THE VIRTUE OF ACADEMIC INTEGRITY: PREVALENCE, ANTECEDENTS AND INTERVENTION MEASURES

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Abstract

This paper explores literature on one of the most rampant vices (academic dishonesty) that have existed in institutions of learning for many years. A number of studies have documented and demonstrated alarming cases of academic dishonesty in several countries. Kenya has not been spared and a number of measures have been put in place to deal with the vice in learning institutions and national examinations. Academic dishonesty poses a significant threat to the academic integrity of institutions of learning as well as the proper development of students' academic skills, since it undermines the learning process. Research evidence points at some factors that have contributed to lack of academic integrity among students including: pressure for good performance, heavy academic workload, pressure to please family and guardians, lack of awareness of institutional regulations, poor language skills, limited access to reading materials, peer influence, lack of ethics in a self-centered society, readily available internet information among others. These factors can be categorized as either individual or contextual. Among the interventions measures that have been tested and found to work to some extend include honor codes, detection measures, discontinuation from pursuing studies and cancellation of examination results. Despite the tough measures, the problem has not been completely eliminated. To minimize the problem, there is need to evaluate research undertakings with the aim of putting in place tried and tested methods that have been shown to improve the integrity of the examination process like what has been done in the past years in relation to the Kenyan national end of primary and secondary examinations.

Key words: Academic integrity, prevalence, intervention, academic dishonest

1.0 Introduction

Academic dishonesty manifests itself through several forms of cheating. This behavior poses a serious threat to the academic integrity of the individual and the institutions involved. Certainly, academic dishonesty is an individual, institutional as well as a societal problem. It affects the candidates involved, the institution, faculty, and the administration (Boehm, et al., 2009; Decoo, 2002; Fontana, 2009; Lipka, 2009; Rosamond, 2002; Wilkerson, 2009). Employers are likely to avoid candidates from institutions associated with academic dishonesty since they are likely to taint the image of the organization.

Dishonesty, both in academic and employment sectors, has been a part of human problem since ancient times. For instance, in ancient China, civil service job applicants were separated during exams to prevent cheating, since the penalty for being caught was death (Jackson, Levine, Furnham& Burr, 2002). According to Jackson et al., theft by employees is responsible for the loss of between 5 and 50 billion dollars per year. Dishonesty and lack of integrity in the work place is likely to be an extension of lack of virtue of character that learners failed to develop while in school.

Academic integrity is a critical benchmark of every profession. In the past, special attention has been dedicated to addressing academic dishonesty (AD) in various levels of education with an aim of preventing the potential transfer of bad practice to the workplace. In order to effectively address AD in institutions of learning, information about prevalence, causes and barriers to effective intervention strategies is needed. This paper is an attempt to bring to light research evidence pertaining to issues surrounding academic integrity that no doubt compromises the ability of professionals to be innovative in their areas of specialization. The question arises as to why teachers and other educators would condone, perpetuate and aid learners to get involved in academic dishonesty in order to achieve high academic grades that will eventually earn them a job and hence transfer the problem of integrity into the job market.

Academic integrity is important because the people you deal with can trust and rely on you to act honestly and fairly in whatever responsibilities are assigned to you in a learning institution and in your future career. When people know that you believe in doing the right thing, and that your behavior is consistent with that belief, they trust you. People of good integrity develop the reputation of being honest, fair, trustworthy, reliable and so on.

The school curriculum covers mainly three domains (cognitive, psychomotor and affective). The affective domain whose main concern is to ensure the development of good character including good morals, is put to test when learners engage in academic malpractices that are later mirrored in the larger society. Higher levels of education tend to concentrate on the cognitive domain at the expense of the other two.

Maintaining academic integrity is important for an institution because it provides value to the academic qualifications acquired as well as the institution. Employers prefer to hire graduates whom they believe to have high personal integrity in addition to good qualification.

Acting with integrity is beneficial to the individual since it can reduce a lot of unnecessary stress in life, making one happier, healthier, and more productive. A candidate who goes into an examination room with an intention of cheating may suffer unwarranted anxiety that may interfere with the normal thinking process to an extent of performing poorly when the chance to cheat is thwarted or do not arise.

Academic cheating can occur at either the institutional or individual level. At the institutional level, attempts are made to have inflated scores perhaps to ensure that students do well. This might happen at transitional levels where the awarding body is external.

2.0 The Concept of Virtue of character, Academic Integrity and Dishonesty

Academic integrity involves upholding ethical standards in all aspects of academic work, including learning, teaching and research. It involves acting with the principles of honesty, fairness, trust and responsibility (University of Wollongong, 2017). Academic integrity is a broad and inclusive term used to identify ethical conduct in educational contexts.

Academic integrity involves honesty in the preparation, completion, and submission of assignments and examinations, as well as the interactions that occur among students, and between educators and their students (Bertram Gallant & Drinan in Can J High Educ. 38(2):25–44, 2008;Devlin in J High Educ. Policy Manage 28(1):45–58, 2006).

On the other hand, Guthrie (2009) defines academic dishonesty (AD) as any academic behaviour that does not comply with stated assessment requirements and other institutional policies; when students behave in ways intended to gain undue benefit in relation to their assessment. A virtueis a traitof character, manifested in habitual actions that are good for a person to have. The term also refers to the quality of doing what is right and avoiding what is wrong.

Adams State University in the United States of America provides a list of academic dishonesty behaviours including, but not limited to the following:

- Copying from another student's examination,
- Purchase of a term paper and turning it in as one's own,
- Feigning illness to avoid an examination,
- Submission of the same term paper to another class without permission,
- Studying of a copy of an examination prior to taking a make-up examination,
- Providing another student answers during an examination,
- Use of notes or book during an examination when prohibited,
- Turning in a "dry lab" without doing the experiment,
- Sabotage of someone else's work (on disk, in lab, etc.),
- Collaboration on homework or take-home examinations when instruction called for independent work,
- Providing test questions to student,
- Sharing of answers during an examination by using a system of signals,
- Plagiarism: appropriating or passing off as one's own work the writings and ideas of another person, i.e., copying without giving credit due, forgery, literary theft, or expropriation of the worker of others,
- Writing assignments for another student,
- Alteration or forging of official university document,
- Violation of copyright(s),
- Cheating on examinations, papers, and assignments,
- Purchasing or requesting the service of completing course requirements from a third party source,

- Utilization of unapproved electronic devices during testing (i.e. cell phones, tablets, media players, etc.),
- Coercing a third party to complete an examination on your behalf,
- Providing or falsifying information on registration, examination request forms, etc.,
- Supplying or using work or answers that are not your own,
- Providing or accepting assistance in completing assignments or examinations,
- Interfering in any way with someone else's work, and
- Stealing an examination or solution from the teacher.

Plagiarism which is a serious form of academic dishonesty occurs when a person represents someone else's words, ideas, phrases, sentences, or data as one's own work (Higbee& Thomas, 2002). When submitting work that includes someone else's words, ideas, phrases, data or organizational patterns, the source of that information must be acknowledged through complete, accurate and specific references. All word for word statements must be acknowledged through quotation marks. This is a more serious violation at postgraduate level.

3.0 Prevalence of Academic Dishonesty

Academic dishonesty may be more widespread than one can imagine. It may not be possible to get statistical data from all parts of the world. However, available research shows that it is a universal phenomenon to be found in many geographical regions of the world. Empirical studies indicate that cheating by students in post-secondary institutions is prevalent in many countries, including Poland, Germany, Spain, Portugal, the Middle East, Nigeria and Taiwan (Hughes, Butler, Kritsonis&Herrington, 2007; Teixeira & Rocha, 2008; McCabe, Feghali& Abdallah, 2008; Olasehinde-Williams, Abdullahi&Owolabi, 2003; Lin & Wen, 2007).

In their survey of undergraduate students in Western Pennsylvania Lord and Chiodo (1995) found that 83% of the respondents had cheated in the past or during the current academic year, 80% had admitted to using crib notes or written science terminologies on their shoes, wrists or other parts of their bodies during minor quizzes and over three quarters admitted cheating on major examinations and projects.

A survey of 700,000 students in America, 80% of the respondents admitted as having engaged in academic dishonesty (Clayton, 1999; Morales, 2000). Approximately 80% of high achieving high school students and 75% of college students admitted having cheated (Anderman, 2000). About 88% faculty members as have been reported as having witnessed academically dishonest behaviors in their students (Morales, 2000). According to kiogotho (2009), nearly 21% of students who say cheating is bad still engage in the behavior. Kenya has not been spared from this vice. According to Siringi (2009), over 60% of students in colleges and universities in Kenya admitted having cheated in examinations. According to Khaemba (2008), 1.5% of students who sat for Kenya Certificate of Secondary Education (KCSE) examination were reported to have cheated. In the year 2008 KCSE examinations Masaba District had 0.56% cases of cheating, second to Migori District which had 0.79%. During the 2017 KCSE examination, results for 1,205 candidates

alleged to have been involved cheating were cancelled (Magoha, 2018).

In a study conducted by Lambert et al. (2003), 83% of students admitted to have been involved in some form of cheating. Some students reported being involved in the vice more than once. Research evidence among researchers suggest that plagiarism is on the rise in Western countries (Ashworth, Freewood, & Macdonald, 2003; Hayes &Introna, 2005). The reasons why students plagiarize are varied and include academic pressures, poor planning, poor preparation, excessive workload, opportunities for cheating, cultural background, and prominent bad examples in society (Thomas, 2004).

Research in high schools show that 75% of students cheat on tests, and 90% cheat on homework. Similar findings have been reported in colleges. Moreover, it is evident that the rate of cheating have gone up over the past three decades (Stephens, 2004).

In a study of 291 science students, 50% of them admitted to have cheated using the internet (Szabo & Underwood, 2004). Brandt (2002) found that students plagiarized in various ways including the following:

  i.   Stealing material from another source and passing it off as their own;
  ii. Submitting a paper written by someone else and submitting it as one's own;
  iii. Copying sections of material from one or more sources and deleting the full reference; and

  iv. Paraphrasing material from one or more source(s) without providing acknowledgement.

Despite the tough measures taken against examination cheats including cancellation of results and suspension from sitting for the examinations again, examination cheating seems to persist in many parts of Kenya.

4.0 Antecedents of Academic Dishonesty

There are a number reasons that make students to engage in academic dishonesty practices. Society has always insisted that students must acquire good qualifications for future employment, financial security, and for personal reasons (Choi, 2010; Cohen & Brawer, 2003; McCabe, Butterfield, & Trevino, 2006). Students often believe that they will receive better and well-paying jobs from future employers if they have exceptional grades (Norton, Tilley, Newstead, & Franklyn-Stokes, 2001). Good academic grades are considered as an important measure of success in society. This consideration has an impact on the lives of students, thus putting undue pressure on them (McCabe et al., 2006; Norton et al., 2001) and making them extremely concerned about the grades they receive (Choi, 2010; McCabe et al., 2006; Wilkerson, 2009).

McCabe et al. (1999) identified the factors that have been found to influence cheating, including pressure to get high grades, parental pressures, a desire to excel, pressure to get a job, laziness,

lack of responsibility, lack of character, poor self-image, lack of pride in a job well done, and lack of personal integrity.

Higbee and Thomas (2002) categorize causal factors to academic integrity as external and internal. External factors include pressures to achieve good grades, the classroom environment and relatively low risk of detection, institutional policies on academic honesty, and performance and achievement issues. Internal factors include personality characteristics, test anxiety, demographic factors among others. Self-discipline is important for a student to resist the temptation to cheat in examinations.

Student cite a diversity of reasons as to why they cheat. Some have cited ignorance (Jocoy, 2006), poor professors and teaching environments (Sterngold, 2004), inadequate policies and penalties regarding academic dishonesty (Macdonald & Carroll, 2006), peer influence (Brown, 2002), opportunity (DiCarlo, 2007), availability of information from the internet, the need to get a good job; and a cheating culture in our society (Langlais, 2006; Sterngold, 2004).

The availability of information from the internet has aggravated the problem of academic dishonesty. Available literature suggests that the internet and technology play a major role in the increasing number of students who are involved in academic cheating (Harper, 2006). The prevalence of digital resources provides an environment where academic dishonesty such as cut and paste plagiarism can be extremely easy. Researchers have found that the computer, and/or the Internet, has been the most misused and abused technologies in academia (Boehm, et al., 2009; Hansen, 2003; McCabe, 2009; Park, 2003; Roach, 2001; Szabo & Underwood, 2004; Wood, 2004). This implies that information and communication technologies have made academic dishonesty easier than ever before (Underwood &Szabo, 2003).

Gomez (2001) reported that many students tend to view cheating as a victimless crime, and students are demonstrating the application of the no big deal phenomenon. Students would perhaps argue that it does not cause any harm to a third party. After all it is their lives that will be affected.

Some institutions are also to blame for the vice. Cheating and unethical behaviors are often tolerated by administrators and faculty who are concerned about maintaining their reputations as well as the stress associated with being involved in the university disciplinary processes (Boehm, et al., 2009; Danielsen, et al., 2006).

Lowered risk of punishment (Leming, 1980), peer behavior and peer disapproval are some of the situational factors identified as having a role to play in student cheating (McCabe & Trevino, 1993, 1997).

Reports by students engaging in examination malpractice show that majority (90%) consider it wrong yet about 76% of them report having cheated at least once in high school or college. Detection by teachers and professors was reported to be as low as 1.3%. This seems to suggest that not getting caught could reinforce students to engage in academic dishonesty (Davis, et al. 1992).

It could be true that students are aware and share information on fellow colleagues who cheat and are rarely caught and punished, a situation that motivates more to cheat.

5.0 Dishonesty in the Workplace and Society

The long term impact of lack of the virtue of academic integrity cannot be overemphasized. Academic dishonesty appears to be a precursor to workplace dishonesty. Students who cheat on tests are more likely to engage in dishonest activities in the workplace than those who do not (Graves, 2008). Worse still, this may cause irreversible damage to their colleagues and more particularly those in high-risk professions such as engineering, medicine, dental hygiene, nursing, police force and so on. The reputation for the organization they work for cannot be spared either. Many employers nowadays demand competent graduates whose integrity is unquestionable and uphold high ethical standards in order "to cope with the pressures and complexities of working in a rapidly changing, competitive environment" (Zahran, 1997, p. 124). For example, in Kenya it is mandatory in some professions (teaching, police force etc.) to present a certificate of good conduct before one is considered for a job.

Whether we admit it or not, those students who cheat are the same people who will be responsible for civil society and the economy. They are the future employees who will serve our food, clean our buildings, vaccinate our children, provide us with prescription drugs, and report our news and so on. There is little or no doubt that the problem of dishonesty in the academic system will very easily generalize over into the work setting. Academic dishonesty leading to workplace dishonesty has the ability to do harm to members of the society who count on its workers to be innovative, productive and honest.

Nonis and Swift (2001) after reviewing a number of past studies concluded that students who engage in academic dishonest are more likely to engage in dishonest behavior on the workplace. The many instances of workplace dishonesty supports the argument that the issues of integrity in society have their root cause in the academic lives of learners.

6.0 Intervention Measures

Society cannot afford to watch academic dishonesty keep on increasing and destroying the core of our academic institutions which is mainly to bring out the best talent and nature innovation and creativity.Widespread abuses of academic integrity may lead to endemic corruption (Crittenden, Hanna, & Peterson, 2009). At the university level, a reputation for academic dishonesty will dilute degrees and potentially threaten the institution's accreditation.

To be effective, intervention initiatives require consistency and should emphasize on the norms and core values of the institution and community (Carpenter, Harding, Finelli, & Mayhew, 2005). In case dishonesty prevails over integrity, the notions of independent thinking, intellectual property, the struggle of original thought, and academic freedom will all be at risk.

In a study carried out in Malaysia, Shariffuddin and Richard (2009) reported that even if preventive measures were to be taken, it was not possible to stop academic cheating completely although it could be deterred or minimized to a certain extent. This is because more creative and innovative techniques are used to cheat successfully. It is unfortunate that the students whom we are training to be innovative and come up with new inventions are putting into practice their innovativeness in discovering new methods of cheating.

Communication concerning academic integrity and the desire for more substantive sanctions for violation are perceived as some of the effective preventive measures (Gambill & Todd, 2003). Sensitizing students has been identified as one of the possible approaches of dealing with academic dishonesty (Duff, Rogers, & Harris, 2006).Students can be provided with copies of the honor codes which may lead to lower levels of academic dishonesty because they clarify expectations and definitions of cheating behavior (McCabe et al., 1999, p. 212).

Sabieh (2002) suggests that students are more likely to avoid engaging in academic dishonesty once they understand why it is important that they comply with examination rules and regulations as well as how to properly express themselves in writing. Organizing workshops on academic integrity topics including partialism is another approach which learning institutions can adapt to minimize the vice. The table below presents a summary of some of the methods used in cheating, detection and proposed preventive measures.

Table 1. Summary of methods used in cheating, detection and prevention

Cheating Method	Detection Method	Method Prevention
Cell – photo: take photo of test question, send to someone at home, get silent textreply	Watch for cell phone usage of any kind	Prohibit cell phones in test environment
Calculator – program: type formulas or cheats into calculator before test begins	Patrol room frequently; watch for frantic clearing of calculator results; watch for "flipping through" calculator readout	Prohibit calculators in test environment; OR ask department to invest in a box of "simple" calculators to share for tests
Calculator – sharing: program cheats ahead of time and let someone else use the calculator during the test	Watch for sharing of calculators	Prohibit calculators in test environment; OR ask department to invest in a box of "simple" calculators to share for tests
iPod – professor: listen to recorded lecture during the test;	Scan for earphone wires; patrol room nonstop	Prohibit iPod usage; require

possible to hide earphone wires behind long hair		devices to be placed into backpack below desk
iPod – student: prerecord yourself saying formulas and cheats; listen during test	Scan for earphone wires; patrol room nonstop	Prohibit iPod usage; require devices to be placed into backpack below desk

(Kevin Yee & Patricia MacKown, 2010:8)

Other **strategies that have been used to minimize academic cheating include the following:**

i. Communication of policies for dealing with academic dishonesty (Michael & Williams, 2013);
ii. Reminding students that academic dishonesty is injurious to their future life;
iii. Allowing students to collaborate, particularly for homework assignments, since students will see no need to steal (Stephens, 2004);
iv. Letting students know that you trust that they can succeed in class without cheating (McBurney, 1996);
v. In case students are motivated to cheat by fear of failure, consider assessing their learning through a variety of different mechanisms to minimize the temptation to cheat (Gooblar, 2014; Pope, 2014);
vi. Make assessments fair (Stephens, 2004);
vii. Try to structure assignments in such a way to make it very hard to plagiarize (McBurney, 1996);
viii. Take control of the testing environment, and keep your eyes open (McBurney, 1996);

7.0 Conclusion

From the literature that has been conducted in the past, it appears that it has not been possible to successfully deal with the problem of academic dishonesty. Despite the stringent measures that have been instituted on students caught cheating, the vice continues to persist. The evidence available seems to point to the fact that academic dishonesty somehow leads to workplace dishonesty.

Nevertheless, the studies that have been done on this area have helped to shed some light on the extent and magnitude of the problem. Learning institutions and all stakeholders can be able to

borrow some of the preventive measures that have been shown to minimize the problem since it appears that it may be difficult to completely eliminate the problem of academic dishonesty.

8.0 Recommendations

Educational institutions and various stakeholders need to increase sensitization efforts towards awareness on regulations regarding academic dishonesty. Stakeholders need to ensure consistency and firmness in the implementation of recommended sanctions against examination malpractices. This way, students will get to know the seriousness of the matter.

Parents and managers of institutions should try to minimize the pressure on good grades, high academic workload and other factors that have been identified as some of the leading causes of academic Dishonesty. Clear communication on policies on examination malpractices is critical in order to minimize the problem. Zero tolerance of academic offences can work towards minimizing the vice.

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