



A FRAMEWORK FOR CONTROLLING DISHONESTY IN OPEN AND DISTANCE LEARNING (ODL) IN HIGHER EDUCATION

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Dishonesty is a contentious issue in higher education. The aim of this paper was to review current literature on dishonesty in higher education and ODL in order to construct a framework for the prevention of it. This is a particularly pertinent subject because the world-wide web has made academic dishonesty easier by facilitating the practice of plagiarism. Dishonesty in high school leads to dishonesty in higher education which, in turn, leads to fraud in the workplace. Safeguards to curb the wave of dishonesty need to be implemented in higher education and, especially, in ODL. Consequently, ethics in higher education and ODL, accountability and ways to counter fraud are all highlighted in this paper, as are plagiarism detection software and the usefulness thereof in academia.

Keywords: Plagiarism, Cheating, Dishonesty, Fraud.

Introduction

Dishonesty and issues surrounding it, such as its prevalence, detection and punishment, have become major points of concern in ODL and in higher education in general. Dishonesty is a growing threat to the integrity of ODL. Research studies such as Davis, Grover, Becker and McGregor (1992), Park (2003) and Palvervess and Boothy (in Bennett, Beherendt and Boothy 2011: 29) indicate that 40–90% of students have admitted to engaging in some form of dishonesty in higher education. Although there are numerous forms and categories of dishonesty (Bennett, Beherendt and Boothy 2011: 29), it seems that dishonesty can only be controlled, not stopped entirely. The framework developed in this study is therefore aimed at controlling dishonesty in higher education and, specifically, in ODL and technology-enhanced learning.

Bennett, Beherendt and Boothy (2011: 29) referred to Park's (2003) study and indicated that dishonesty most often presents itself in four ways in academia: Firstly, students paraphrase a source without citing the source; secondly, students submit work that appears to be paraphrased and contain references, but in fact it was copied word for word from the original source; thirdly, students present work as their own, without including any citations in the text; and lastly, students submit work that was done by another student (Bennett, Beherendt and Boothy 2011: 29-30).

Dishonesty in academia should not be viewed as a trivial form of deviant behaviour because dishonesty has the potential to produce lasting repercussions for individuals and institutions (Ogilvie and Steward 2010: 130). For the educational institution, dishonesty threatens the equity and efficiency of educational assessment and therefore harms the reputation of the organisation as a whole.

There is an extensive body of literature on dishonesty in academia, but only a limited number of attempts have been made to use ethical frameworks or theories to guide the research studies (Ogilvie and Steward 2010: 131). This paper discusses academic dishonesty using the framework of Mayhew,

Hubbard, Finelli and Harding (2009) to explain the phenomenon and to make recommendations to safeguard against academic dishonesty in ODL.

Plagiarism is a contentious issue in higher education. Indeed, plagiarism, cheating, dishonesty, fabrication, forgery, bribery, threats and fraud have been the topic of considerable debate within higher education and ODL institutions worldwide in recent years (Lanier 2006; Tennant, McMullen and Kaczynski 2010; Flint, Clegg and Macdonald 2006; Mayhew, Hubbard, Finelli and Harding 2009). The expansion of higher education and the technology explosion have increased competition between higher education institutions, including open and distance learning (ODL) institutions. This situation has presented new opportunities for unethical and corrupt practices in ODL and online learning. So how do academics see their role regarding dishonesty in ODL? (Tennant, McMullen and Kaczynski 2010: 94)

One of the greatest changes in higher education has been the increase in distance education providers. This increase has come with a price, however, in the sense that academic dishonesty has become an epidemic among students and, in some cases, even academic staff (Lanier 2006: 244). Tibbetts and Myers (in Lanier 2006: 244-261) noted that virtually all cases of academic dishonesty suggest that in-test cheating, in particular, is rampant. It has been argued that the world-wide web has made academic dishonesty easier by making it possible to copy other people's work. But has the level and scale of academic plagiarism at universities really increased? There is a general consensus among those involved with higher education that web-based distance education (WBDE) provides more opportunities for – and even promotes – academic fraud than traditional face-to-face instruction. Whether there is a real increase in the rate of plagiarism or merely an increase in the detection rate of fraud in higher education is not clear. However, increased access to and use of the internet is thought to create new opportunities for plagiarism (Flint, Clegg and Macdonald 2006: 145) and statistics indicate that academic fraud is on the increase (Tennant, McMullen and Kaczynski 2010: 94). Students openly admit their dishonesty and, in some cases, even boast about how easy it is to be dishonest in ODL and WBDE.

This paper starts by identifying what is commonly understood by academic fraud. Next, it highlights ethics in higher education and ODL, accountability and ways to counter fraud. Some reflections are included on dishonesty using degree mills and paper mills. Lastly, recommendations are proposed for curbing the wave of fraud in ODL and online learning, with reference to the ethical framework based on the theory of planned behaviour (TPB) in Mayhew et al (2009: 441-468).

Academic Dishonesty

Plagiarism is misconduct; it is an unethical and immoral act which has become a serious problem in ODL and other academic institutions. It is not only students who are plagiarising – academics are also guilty. A research study by Guterman (in Shahabuddin 2009: 353) examined 2 600 abstracts and found at least three instances of outright plagiarism. Academics should obviously not plagiarise at all, not even three times out of 2 600; they should be setting the example for their students. Guterman (2008) also found many examples of double publishing (ie publishing the same paper in different journals) (Shahabuddin 2009: 353), which seems to imply that neither students nor academics fully understand what plagiarism entails.

The offence of academic dishonesty includes acts of plagiarism, using concealed notes to cheat in tests or examinations, exchanging work with other students, buying essays or theses or, in some cases, asking others to sit for examinations. Plagiarism itself has more to do with taking someone else's work and pretending it is your own. This can be done in numerous ways, such as copying from books, websites and journals without proper reference to the authors (Underwood and Szabo 2003: 467). Dishonesty is defined as breaking the rules to get ahead academically, professionally or financially. The increase in academic dishonesty over the past decades is alarming. In one research study, 40–80% of students indicated that they had cheated at least once during their studies (Harper 2006: 672-679).

Current research (Bloodgood, Turnley and Mudrack 2010; Mayhew et al 2009; Smith, Davy, Rosenberg and Haight 2002) indicates that academic plagiarism is a serious problem for tertiary

institutions worldwide. Plagiarism is, of course, not new and has been a problem that has plagued higher education and other institutions for many years (Bloodgood, Turnley and Mudrack 2010). In the current technological era of the internet, academic plagiarism has also become a technological problem. Point, click, copy and paste is now a way of putting assignments together in a very short time using online databases or paper mills, which are supplying academic papers to students either for free or at a fee. Nevertheless, while technology has made plagiarism easier to commit, it has also made it easier to detect (Stuber-McEwen, Wiseley and Hoggatt 2009: 1-9). So, then, what is plagiarism?

A clear-cut definition of plagiarism is difficult because of the complexity of the factors involved. Yet academia requires a definition of plagiarism so that it can provide its students with guidelines on what constitutes academic honesty. Bretag and Mahmud (2009: 50) define plagiarism as “an issue potentially relating to various factors, including linguistic competence, academic literacy, culture, racism, academic integrity, media scandal and institutional governance”. Furthermore, the definition of plagiarism is complicated by the fact that it is usually conflated with cheating and academic misconduct in general. From the Latin origins we know that plagiarism has criminal connotations. Plagiarism can be defined as “to take and use another person’s thoughts, writing, invention etc. as one’s own” (Shahabuddin 2009: 353). It also deprives authors of credit and can be regarded as a form of theft.

As far as this paper is concerned, plagiarism is defined as a form of cheating, but cheating is not necessarily plagiarism. Plagiarism is the act of passing off someone else’s work, ideas, images, words or concepts as your own (Walser 2011:12). Plagiarism includes copying from books, from peers, group collaboration on individual assignments, self-plagiarism, online copying and pasting and making use of online paper mills. The most common reason for students to plagiarise is because they simply do not care; they procrastinate and then try to do “damage control” by relying on pilfered prose (Paynter and Mills 2004: 1). Plagiarism has consequences and students who plagiarise might face dismissal, demotion in their workplace and being disbarred from further studies. Plagiarism and cheating are closely related, although cheating mostly concerns examinations.

Academic cheating is generally defined as an attempt to use illicit documents and/or information in works submitted for academic credits (Pavela in Sierra and Hyman 2006: 193). Cheating efforts normally tend to focus on examinations, such as copying other students’ answers, helping other students or using crib notes to earn a pass mark. When students submit someone else’s work, it is also considered a form of cheating. Technology enhances learning, but the internet is also fuelling academic dishonesty.

Many authors, such as Bull, Knezek, Roblyer, Schrum and Thomson (2005) and Dexter, Anderson and Becker (in Etter, Cramer and Finn 2006: 133), claim that computer technology will threaten academic integrity in future. Research now shows that students increasingly copy and paste from the world-wide web and submit the results as their own work. This practice could obviously have a serious effect on teaching and learning. But how are these dishonest practices influencing ethical standards in academia and elsewhere?

Theoretical Framework

According to Mayhew et al (2009: 442), academic institutions are charged to foster intellectual honesty, responsibility, respect for individual actions, active participation in community development and discernment for ethical decisionmaking and actions. Academics themselves must try to understand what constitutes academic dishonesty and how to predict, prevent and eradicate it. The research carried out by Beck and Ajzen (1991) and Fass (in Mayhew et al 2009: 441-468) clearly indicates that students who cheated in academia were more likely to shoplift and be dishonest in terms of paying taxes and engaging in unethical practices in the workplace.

The modified framework based on the theory of planned behaviour was used to guide this literature review on dishonesty in ODL and higher education (Mayhew et al 2009: 441-468). The framework for prediction of student dishonesty and moral reasoning is suitable for unravelling the problem of cheating in ODL (as seen in fig 1). Figure 1 is relevant to dishonesty in academia because it addresses three related

and mutually reinforcing mechanisms: attitudes toward dishonesty, subjective norms and self-perception in terms of one's ability to cheat effectively. Ajzen's theory of planned behaviour (TPB) (2002), as described by Mayhew et al (2009: 468), states that individuals make rational decisions to engage in specific behaviour, based on their beliefs.

These beliefs and expectations underlie three conceptually distinct constructs at the core of the theory, namely attitudes toward the behaviour, perceived social pressures (norms) and the moral obligations that feed into the intention. The intention (to cheat) feeds into the perceived behaviour control that drives the individual to cheat in academia and, later, in the workplace. From Whitley's (1998) and Pascarella and Terenzini's research (in Mayhew et al 2009: 441-468), it is clear that there is a positive relationship between dishonesty at high school level and academic dishonesty at university level (see figure 1). Despite the support the TPB model is receiving, more research needs to be done into the prediction of dishonest behaviour in certain circumstances.

Mayhew et al (2009: 441) add the concept of high school dishonesty to the TPB model. Researchers (Stone, Jawahar and Kisamore 2009; Smith, Davy, Rosenberg and Haight 2002; Bloodgood, Turnley and Mudrack 2010) suggest that certain collegial behaviours can be explained by personality characteristics, namely race, gender, high school grade and high school behaviour, such as frequency of dishonesty in high school (which is then transported into academia and, later, into the workplace). A student's moral development is thus one of the factors that could be used to predict dishonest behaviour. The framework shown in figure 1 could be used to develop interventions and communication between academics and students regarding dishonesty and how dishonesty affects morale and the community at large (in preparation for the task of responsible citizenship).

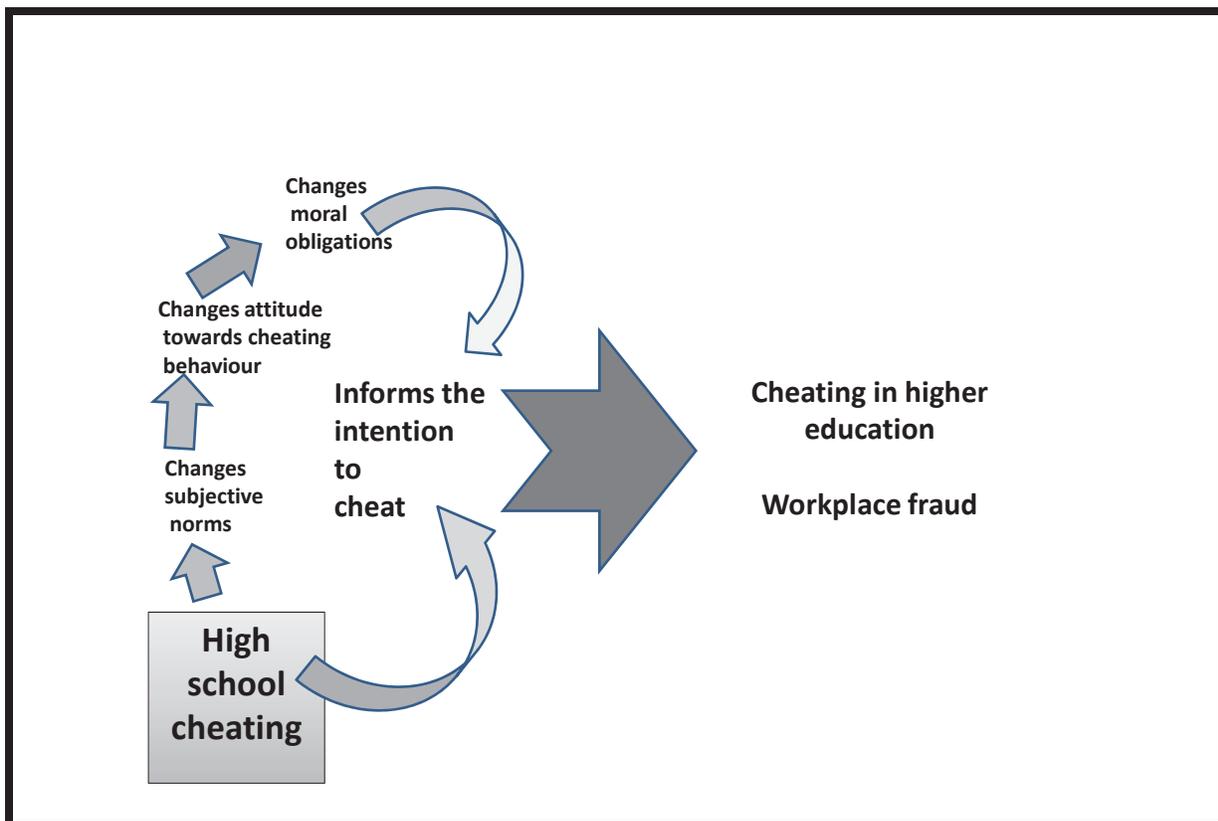


Figure 1. Framework for the prediction of dishonesty (adapted from Mayhew, Hubbard, Finelli and Harding 2009).

According to figure 1, there are various reasons for dishonesty, reasons which are linked to certain factors and opportunities. Dishonesty is, in most cases, a combination of both. First, there has to be a need to cheat. If a student completes a good and well-organised assignment in time, he or she is unlikely to consider being dishonest. Most often, it is weaker students who are more prone to dishonesty.

Students are not the only people who are dishonest in academia. Academics in higher educational institutions are also dishonest, and workplace fraud and corruption are rampant in modern society (Osipian 2008: 345-346). However, dishonesty and corruption have an especially negative impact on the quality of higher education; furthermore, they increase inequalities in obtaining access to higher education which, in turn, causes further inequities. Osipian's (2008: 245) research focused on corruption in higher education; he listed various ways in which corruption, fraud and dishonesty manifest in higher education throughout the world. But the focus of this article is on student dishonesty and the rest of this paper will therefore focus on student dishonesty in higher education and ODL. Note that it is more difficult to fight student dishonesty in a scenario where academic systems themselves are corrupt (Osipian 2008: 345-361; Shahabuddin 2009: 353-359). So what are the reasons for dishonesty in higher education?

Firstly, changes of subjective norms, such as student characteristics and demographic characteristics: younger and unmarried students are more likely to cheat than older and married students. The student ability indicators clearly show that if students are better at a task, they are less likely to cheat than less skilled students. Students' academic beliefs largely determine whether they will cheat or not. Students with higher expectations of success are more likely to cheat than students with lower expectations. Students who see themselves as being on the edge of failure may perceive more potential benefit from dishonesty and are more likely to take the risk of being caught. Impoverished students who study under poor conditions are also more likely to cheat. Finally, extracurricular activities (such as partying) relate positively to dishonesty, although this applies more to classroom situations (face-to-face environments) than to ODL (Whitley 1998: 235).

These reasons could be responsible for the changes in attitude towards dishonesty and may result from external pressures to perform well, financial pressures, difficult assignments, time pressures and heavy workloads. Additionally, fear of failing the examination, inadequate preparation, lack of confidence, knowledge of dishonesty by other students, the need to earn a good pass mark, the desire to avoid being disgraced in front of family members, forgetfulness and the urge for promotion in the workplace were all given as reasons for dishonesty in examinations, according to a study conducted by Hordzi (2007: 98-106).

The second factor that encourages dishonesty is that the opportunity to cheat must be present. The student will cheat only if it is possible to do so. Possibilities include the assignment being available from another student; friends or family members being prepared to do part of the assignment for the student; opportunities provided by discussion forums (the sharing of work); and the fact that it is always possible to copy. Moreover, opportunities available to the student on the internet may encourage him/her to be dishonest. Lastly, a tutor who is supposed to be helping the student may actually write large parts of the assignment or research project; such a tutor is helping the student to cheat. The availability of model answers to questions and computer laboratories on campus that are loaded with model answers and assignments may also lead to dishonesty (Naude and Hörne 2006: 459-466).

When a student's attitude towards dishonesty is more favourable, he or she will be more likely to cheat. Students who perceive that norms and values permit dishonesty end up practising dishonesty to a greater extent. Similarly, students who think of themselves as good/skilled cheaters, cheat more often. Personality variables such as morality obviously have an impact on the decision whether or not to cheat. Students who rate themselves as less honest will be more likely to cheat. When a student is highly motivated to achieve academically, the tendency to cheat is also higher. Alienation, which includes feelings of powerlessness, social isolation and normlessness, often leads to dishonesty and other forms of deviant behaviour. Impulsiveness in a student can also result in dishonesty and affectivity, such as high levels of anxiety during tests and examinations. Interpersonal processes, such as students who have high approval needs, also increase the probability of dishonesty (Whitley 1998: 236). In contrast, situational factors, for example when universities have codes of honour to which students must subscribe, tend to

discourage dishonesty among students. Class size and academic workload also influence dishonest behaviour. When students perceive the assessment to be very important, dishonesty rates are usually higher, and when students believe there is little risk of being caught during assessment, they tend to cheat more often. Finally, students sitting at the back of the class are more likely to cheat than those sitting closer to the front.

Thirdly, dishonesty is linked to changes in moral obligations and is usually the result of internal influences, which persuade the individual to cheat. The ultimate decision to cheat is a personal choice made by weighing internal values and beliefs against external factors (Naude and Hörne 2006: 459). Dishonesty may also become easier if a student observes dishonesty in fellow students, thus reasoning that “everybody is doing it” and deciding to join in. Naude and Hörne (2006) conclude that the decision to cheat is never determined by a single factor, but instead is a combination of factors and circumstances.

Opportunities for Dishonesty

ODL institutions themselves are making dishonesty easier through their increasing use of technology in teaching and learning. New electronic tools and technologies are making it convenient for students to be dishonest and plagiarise other people’s work. More and more work submitted in ODL and in higher education consists of “cut and paste jobs” from the internet (*Faculty focus* 2011; Berry, Thornton and Baker 2006). Let’s now examine how technology is promoting academic dishonesty in ODL and other higher education institutions.

The internet and related technology provide many more ways to be dishonest than was previously the case. With more and more online learning courses available, the concern is whether dishonesty will increase and what can be done to prevent it. There are a variety of ways students can use information and communication technologies (ICT) inappropriately for the completion of assignments and tests in ODL. Word processing facilitates easy cutting and pasting of information from electronic media. Simple scanners can capture internet data and, if a printed version of the work is handed in, it is more difficult to trace dishonesty (Watson and Sottile 2010: 1-12).

It is clear that technology is facilitating dishonesty as described in Harper (2006: 672-679). New forms of dishonesty are discovered daily. Dishonesty is often easier in online learning because the temptation to cheat increases when technology-enhanced learning is used. Also, many students are more comfortable with computer technology than are their instructors; furthermore, students know far more than their instructors about how to use the computer to cheat (Rowe 2004: 2).

Social websites are also used to plagiarise and cheat. A recent study, described in the *Chronicle* (2011), a higher education newsletter, shows that social and user-generated websites are the most popular sources for students when they decide to copy and cheat. Academic sites come in second, and paper mills and cheat sites are third in terms of sites of choice (Parry 2011). This implies that students now rely more on their peers than on experts for information. Parry (2011) indicates that one-third of all “matched content” came from social-networking and content-sharing sites such as Facebook, MySpace, Scribd, SlideShare, Yahoo Answers and Answers.com when the computer software, Turnitin, is used to check students’ work. Other sites that were used for dishonest practices and matched content were Wikipedia, Yahoo Answers, Answers.com, SlideShare, OPPapers.com, Scribd, Course Hero and MedLibrary.org (Parry 2011: 1).

The proliferation of internet sites such as paper mills, where students can download or purchase papers, has created new avenues for academic misconduct. Typed and stored essays in campus computer laboratories can also be downloaded by knowledgeable students, who then hand these essays in as their own submissions. “The range of dishonest academic practice is limited only by student’s ability to use technology creatively” (Underwood and Szabo 2003: 470).

Underground paper mills have existed for many years (Eodice and Pierard 2005; Paynter and Mills 2004; Harper 2006; Herberling 2002). Paper mills advertise their services on student notice boards on university campuses, using terms such as “research assistance”, “paper blues” or “assignments”. Students

use services such as paper mills or other fraud sites to help them in their research. Indeed, they are even prepared to pay certain fees per page without thinking of it as dishonesty (Herberling 2002: 1-6). With the growth of the internet, there has been an explosion in the growth of the number of online paper mills available.

Most of the published research on dishonesty in online learning discusses the ease with which the internet enhances the ability of dishonest students to purchase pre-packaged papers or essays (Eodice and Pierard 2005; Paynter and Mills 2004; Harper 2006; Herberling 2002). Although very few paper mills outwardly endorse dishonesty, their headlines and keywords make it clear that dishonesty and deceit is their main business. The paper store, Enterprises Inc, openly states that it has the largest catalogue of expertly researched model papers (Herberling 2002: 1-6).

If you search the web, you will find dozens of sites filled with research papers and assignments, and most are free or ask you to donate a paper in return whenever you download a paper. However, students must be careful of things offered for free; they might just get what they paid for. Degree mills, or shadow scholars, which produce papers for students on demand, are creating problems in academia and particularly in ODL. The critical question is how ODL and other academics can prevent dishonesty in academia while there are so many websites providing complete papers to students. For example:

- <http://www.schoolsucks.com>
- <http://www.cheatinghouse.com>

A Google search for research papers yielded 107 000 000 results, from which students could purchase papers, get them free or upload their papers for other students to reuse (Harper 2006).

The following sites offer to write academic papers either for free or at a fee:

- <http://www.collegetermpapers.com>.
- “The Evil House of Cheat” <http://www.cheathouse.com> claims more than a million hits per year (Underwood and Szabo 2003: 469)
- Papers are also sold to students and the owner of “A1termpaper” reported sales of 1 000–2 000 papers in the first year after going online. In short, paper mills are booming at the expense of quality higher education.
- Essaysfree.com, BigNerds.com
- OPPapers.com
- AcademicTermpapers.com, which charges \$7 per page
- Paperstore.net for \$10 per page
- A1termpaper.com (aka 1-800-termpaper.com). This is a strange site selling papers that were mostly written during the 1970s and which are rather pricy at \$62 per paper.
- Students could also buy custom-made papers written to their specification at PaperMasters.com, from between \$17 to \$20 per page, or a custom paper at \$71, without any effort on the part of the student (Herberling 2002: 1-6).

Conversely, to prevent plagiarism from going unnoticed, software tools have been developed which are known as anti-plagiarism software. The most popular anti-plagiarism software is Turnitin. Plagiarism.org can also be accessed to assist with plagiarism detection. Plagiarism detection sites are widely available and only a few are mentioned here:

- Eliminating Plagiarism: <http://www.ku.edu/~writing/instructors/classes.html>
- Electronic Plagiarism Seminar: <http://www.lemoyne.edu/library/plagiarism.htm>
- The Plagiarism Resource Centre at the University of Virginia: <http://plagiarism.phys.virginia.edu> (Eodice and Pierard 2005: 2)
- EVE2 Plagiarism detection programme at <http://www.canexus.com>
- Glatt Plagiarism services at <http://www.plagiarism.com>
- iThenticate at <http://www.ithenticate.com> or <http://www.plagiarism.org>

- Lexis-Nexis CopyGuard at <http://www.lexisnexis.com/copyguard>
- MyDropBox Assignment Suite™ (for Blackboard)
- Plagiarism-Finder at <http://www.m4-software.com/>
- Wcopyfind 2.6 at <http://www.plagiarism.phys.virginia.edu>

More examples of commercial detection software (Rovai, Ponton and Baker 2008: 91):

- <http://www.canexus.com>
- <http://www.catchitfirst.com>
- <http://www.copycatchgold.com>
- <http://www.integriguad.com>
- <http://www.turnitin.com>

The use of anti-plagiarism software may create a culture of mistrust and a feeling of guilt when students and academics interact with each other. The main problem with using anti-plagiarism tools is that the focus of these tools is on detecting plagiarism, rather than on educating students. However, students will act more responsibly when they know that their instructors are familiar with dishonesty and the use of paper mills (Krsak 2007:164). The next part of this paper is devoted to examining how to prevent dishonesty.

Framework for Controlling Dishonesty in ODL

Academics are instructors and facilitators of learning – not detectives. However, from the above discussion, it is clear that academics must be mindful of dishonesty. Academics should not spend a great deal of time detecting plagiarism, but should direct their energies towards teaching and informing students about dishonesty and ethical practices. Each course should have an ethical component where dishonesty, such as plagiarism and cheating, are addressed, and this should include reference to penalties for dishonesty. Students must know that dishonesty is wrong; it is a form of stealing and is unfair to other students. Dishonesty is not helping to prepare students for the workplace. Academics could design tests and assignments that make it more difficult to cheat. For example, multiple drafts of a written assignment could be required to track the development of the student, although this could pose difficulties in a semester system with strict time frames. Assignments could also be structured in ways that elicit original work. Topics that begins with a question on “how” or “why” usually results in more original work (Walser 2011:13).

Figure 1 indicates the predictors of dishonesty in higher education, which provide valuable information about dishonesty. However, this is not enough to stem the wave of dishonesty in ODL and elsewhere. The question still persists: how can we prevent dishonesty in a scenario where students are used to dishonesty, and where students know they will probably not be caught? If students cheated in high school and were not caught, and their norms were influenced and skewed towards dishonesty and plagiarism, then higher education, ODL and online learning institutions need to implement safeguards to prevent further dishonesty.

Figure 2, the framework for prevention of dishonesty in ODL, is based on the work of Mayhew et al (2009: 441-468) and a review of literature published from 1998 up to April 2011 (ie literature on dishonesty in higher education, ODL and online learning). The framework also implies that if dishonesty is addressed in ODL and other higher educational institutions, we can expect less fraud in the workplace (as a bonus).

Safeguards to prevent dishonesty in ODL should start by defining what dishonesty really entails, because the literature review referred to above indicated that most students do not know what dishonesty and plagiarism really mean. The next strategy is to ensure that course content is permeated with the ethical principles identified by McCabe and Pavela (in Harding, Carpenter, Montgomery and Steneck 2001: 3). Ethical principles such as the affirmation of academic integrity, fostering a love of learning in

academia and treatment of students with respect and trust could lead to the encouragement of student responsibility for academic integrity. Next, there is a need to clarify expectations, develop fair assessment practices and reduce the opportunities for students to engage in academic dishonesty. Finally, there is a need to challenge dishonesty when it occurs and to assist in defining and supporting academic integrity standards at all levels. Staff and students must understand the values and expectations of ODL and online learning in higher education. This could be facilitated through teaching students about the risks of simply cutting and pasting work from the internet. Students need to be taught the difference between paraphrasing and copying information from other sources. They also need to know how to reference properly, as well as which sources on the internet are trustworthy. Academic staff must provide guidance to students on how to quote and how to reference quotations (Christensen 2011: 203-204).

According to figure 2, ODL institutions must develop policies and standards of academic integrity. Ethical issues such as honesty, keeping your word, respecting others and fairness must be addressed in all ODL policies (Gearhart 2001: 3), and ethical principles must be visible in all spheres of ODL policies and practices. The practice of setting assignments must be revised by assignment modification. The traditional assignment, such as the essay-type assignment, could include requirements to include specific reading material, books and articles. Students could be asked to incorporate ethical guidelines and practices in assignments. Assignments could also include projects that allow the student to relate to subject matter including personal life experiences, which would make each assignment unique. Assignments must be altered each semester to prevent copying or plagiarism. The reuse of multiple-choice questions must be revised because this practice adds to the level of fraud in ODL.

Students should take examinations in a proctored testing centre to avoid dishonesty (students go to the local testing centre and take the test or examination in the presence of a proctor/invigilator, after which the test or examination is returned to the instructor). Teaching assistants could also be used to prevent dishonesty in the sense that students could be assigned to a specific tutor (see figure 2). This facilitates interaction between students and tutors, with the tutor being able to verify the student's work. The use of biometrics is another kind of verification. The verification methods include measures such as handwriting analysis, fingerprinting, face recognition, voice recognition and iris (eye) scanning technology. These biometric approaches could be used as an alternative to identification and authenticating of students in ODL.

Lastly, certain plagiarism tools (as shown in figure 2) for checking assignments could help to address the problem of dishonesty in electronic documents. ODL instructors must note that checking measures could erode the trusting relationship in academia. It is therefore advisable that students be provided with these checking tools so that they can check their own work before submission and submit the anti-plagiarism report along with their assignment (Baron and Crooks 2004: 42-45).

The main reason why students and researchers plagiarise is because they do not understand what constitutes dishonesty. Although there are tools available to detect plagiarism, academics and students must be aware that plagiarism cannot be detected completely by these tools. Nevertheless, academics can make sincere efforts to reduce plagiarism by following the guidelines in the framework in figure 2. Web pages and guides on proper citation and plagiarism should be developed to assist students in a more proactive way towards academic integrity.

The fact that dishonesty is a serious problem in ODL and elsewhere is often indicative of a lack of quality and credibility in academic qualifications and research. The four norms of ethical practice must be emphasised repeatedly, namely honesty, keeping your word, respect for others and fairness. Providing information on ethics and plagiarism is the key to all student interactions in ODL and other forms of education. There is a need for sound practical guidelines on ethical practices to permeate the curriculum and course materials. Facilitators could publicise "good practice" guidelines on both discussion forums and home pages.

An ODL policy could be developed or revised to include specific aspects of ethics in academia, such as hacking into other people's computers, plagiarism, sending threatening or obscene messages, posting confidential material on the web, forwarding messages without permission, and the disruption of internet

activities. On the other hand, ethical principles of academic integrity for instructors should form part of the ODL policy.

Academics must acknowledge that there is a problem with dishonesty in academia, ODL and online learning. Secondly, academic institutions could use the framework for the prevention of dishonesty, as shown in figure 2. Dishonesty should be clearly defined so that all staff and students understand what this term encompasses. Methods for the eradication of dishonesty at all levels need to be researched and all academics should “set the scene” and serve as good role models (Rajeev, Soni and Makhdumi 2009: 444-445). By using the framework developed in this study, academic institutions could produce students who have a strong ethical foundation and this, in turn, would inform ethical practices in academia in the future (Harding, Carpenter, Montgomery & Steneck 2001: 4).

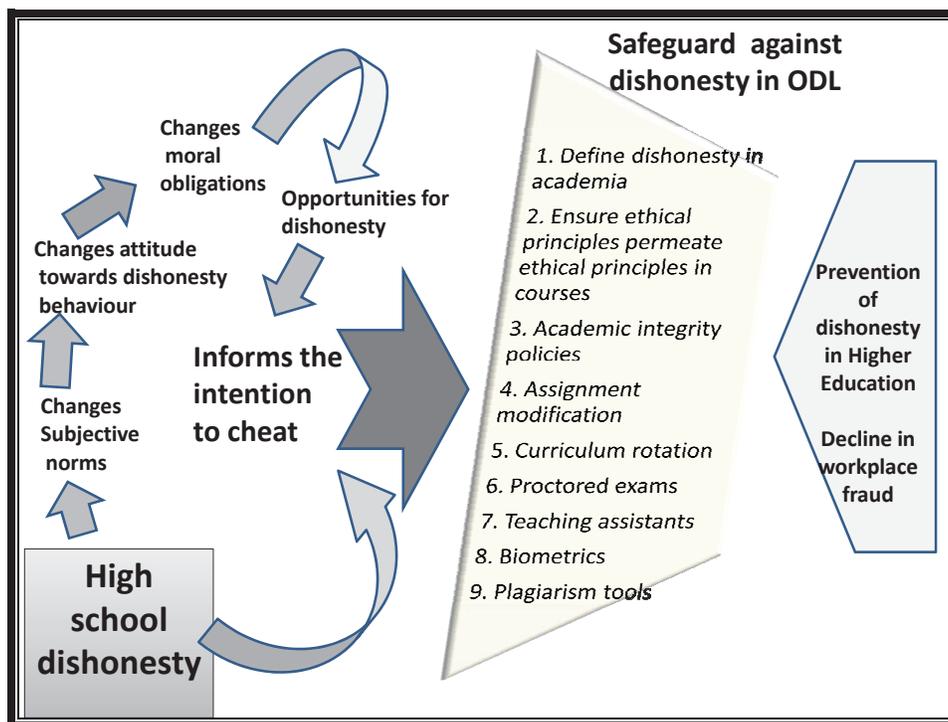


Figure 2. Framework for controlling dishonesty in ODL (adapted from Mayhew, Hubbard, Finelli and Harding 2009).

Research into ethical behaviour in ODL indicates the need for ethics training programmes, which could help individuals to improve their level of moral reasoning. Furthermore, ethical courses could raise students’ awareness and make them realise how unethical behaviour can hurt them, other people and society as a whole (Bloodgood, Turnley and Mudrack 2010: 23). Ethical conversations and courses in academia could result in academics and students thinking more carefully about the consequences of dishonesty. However, this aspect requires further research.

Reflections on the Framework for Controlling Dishonesty in ODL

After this literature review on dishonesty in academia, the framework for predicting dishonesty was modified to include aspects such as the opportunities for dishonesty and the safeguards against dishonesty, which were identified in the study. Figure 2 was constructed to depict the forces driving

dishonesty, as well as the safeguards against dishonesty. Academics therefore needed to reflect on this framework.

Ten participants, who were ODL practitioners at an ODL mega university, were selected to reflect on the framework. They were selected specifically for their expertise in ODL and technology-enhanced learning and included an ODL researcher, ODL advisors and academics from across various disciplines. The framework was sent to the participants via e-mail and, in the end, a total of five responses (reflections on the framework) were received.

The reflections of the participants pointed towards the need for more information regarding ethical practices and controlling dishonesty in academia. The participants also indicated the need for more clarity on what cheating and plagiarism in ODL entail, particularly in the context of the increasing use of technology.

All the participants agreed that it is important for each academic course or module to include a component that addresses ethical values, dishonesty – such as plagiarism and cheating – and the policies regulating it. Participants also called for harsh penalties to be employed in cases of student dishonesty. Most of the participants agreed that students should use anti-plagiarism software to check their own work before submitting it, since they (the academics) do not have the time to “police” students’ ethical behaviour. One participant raised a concern about anti-plagiarism software, claiming that students could still cheat by submitting false anti-plagiarism reports.

The participants also requested access to anti-plagiarism software themselves so that they could detect dishonesty in assignments. As there are many free anti-plagiarism tools on the internet, no licence is needed. Clearly, the feasibility of academics using anti-plagiarism software needs to be explored further in the context of ODL, since most academics feel that their time and energy are already overstretched.

All the participants agreed that addressing dishonesty in ODL is not easy. One participant reflected as follows:

“In my view it is a deep “thing” that comes from who you are and what values you were taught from childhood and how you as a person choose to lead your life.”

Conclusion

The continuing massification of higher education, with increasing student enrolment and the increase in profit-oriented higher education providers, is affecting the quality of education. This calls for greater control of corruption and academic dishonesty and the implementation of appropriate policy. Most academics are ill-equipped to provide long-term psychological counselling to students who cheat or plagiarise. Consequently, academics in ODL environments should refer dishonest students to on-campus counselling services to deal with the problem. Nevertheless, academics can use the framework provided in this article to guide their teaching.

It is clear that the availability and accessibility of the internet can be a double-edged sword for those who plagiarise, because the internet can easily be used to detect plagiarism. It is therefore of the utmost importance that ethical behaviour be instilled in students in ODL and elsewhere, because education is one of the significant factors that helps communities to develop morally. Higher education is dealing with a different kind of student, which means that punishment by itself is not enough to change students’ attitude towards dishonesty. Educators must include discussions about dishonesty during workshops, do more research, and include ethical principles in their course material if they are to get to the bottom of the problem of dishonesty and plagiarism in ODL.

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