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Academic dishonesty - team effort against it; a review of literature

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ABSTRACT

Institutions of higher learning are expected to adhere to academic integrity in their quest for knowledge. Nevertheless, academic dishonesty has increased in higher education than in any other time in history. Technological advancement has largely contributed to this dishonesty and student can use today's technology to retrieve information from across the globe. It demands the effort of the all stakeholders in education to fight against academic dishonesty. This paper conveys the contribution of student, faculty, and administration and education fraternity to fight against academic dishonesty.

Key Words: Ethics, Academic integrity, Cheating, Feedback, Ethical behavior.

INTRODUCTION

It is the desire of the institution of higher learning to attract good students as well as to develop a culture of honesty and virtuous standard among all their students. Some institutions advance this mission through adherence to academic honor codes, institutional rituals and student pledges upon admission to the school (Levy and Rakovski, 2006). Nowadays technological advances has made academic dishonesty easier to accomplish and harder for the faculty to identify (Johnson and Martin, 2005). As part of their duty, institutions anticipate faculty members to ensure that students uphold academic integrity through their syllabi and the instructional process of their individual course work. Academic dishonesty is a violation of rules and regulations of almost every institution. People abhor it, yet majorities have committed it at one time or another in their academic endeavors. Symaco and Marcelo (2003) noted that in the area of education, academic dishonesty is a chronic problem that has successfully escaped a lasting solution regardless of institutional efforts to eradicate it. Researchers have shown that students sometime view academic dishonesty as a normal incidence and something ordinary. They argue that that situational factor in the school such as classroom environment work to facilitate academic dishonesty in the student body (Symaco & Marcelo, 2003).This paper will give an overview of various forms of academic dishonesty, student response to academic dishonesty when it occurs and the measures taken by the faculty and institutional administrator to prevent its occurrence in their institutions.

The international center for academic integrity at Clemson University indicated that about 70% of the students engaged in some form of cheating during their education process. Symaco and Marcelo (2003) indicated that some forms of academic dishonesty have increased; test cheating and unauthorized collaboration in assignment had risen significantly over the years. It is therefore the responsibility for the school to come up with more effective ways to enlighten the students and the faculty the importance of upholding academic integrity and swiftly respond to acts of academic dishonesty with the intention to eradicate it.

FORMS OF ACADEMIC DISHONESTY

Johnson and Martin (2005) noted that students have developed new techniques of cheating. However the old techniques are still dominant in the college campuses. Some of the old techniques include bringing notes to class and having information written on water bottles, pens and gum wrappers. Cheaters are using technology to undermine academic integrity and students are becoming innovative in their cheating methodologies. Students are now using cell phones to get the exam information, communicate with others outside the exam room to obtain answers and searching for answers on the web during an exam and such techniques are posing a new challenge to the today's educators (Johnson and Martin, 2005). Petress (2003) noted of other forms of academic dishonesty such as copying test responses from a classmate; taking exams for other people; failure to cite other peoples work; taking exam home and purchasing research papers and one assumes it is his/her work. Also actions such as breaking the office or teachers file to access the test or answer key; sabotaging peers ongoing work or gaining illegal access to school computer to change official grades are all forms of academic dishonesty (Petress, 2003). There are many reasons that students justify for cheating: lack of time, poverty, uncaring instructors, laziness, peer pressure, poor role model, fear of failure and technology has done cheating to be done easily (Robert, 2002).

Researchers might be tempted to fabricate data to make a series of startling discoveries, publish the results and thus impress those that are in their filed, this is another kind of academic dishonesty that is at times happens in researcher (Robert, 2002). Plagiarism is another form of academic dishonest. It may occur unintentionally and the authors may not realize what they have done is ethically undesirable and other times it may be a determined act (Robert, 2002). Robert (2003) in his article noted that researchers can manipulate data in favor of what they want to achieve. Other times researchers may mishandle the human subject against the code of ethic as other forms of academic dishonesty. Finally institutional administrators may manipulate statistical data so that institutions may appear more appealing than they are and perception is substituted for opportunity, which ensures that integrity is less significant than impression (Robert, 2002).

STUDENTS AND ACADEMIC DISHONESTY

Academic dishonesty in school can be another form of student deviant behavior and may contribute negatively to character development, harm other students and the integrity of the institution is jeopardized (Staats et al, 2009). Students who practice academic dishonesty put their individual gain over those of other students and put the integrity of the university at risk. Teachers should confront it, treat student fairly and facilitate character development, transfer of knowledge and avoid lowering student morale and reduction of public trust in the educational process (Keith-Spiegel, 1998). There are students who purposely decide to uphold academic integrity at all times. Studies have shown that among students, dishonesty is learned from peers and that cheating establishes a climate where those students who are honest feel disadvantaged (Dichtl, 2003). There is need for the administration and the faculty to make sure that students have appropriate understanding of the importance of academic integrity policies in the institution.

Dichtl (2003) noted that institutions should make their students to go through comprehensive honor code which will outline academic integrity expectation, definitions of improper and proper conduct and also spell out the penalties of violations. Students can easily confront their peer's behavior on academic dishonesty if they were made to understand the institution expectations. Bouville (2010) noted that the main reasons for student to avoid academic dishonesty are obedience to the rules and avoidance of penalties. Cheaters may obtain underserved high grades, thus having unfair advantage over other students and this allures cheater to practice this vice in academics all the more.

Bouville (2010) in his publication, "Why is Cheating Wrong?" gave several reasons that cheaters take to mind when they practice dishonesty practices in academia. First, a common view equates grades to the value of the student. Grades are used as a measure of how good the student is, as it can be a measure of knowledge, talents, and competency. This view may imply that efficient cheaters are good student since they get good grades. Other means of measuring students worth can help in trying to curb cheating among students. Secondly, grades are used as predictors of future success. In college admission grades are used to guess how well the students may do in the future years of study. This may cause the student to practice academic dishonest with the aim to secure a place in college.

Passow et al (2006) noted that "acts of academic dishonesty undermine the validity of the measure of learning". Teachers will not know of what the students does not understand if there are elements of cheating among the student. It will be difficult for the teachers to regulate their

approaches of instruction as they will assume the student are all doing fine which might not be true. Cheating hurts the students and prevents teachers from providing the necessary and relevant feedback to their students in the learning process. This should be true to all the teachers who may be interested in providing useful information on what the students are doing or they want to make use of the information they receive from their students to prepare for classroom intervention programs.

FACULTY AND ACADEMIC DISHONESTY

While it is paramount to understand the degree of academic dishonesty and devise the methods of combating the problem, it is equally important to understand faculty perspectives of their institution strategies for deterring academic dishonesty (Simon et al, 2003). Academic dishonesty challenge the faculty and the administration to be fully committed to maintain a healthy institutional climate while still developing a uniform method of attaining their goal of upholding academic integrity.

Majority of the students desire to be honest. It should be the responsibility of the faculty to ensure they apply appropriate instructional measures that will discourage dishonesty. They should be role model for the students and implement measures that will be vigilant in prevention of academic dishonesty (Perress, 20003). Faculty should conduct their courses in a manner that promote academic integrity and discourage academic dishonesty. They should be encouraged to have a statement concerning academic integrity in their syllabi and to discuss integrity concerns in their individual classrooms (Whitley & Keith- Spiegel, 2001).

Faculty members should be trained on measures to prevent controls and confront academic dishonesty. Most importantly, training for all newly hired graduate teaching assistance and faculty members should be conducted on regular basis (Whitley & Keith- Spiegel, 2001). Institution should support the faculty in their effort to establish high standards of integrity in their teaching and research work. Kibler (1993) noted four strategies that institutions can adopt to help faculty to implement academic integrity and prevent academic dishonesty. First, provide the faculty with assistance while they are administering exam to large classes. Second, they should be provided with assistance and consultation services when violation of academic integrity occurs. They should be guided on how to correctly follow procedures, techniques of gathering evidence, and strategies for presenting evidence in hearings. Third, experience faculty member should be appointed in each department to be academic integrity liaison chairs to provide help to his fellow colleagues. Finally, the institution should provide recognition to faculty members who correctly handle cases of academic dishonesty.

Cole and Kiss (2000) remarked that, " Student are more likely to use academic dishonesty practices when they think their assignments are meaningless and they are less likely to cheat when they admire and respect their teachers and are excited about what they are learning". Students who are not motivated by what they are learning may be tempted to cheat rather than waste time on something that is not of interest to them. Teachers should try to motivate their students and ensure that the materials taught are appropriate and applicable to the students level of learning and this will help the students to avoid cheating on their work (Bouville, 2010).

ADMINISTRATORS AND ACADEMIC DISHONESTY

The aspect of academic dishonesty extends to the whole institution and demands all the stakeholders in the institution to be vigilant in curbing it. Institutions should establish an academic integrity policy that should be adhered to by the student body and the faculty (Whitley & Keith-Spiegel, 2001). The development of the policy should involve all the interest groups that will be affected by the policy. Student involvement is crucial because they are the ones who will be subjected to the penalties of the policy. Whitley and Keith-Spiegel (2001) noted that the statement of the policy should from the start explain to the members that the institution values academic integrity and condemns academic dishonesty. Institutional administrators should be a role model of doing business in a manner that portrays commitment to integrity of all forms and this will create an atmosphere of integrity in all areas of the institution (Bok, 1990). The administration should be at the forefront on the commitment to academic integrity by making public commitment to integrity, acting in accordance with institution academic integrity statement and taking appropriate actions of integrity violation by faculty, student and staff (Whitley & Keith-Spiegel, 2001).

McCabe et al., (2002) study indicated that students at higher education showed that honor codes were successful in reducing the level of cheating on the colleges. He noted that honor codes were more successful when they were combined with a climate that emphasized the importance of academic integrity and an honor system that allows for strong student involvement in the enforcement of academic integrity initiatives. The administration should strive in creation of the campus environment that is conducive to promote academic integrity. Administrators should seek the full support of all the college constituents such as the students, faculty and staff for the honor code to be successful to meet the objective of deterring academic dishonesty. The administration should ensure that the implementation of the honor codes at the institution caters all that are involved in the institution welfare. Revision and adaptations to meet the needs of all parties concerned and students should provide opportunities all concern to learn from their mistakes (Melgoza & Smith, 2008).

HOW ACADEMIC FRATERNITY CAN CURB ACADEMIC DISHONESTY

Academic dishonesty is no longer a task of classroom management issue that can be well-ordered by a single faculty with teaching responsibility. This unethical behavior at times involves use of high- tech tools which extends beyond institutional boundaries and reaching across the world to some distant source of information (Simon, et al, 2003). This demands the administrators and professional organizations to work together to maintain a healthy learning environment with a high level of trust between the faculty and the administration (Simon et al, 2003). A good supportive relationship between the faculty and administration could play a major role helping the faculty members to respond to assumed instances of academic dishonesty. Simon et al (2003) noted that a good faculty/administration fit would create a level; of trust where the faculty members can positively deal with academic dishonest issues in the classroom and be confident of the administration backing of their judgment.

Gallant (2008) noted of various strategies that can be applied to enforce academic integrity in the institutions of higher learning. First, he noted about rule compliance strategy that can be enforced in the institutions. Under this strategy, code of academic ethics should be upheld with the regulations which the students are expected to comply and disciplinary processes that are

applied when the policy is violated. It should be expected that students attending the institution understand and subscribe to the ideals of academic integrity and should bear individual responsibility for any act of academic dishonesty detected on their work. Dalton (1998) noted that the rule compliance strategy focus on ensuring that the cost of engaging in academic dishonesty in much higher than the rewards. Student who engage on academic dishonesty under this strategy are perceived as deviant and taking advantage of institution to cheat. The mechanism of punishing violators is considered to be the effective restraints to propagator of academic dishonesty (Dalton, 1998).

The second strategy that Gallant (2008) discuss in this article is integrity strategy where student misconduct is assumed to result from undeveloped moral as well as the students inability to understand the importance of integrity in their academic work (Bush, 2000). In accordance with the integrity strategy, it advocates for teaching values of honesty and integrity to students so that they can apply them in their academic work. The strategy includes disciplinary method for responding to academic dishonesty but not as the primary method, rather disciplinary and developmental methods should be included as part of the educational process (Gallant, 2008). The strategy also focuses on communicating to students the importance of academic integrity as a core institutional value that will shape their academic success in the institution.

CONCLUSION

The extent of academic dishonesty in the institutions reflects to the broader erosion of ethical behavior in the in the society that tend to be more self-centered over the concern of others. Teachers and administrator should purposely champion character formation on their students and hold them to be accountable for their misconduct (Storm & Storm, 2007). Prevention of academic dishonesty in the institution of higher learning demands a consented effort from all the stakeholders. Students, faculty and institutional administrators should agree on the strategy to apply in their institutions that will be adhered to in order to fight the dishonesty in academia. Student's contribution is vital and they are the one who will be subjected to the penalties that may follow academic dishonesty practices. Students at the same time can help in the enforcement of the strategies agreed upon among their peers. Faculty and administrators should work as a team in enforcing the rules and regulations that uphold academic integrity in the institution.

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