

PAPERS

SESSION 1

**CONFIGURING PEDAGOGY AND COMMUNITY CULTURE FOR ACADEMIC
INTEGRITY IN KAZAKHSTANI UNIVERSITIES**

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Traditional compliance policing methods to ensure academic integrity tend relatively to ignore the developmental approach, and to ignore whether learning is actually occurring. Cheating and plagiarism indicate a breakdown in pedagogy, which is better addressed by student development than policing.

Notwithstanding, the knowledge economy creates both a need for and opportunity to promote academic integrity within a developmental approach, which emphasizes analytical thought and rewards acquisition of soft skills. Quality assurance can be achieved by means followed in conventional institutional accreditations.

Academic integrity pays dividends. It pays to institutions in the post-socialist region, such as KIMEP University, which were able to run the higher education market on the basis that academic integrity was assured. It pays to graduates, who benefit on the employment market from the reputation of their host universities. To wit, KIMEP alumni have an employment rate after six months of graduation of over 90% (KIMEP, 2019) against an average in Kazakhstan of 75% after one year (Canning, 2017, p. 75). The stock in trade of higher education institutions (HEIs) is their reputations, which are essential to guard.

Conversely, cheating and plagiarism do much harm. If these were to become universal, unqualified surgeons would routinely disfigure their patients and architects would construct buildings that collapse on their occupants. Science and innovation would be harmed because authentic creators of knowledge would go unacknowledged and unsupported by the public. HEIs would lose their clients and graduates would find their diplomas of little value.

In order to avoid cheating, HEIs usually start with a rule compliance (policing) approach, whose intention is to raise to students the costs of cheating (Gallant, 2011, p. 9). This is necessary but not sufficient, because clever students will always find ways to evade the rules. Policing can be only episodic and partly successful, and is limited to the time in which students are under the care of HEIs. The opposite of the compliance approach is the developmental approach, which shifts attention at least somewhat from the moral failings of cheaters to the preventive or more positive developmental measures that can be taken by institutions (Gallant, p. 9).

From the developmental perspective, the culture of the academic institutional community becomes particularly relevant. It is also essential to note here that, in addition to the ills of cheating mentioned above, cheating indicates a *breakdown in pedagogy* – both on the input side of teaching and output side of assessment of academic results achieved. In regard to the breakdown in pedagogy, it may be noted that not all students cheat out of a deliberate desire to do so. Often they plagiarize simply because they do not understand what is required of them; first of all in the specific assignment they have been given, and second, more pertinently, because they have not internalized the skills and attributes that would be useful to them in a broader sense in their later professional lives.

A predisposition to plagiarize in Kazakhstan goes back to the traditional Soviet approach to pedagogy, which emphasized knowledge and memorization of facts (Yakavets, 2014, p. 1), and undervalued skills of synthesis, analysis, and critical thought. Accordingly, KIMEP's experience is that freshmen have poor conceptual and writing skills. The tendency to emphasize knowledge of "things" that are "practical" is also a bad feature of the so-called "audit culture" (Taylor, 2018, p. 13-14) of Western neo-liberalism. Neo-liberals complain that too many "useless" courses such as philosophy, history, literature, and sociology are taught, to the detriment of science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) courses. Both the Soviet and neo-liberal pedagogical approaches are instrumental; that is, they privilege credentialism and vocationalism but not transferable skills and not the value of education for education's own sake. Unfortunately, Gallant (p. 11) says, rule-compliance schools often offer limited explanations for the rules in place.

The credentialist and vocationalist road is fundamentally the wrong road for HEIs to take; and not only because it appears to the academic purist to be of a lower intellectual order, but because it is out of line with modern professional requirements. The modern, globalizing knowledge economy requires more

people with so-called “soft skills” in critical thinking, foreign languages, empathy for foreign traditions and tastes, communication, readiness to take responsibility, and skills in self management, to name a few (see Allen, 2004; Neuman, 2005). The important point here is that these skills are the ones best conveyed to students through a developmental pedagogy. In the modern economy, in which facts can be found easily in electronic media, knowledge of facts – which, it should be noted, is the more cheatable and plagiarizable kind of knowledge – is less critical. Conversely, the soft analytical and creative skills are becoming more valued; and it is precisely these that are more amenable to a developmental pedagogical and institutional culture. Therefore the time is opportune for implementing academic integrity. Of course this is not to say that vocational education as such is bad, for vocational education has the legitimate function of preparing young people for practical employment in the economy. But vocationalism at the program level, and as a preparation for specific careers, should not be confused conceptually with educational content to be conveyed within HEIs. In other words, the vocational should be acknowledged to be vocational, and the academic should be acknowledged to be academic. HEIs should resist the temptation to vocationalism, within which cheating is easier, and should encourage more of the higher order attributes which are not so easily cheatable.

Now, implementing a culture of academic integrity has both a procedural and human side. On the procedural side, Gallant (p. 10) says, discipline may be used as a tool for development, but should not be seen as an end in itself. The procedural side is rather straightforward, for institutions need only to follow quality assurance methods that are already codified by most accreditation agencies, which apply the Dublin Descriptors under standards of the European Higher Education Area and the criteria of the Bologna Process for which Kazakhstan has signed. To repeat and clarify, the focus should not be in the first instance on discipline and teaching inputs but on active learning and learning outputs, including proper assessment of outputs. The payoff for institutions is that accreditation, with its requirement of academic integrity, provides a set of requirement and guidelines which are both pedagogically useful and financially profitable.

This represents a cultural shift within a HEI. But how can we know that a cultural shift has been effective in improving academic integrity? Fortunately, the answer is close to hand, for most accreditation agencies call for and recognize four kinds of learning output indicators. Listed in ascending order of validity these are 1) direct internal indicators, such as results on exams set by teachers, 2) indirect internal indicators, such as observation by teachers and

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student satisfaction, 3) indirect external indicators, in the form of employment success and employer and alumni testimonies, and 4) direct external indicators such as state exams and successful performance by students accepted for study in other national HEIs and universities abroad. If these indicators are present, especially the third and fourth, these may be taken as evidence that a developmental culture and a culture of academic culture characterize a particular HEI.

The more subtle issue of implementing a developmental culture concerns the human side. The challenge that remains is to obtain faculty, student, and staff support for institutional changes (Gallant, p. 28). There needs to be realism on the part of HEI management. Managers need to understand that some resources will need to be deployed for the control of cheating and for encouragement of a developmental culture. The teaching workload should not be so heavy that faculty have insufficient time to devote to policing, and class sizes should not be so large that faculty have insufficient time for personalized attention to students in difficulty and needing help. If faculty are overloaded, they will not buy into the desired culture actively, and will also resist passively by failing to act with energy in either policing or development (Gallant, p. 19). Concomitantly, managers should find means to identify and reward faculty who teach with academic integrity and protect faculty from student “outliers” who give low ratings to faculty who are strict about integrity (Gallant, p. 20). The harm that cheating does should be explained more explicitly to students at the same time that the benefits of academic integrity to them is also explained. This will go at least some way towards reducing resistance from students and having them internalize academic integrity.

It must be admitted that the integrity model contains some difficulties. Academic integrity needs to be emphasized and implemented all across an institution. Management needs to trust in the professionalism and good judgement of faculty, and faculty need to trust each other to maintain standards. As already noted, implementation can be achieved and maintained through broadly applied quality assurance mechanisms that are consonant with accreditations already in place. There is also a role for plain old exhortation: academic integrity is formalized in institutional and program mission statements, and in regular, institutionalized quality assurance exercises that restate the need for integrity, so that integrity becomes a habit and part of the culture of a HEI.

SUMMARY

The main points of this paper are restated below:

- Academic integrity is profitable to HEIs and graduates;
- Cheating and plagiarism indicate a breakdown in pedagogy;
- The developmental approach shifts attention away from the moral failings of students to the functioning of educational institutions;
- The onus to address the breakdown in pedagogy falls on HEIs;
- The knowledge economy rewards soft skills, which are pedagogically more developmental and less plagiarizable;
- The focus of pedagogical efforts and quality assurance assessments should shift from teaching inputs to learning outputs; and
- Academic integrity is implementable through known accreditation criteria and procedures.

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