the faculty members should follow the principles of academic integrity in their own behaviour, work and conduct. Students are obligated not only to follow these principles, but also to take an active role in encouraging other students to respect them. If students suspect a violation of academic integrity, they should make their suspicions known to a faculty member or staff member in academic affairs. Almost all the types of academic dishonesty described and discussed in this article have to do with working with others or using the work of others. This is not to suggest that working with others or using their work is wrong. Indeed, the heart of the academic enterprise, learning itself, is based on using the ideas of others to stimulate and develop your own. In this sense, all academic work is collaboration, and therefore, academic integrity focuses on those acts that invalidate fruitful collaboration. Gallant (2008) describes five categories of academic dishonesty as follows (p. 10):

Plagiarism: using another's words or ideas without appropriate attribution or without following citation conventions;

Fabrication: making up data, results, information, or numbers, and recording and reporting them;

Falsification: manipulating research, data, or results to inaccurately portray information in reports (research, financial, or other) or academic assignments;

Misrepresentation: falsely representing oneself, efforts, or abilities; and

Misbehavior: acting in ways that are not overtly misconduct but are counter to prevailing behavioral expectations.

It may be true that technologies provide more opportunities to cheat. Turnitin (2011), a company that provided plagiarism detection software, found that many online tools are used as sources.

- About one-third of plagiarized material can be traced to social networking sites and frequently asked questions services.
- Approximately 15% of material that is plagiarized is associated with services that promote and provide ways to plagiarize and cheat.
- The most commonly used source for plagiarized material is Wikipedia.

Types of Academic Dishonesty

The most prevailing academic dishonesty is as under:

Cheating

Using or attempting to use unauthorized materials in any academic exercise or having someone else does work for you. The examples of cheating include: looking at another student's paper during a test, bringing an answer sheet to a test, obtaining a copy of a test prior to the test date or submitting homework borrowed from another student.

Fabrication

Inventing or falsifying information. The examples of fabrication include: inventing data for an experiment you did not do or did not do correctly or making reference to sources you did not use in a research paper.

Facilitating Academic Dishonesty

Helping someone else to commit an act of academic dishonesty. This includes: giving someone a paper or homework to copy from or allowing someone to cheat from your test paper

Plagiarism

Using the words or ideas of another writer without attribution, which seem as if they are your own. Plagiarism ranges from copying someone else's work word for word, to rewriting someone else's work with only minor word changes (mosaic plagiarism), to summarizing work without acknowledging the source.

Multiple Submissions

Submitting work you have done in previous classes as if it were new and original work. Although professors may occasionally be willing to let you use previous work as the basis of new work, they expect you to do new work for each class. Students seeking to submit a piece of work to more than one class must have the written permission of both instructors.

Abuse of Academic Materials

Harming, appropriating or disabling academic resources so that others cannot use them. This includes cutting tables and illustrations out of books to use in a paper, stealing books or articles and deleting or damaging computer files intended for others' use.

Deception and Misrepresentation

Misrepresenting work, academic records or credentials, e.g. forging signatures, forging letters of recommendation and falsifying credentials.

Electronic Dishonesty

Using network access inappropriately in a way that affects a class or other students' academic work. The examples of electronic dishonesty include: using someone else's authorized computer account to send and receive messages, breaking into someone else's files, gaining access to restricted files, disabling others' access to network systems or files, knowingly spreading a computer virus or obtaining a computer account under false tricks.

Carelessness

Students sometimes make minor mistakes in completing academic assignments. Mistyping one of many endnotes in a long paper, for example, may in most cases be considered a careless mistake, rather than an act of deliberate dishonesty.When students make multiple mistakes in acknowledging sources, however, these mistakes cannot be considered simply careless. Students who copy long passages from a book or a web source, for example, make a deliberate choice to do so. Such students have taken a short cut; instead of explaining the source of their ideas, they have simply stolen ideas from others. In such cases, carelessness is a form of dishonesty.

Common Forms of Academic Dishonesty

The common forms of academic dishonesty are as under:

Dishonesty on Examination

- Using crib notes on a test.
- Copying from another student on a test, with or without his or her knowledge.
- Using unfair methods to find out in advance what will be on a test.
- Cheating on a test in some other way.
- Helping someone else cheat on a test.
- Taking an examination for someone else or having someone take an examination for you.
- Changing an answer after an examination was graded and reporting it as a scoring error.
- Giving a false excuse for missing an examination or a deadline.

Dishonesty on Written Paper

- Copying a few sentences or paragraphs of material from a published source including internet and without footnoting.
- Falsifying quotations
- Fabricating or falsifying a bibliography
- Listing real but unread sources in a bibliography.
- Having a paper corrected for spelling, grammar and mechanics when those items will be graded
- Using a paper for more than one class without professor approval.

Dishonesty on Paper or Class Work

- Copying material and turning it in as one's own.
- Turning in someone else's work as one's own.
- Collaborating on an assignment when the instructor has asked for individual work.
- Receiving substantial, unauthorized help on an assignment.
- Allowing someone to copy your work.
- Writing lab report without doing the experiment.
- Falsifying lab data.
- Falsely claim to have handed in a paper or class work.
- Reading Cliff's notes or some other condensed material rather than the assigned text.
- Reading an assignment in English when it is assigned in a foreign language.
- Not doing one's fair share of group work.
- Removing items from a reserved file so that others cannot use them.
- Signing an attendance sheet and then immediately leaving the class.
- Signing an attendance sheet for an absent student.

Major Issues in Academic Dishonesty

In general, students cheat for a variety of reasons. Chiesl (2009) identified several common reasons that students cheat, in general, across educational settings. These include: fear of failure, desire for better grades, pressure from parents to do well, unclear instructional objectives, "everyone else is doing it", "there is little chance of being caught" and "there is no punishment if I get caught" (p. 329). Faucher and Caves (2009) identify a variety of reasons that students cheat, including the pressure to succeed indicated by high grades getting away with something, lack of organizational skills, and fear of failing a course (loss of time and money). Dee and Jacob (2010) believe that students have a poor understanding of academy dishonesty and, therefore, they are either ignorant that they are being dishonest or they don't value the reason for being honest. Whether motivation to succeed, peer standards of behaviour or ignorance are the reasons, there is convincing evidence that most students have cheated in their university experience, however, they may not understand that what they have done is actually unethical. There is a commonly reported perception that students cheat on assessments in online learning because it is not clear what constitutes cheating or expectations are not clear due to the delivery mode itself (Dee and Jacob, 2010). However, Loschiavo and Shatz (2011) report that while three-quarters of students in their study sample reported cheating on online quizzes, when honour codes were clearly articulated this number decreased significantly. Thus, how expectations are presented may impact rates of dishonesty. Additionally, dishonesty may have roots in the student. There is evidence that students who cheat on tests are self-deceptive in other areas of their lives (Chance, Norton, Gino, and Arlely, 2011). In online environments it may be difficult, if not impossible, for instructors to determine or appraise student disposition. Thus, understanding students and being proactive in the design and implementation of an online course may impact student behaviour.

Strategies to Minimize Academic Dishonesty

Academic integrity embodies the principle that students' work is genuine and original, completed only with the assistance allowed according to the rules, policies and guidelines of the University. In particular, the words, ideas, scholarship and intellectual property of others used in the work must be appropriately acknowledged. Breaches of academic integrity include: plagiarism, collusion, the fabrication or deliberate misrepresentation of data, and failure to adhere to the rules regarding examinations in such a way as to gain unfair academic advantage. Every individual student is responsible for ensuring that they are fully informed about methods of acknowledgement appropriate to any piece of assessable work that they submit. McCabe and Pavela (1997) identified the following ten principles of academic integrity: (i) affirm the importance of academic integrity; (ii) foster love of learning; (iii) treat students as ends in themselves; (iv) promote an environment of trust in the classroom; (v) encourage student responsibility for academic integrity; (vi) clarify expectations for students; (vii) develop fair and relevant forms of assessment; (viii) reduce opportunities to engage in academic dishonesty; (ix) challenge academic dishonesty when it occurs; and (x) help define and support campus-wide academic integrity standards. Some strategies to prevent academic dishonesty relate in part to the offense (plagiarism, false identity, cheating), institutional policies, and configurations of technology are as follows:

- Academic integrity expectations should be made clear to all stake holders involved in the teaching learning process. Defining academic dishonesty and providing a clear policy in the syllabus and in other locations in the course communicates a clear message to students the importance of ethical behavior as well as the consequences of dishonesty.

- Design test items that allow the student to use their text so they are less tempted to search the Internet for the correct answer.

- Design questions that build on prior course work, requiring knowledge that has already been covered and assessed (Krsak, 2007).

- Make tests available the day it is offered, no earlier, setting specific and time-based periods for taking the test (Cluskey, Ehlen, &Raiborn, 2011; Krsak, 2007).

- Check both start and submission times so that assessment duration can be monitored. Monitoring can indicate possible cheating or document forced technology interruptions.

- Create an honour statement that students sign for each test, project, and paper where students pledge that they have not plagiarized or cheated on the work they have submitted.

- Create examination environments that discourage cheating.

- Do not permit cell phones, hats, or sun glasses.

- Use alternate forms of test for adjacent seats.

- Create system to account for test materials and bluebooks.

- Define your expectations about group collaboration verses individual work product.

- Define guidelines for "take home examinations".

- Clearly describe your standards for citing materials that are taken from other sources.

- Discuss appropriate use of internet sources.

- Warn students that you may use search engines to check suspicious passages in reports and essays.

- Minimize opportunities for plagiarism. Faculty should endeavour to design learning environments and assignments that encourage students to investigate, analyse, and synthesize information.

- Rewarding critical thinking and process-oriented work will diminish opportunity for and interest in plagiarism.

- Spend time at the beginning of the term discussing standards of academic scholarship and conduct.

- Include a policy for using sources in your syllabus. Define a policy that clearly explains the consequences of both plagiarism and the misuse or inaccurate citation of sources. Teach students what plagiarism is and how to avoid it.

- Clarify the distinctions between plagiarism, paraphrasing, and direct citation. Discuss with students the difficulty of writing good academic papers. Emphasize that learning to write is a process that involves practice.

- Cultivate a classroom climate that encourages honesty. This includes: assuring students that they can succeed in the course without resorting to cheating.

- Promote the benefits of integrity in your classroom by celebrating learning for learning sake and reassuring students that everybody isn't doing it.

- Make your assignments specific. The broader a paper topic, the easier it is for students to turn to the internet for content. Design assignments that require the student to analyse and synthesize information learned in class. Assignments should be challenging but not overwhelming; topics that are too difficult invite cheating.

- Change the assignment each time you teach a course. This will prevent students from appropriating other students' work from previous semesters, or even recycling their own work from the first time they took the course.

- Teach students how to evaluate sources. Provide opportunities for students to discuss the quality of the content and context of their sources with you and one another, through class discussions.

- Encourage student responsibility.

Conclusion

We believe that it is possible to have an impact on the amount of dishonesty that occurs in our campuses, but this will certainly take some effort on the part of bothstudents and faculty members. We believe that if we as faculty encourage student responsibility, have open and frank discussions about academic dishonesty, are more willing to respond when students cheat, and focus on ways to engage students and improve our teaching, the current culture surrounding dishonesty will start to change. We all must realize that it is the mutual responsibilities of students and instructors to maintain academic integrity. The age-old concern of academic dishonesty is a pervasive issue that all instructors must face (Abbott, Siskovic, Nogues, and Williams, 2000). However, the incidences of academic dishonesty can be significantly reduced if instructors are proactive, vigilant, and are willing to welcome the challenge of creating 'cheat-proof' course materials (Van Belle, n.d.).

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