

## JUDGMENT AND IMPLEMENTATION OF ACADEMIC FRAUD PRACTICES BY STUDENTS OF HIGHER EDUCATION

### *JULGAMENTO E IMPLEMENTAÇÃO DE PRÁTICAS DE FRAUDE ACADÊMICA POR ESTUDANTES DO ENSINO SUPERIOR*

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#### **ABSTRACT**

The article outlines the conceptual foundations of the formation of academic integrity among students of higher education; the essence of the concept of academic integrity, its content in relation to the formation of personal and professional characteristics of a competent specialist was investigated; defined attitude to manifestations of academic dishonesty among students. A study of cases of violations of the principles of academic integrity in institutions of higher education was conducted. The analyzed European experience in the formation of moral and ethical behavior of the future specialist in the field of education is highlighted as a model for Ukraine regarding the fight against tolerance for manifestations of academic dishonesty in the educational process. This paper uses the concepts and definitions found in the international academic discussion on this topic. Under the synonymous concepts of "academic fraud" and "dishonest behavior" we will understand the actions of students aimed at gaining advantages in the learning process and which violate the academic norms and rules governing the educational process at the university.

**Keywords:** Academic integrity. Education. Educational process. Academic dishonesty.

## RESUMO

O artigo esboça os fundamentos conceituais da formação da integridade acadêmica entre estudantes do ensino superior; investigou-se a essência do conceito de integridade acadêmica, seu conteúdo em relação à formação das características pessoais e profissionais de um especialista competente; atitude definida para manifestações de desonestidade acadêmica entre os alunos. Foi realizado um estudo de casos de violação dos princípios da integridade acadêmica em instituições de ensino superior. A experiência europeia analisada na formação do comportamento moral e ético do futuro especialista na área da educação é destacada como um modelo para a Ucrânia no que diz respeito à luta contra a tolerância a manifestações de desonestidade acadêmica no processo educacional. Este artigo utiliza os conceitos e definições encontrados na discussão acadêmica internacional sobre o tema. Sob os conceitos sinônimos de "fraude acadêmica" e "comportamento desonesto", entenderemos as ações dos alunos que visam obter vantagens no processo de aprendizagem e que violam as normas e regras acadêmicas que regem o processo educacional na universidade.

**Palavras-chave:** Integridade acadêmica. Educação, processo educacional. Desonestidade acadêmica.

## Introduction

For the modern educational community the term "academic integrity" is relative new, which determines its multifacetedness translations from a foreign language. This term consists of two words - "academic" and "integrity", which is translated as "decency", "integrity", "moral purity".

The basis of the classical definition of the term "academic integrity" is the main thing ethical qualities of future professionals - conscience, responsibility, courage, justice, respect, decency, trust and courage. We can to state that in the conditions of the challenges that arise before the modern academic community, and growing scale of unethical distribution behavior, the main role is played by development academic integrity in all participants educational process.

Conceptual and legal principles of academic Virtues are reflected in the National Doctrine of education development (2002), National Strategy development of education in Ukraine for the period until 2021 (2013), the Law of Ukraine "On copyright and related rights" (2015), the Law of Ukraine "On Education" (2017). Based on the study of the problem of formation of academic integrity during professional we have the opportunity to train a future teacher distinguish Ukrainian and foreign works scientists.

Academic fraud is a massive problem for universities around the world. As studies in the USA show, in Europe, more than half of the students committed dishonest acts to get a higher grade while studying at the university (IVES, 2017), (NAMANGO, 2016), (MCCABE, 2001).

At the same time, academic fraud leads to a number of negative consequences, both for universities and for society as a whole. First, the high level of academic fraud has a negative impact on the quality of (MAGNUS, 2002) graduates, and, as a result, reduces the value of the Arimi higher education diploma (2017) and employers' trust in universities (CIZEK, 2003). Second, students who use dishonest practices in college are more likely to use them in the workplace after graduation, negatively impacting (WHITLEY'S, 2001) productivity and economic development.

To date, a series of measures have been developed by various universities to combat student academic dishonesty, from sanctioning fraud by (ARIMI, 2017) to teaching academic integrity through special lectures, courses, group discussions (Burr & King, 2012), implementing ethical codes in University (MCCABE & TREVINO, 1993), (MACDONALD & CARROLL, 2006), student involvement in Doyle University ethics committees (2010).

At the same time, universities have recently been focusing on measures aimed at shaping the value of academic honesty among students. The introduction of ethical codes by (LÖFSTRÖM, 2015) is becoming especially popular. Although their effectiveness has not yet been proven, for example, ongoing experimental studies show a small and not statistically significant effect of such codes by (CORRIGAN-GIBBS, 2015).

As part of the study, we assume that the low effectiveness of value measures can be explained by the fact that the developed codes of ethics are based on the assumption that not only the administration and teachers, but also students perceive academic fraud as something "bad", "deviating from the norm" and "ethically unacceptable" regardless of the learning situation. While in reality, students may view dishonest behavior at university as something natural, routine,

and acceptable (STEPHENS, 2019). And also to rely in their assessments and decisions not only on their attitudes towards academic fraud, but also on the conditions and characteristics of the situation in which specific dishonest actions will be or have already been committed by (MCCABE & TREVINO, 1997).

The purpose of the article is to overcome the gap between the prerequisites, on the basis of which ethical codes are developed, aimed at the formation of students' value attitudes, and students' perception of dishonest practices at the university, through the development of a theoretical and methodological approach based on the student's assessment of the fairness of various educational situations at the university and dishonest behavior in their context. This paper uses the concepts and definitions found in the international academic discussion on this topic. Under the synonymous concepts of "academic fraud" and "dishonest behavior" we will understand the actions of students aimed at gaining advantages in the learning process and which violate the academic norms and rules governing the educational process at the university. In this paper, we consider only one type of student cheating - cheating, as this is the most common form of cheating among students (HARPER, 2021).

### **literature review**

Studies of the dishonest behavior of students have become widespread in foreign countries. (BOWERS, 1964) published by B. Bowers in 1964 with more than 5,400 students on 99 US campuses is considered the first large-scale study on this issue. Despite the fact that there were earlier studies, this work is considered a landmark in the study of dishonest behavior of students. For a long time, many studies have used the classification of dishonest practices, as well as the survey tool developed by (HARRISON, 2021). Since then, the topic of academic fraud has gained great popularity among researchers around the world, including E. Anderman, D. Bunn, D. McCabe, J. Stevenson, L. Trevino, T. Murdoch and others. Most researchers seek to answer questions about which students are more prone to dishonest

practices (MCCABE, 2006), (GHANEM & MOZAHM, 2019); why and how they commit dishonest acts during training (MURDOCK & ANDERMAN, 2006), (BRIMBLE, 2016), (YU, 2018), (STEPHENS, 2019), (BARAN & JONASON, 2020); what ways to prevent student dishonesty are being developed and applied at the universities of (MCCABE & PAVELA, 2004), (HAMLIN, 2013), (MILOVANOVITCH, 2020); what are the consequences of student academic fraud (NONIS & SWIFT, 2001), (LADUKE, 2013).

This paper uses a mixed method research design to analyze the environment and context in which students' judgments about dishonest behavior are formed. In this paper, we integrate the methods according to the principle of "consecutive contributions", which is considered the most effective and involves first conducting a qualitative study (in our case, interviews with students), and then a quantitative one to check the data obtained at the (Morgan, 2015) qualitative stage.

To solve the problem, a discourse analysis of the linguistic and genre features of the ethical documents of Ukrainian universities was carried out, as well as an analysis of the features, signs and main themes of the identified discourses regarding the dishonest behavior of students in official documents and in public statements of the university management. The empirical base of the study was the official ethical documents of universities, presented on the websites of universities, as well as public statements of the university management, published on the official media websites and in other open sources.

## Materials

To understand the ineffectiveness of codes of ethics, it is necessary to study how students explain dishonest acts and reflect on their appropriateness within the walls of the university. Previous studies have used the following theories to answer these questions: the neutralization theory of (SYKES & MATZA, 1957); social learning theory (BANDURA, 2002, 2006); the theory of moral disunity (BANDURA, 2002). These theories make it possible to determine students' attitudes towards

fraud and the importance of the characteristics of the educational environment for them. According to the neutralization theory, in order to justify their dishonest actions, students shift the blame to circumstances or other people (SYKES & MATZA, 1957). For example, they may justify their actions with lack of time for preparation, lack of interest in the subject, incompetence of the teacher, helping a classmate, etc. According to social learning theory (SCT), students justify their behavior through the fact that other students do the same, while in their actions they take into account the consequences of such behavior. Another theory about moral disengagement explains students' justification of cheating by their desire to present their actions as morally acceptable (SHU, 2011), (PULFREY, 2018). For example, they explain their cheating by helping their friends/classmates or by adapting to different situations in this way, etc.

However, all of these approaches have a number of limitations. The first limitation is the assumption that students understand that academic dishonesty at the university is bad (STEPHENS, 2019). However, some studies show opposite results, showing a greater differentiation of attitudes among students (KARANAUSKIENE, 2020). Based on previous research, we hypothesize that students perceive the same actions differently and, depending on their rationale, they may view actions that others consider dishonest as natural and normal. This is also supported by the prevalence of academic fraud worldwide.

The second limitation of the approaches under consideration is the lack of problematization of academic fraud within the framework of the term of justice. Therefore, only a small number of studies have been devoted to the study of ways to justify criticism of dishonest behavior by students, which is no less important for understanding the mechanisms of decision-making about involvement in academic fraud. Since this will improve the effectiveness of existing methods of combating student dishonesty and develop new ones. T. Murdock et al. in their study demonstrated that student assessment of the fairness of the educational situation is a variable that characterizes the relationship between the characteristics of the

educational environment and the attitude of students to academic fraud (MURDOCK, MILLER, GOETZINGER, 2007).

This work overcomes these limitations through the development of a new theoretical and methodological approach based on the theory of critical ability. We tested this approach on the example of the analysis of discursive practices of students in relation to dishonest behavior at the university. As a result, six modes of criticism and justification of various actions were identified, which correspond to the originally identified modes:

- 1) inspiration mode;
- 2) home mode;
- 3) glory mode;
- 4) civil regime;
- 5) market regime;
- 6) industrial regime.

All these modes are used by us to study the problem of academic fraud. For example, the mode of inspiration corresponds to the desire for grace, for receiving positive emotions, and in the context of academic fraud, this means that for students, their personal comfort and positive emotions that this process brings are important in the educational process. Within the home regimen, recognized authority and adherence to tradition is the guideline, which means that students adhere to the position learned in school and family regarding academic fraud. For example, in some cases parents support students' decision to cheat on an exam or buy work to get higher grades (ABOU-ZEID, 2016), (BUCKNER, HODGES, 2016). In fame mode, the opinion and evaluation of other people is important, therefore, within this mode, students assess cases of academic fraud in terms of reputational risks and consequences of such fraud. The basis of the civil regime is the success and well-being of the entire team, so students, in cases of academic fraud, are guided by norms and principles aimed at the common good of the group. The market regime is based on a sense of competition and the desire of people to have certain advantages. Under this regime, it is common for students to weigh the costs and benefits of committing

academic misconduct. Therefore, according to research, having a high chance of being caught and punished reduces the likelihood of cheating by students (FREIBURGER, 2017), (KERKVLIEET, SIGMUND, 1999). The basis of the industrial regime is the idea of the effectiveness of a person and his actions, therefore, within the framework of this regime, students evaluate dishonest actions in terms of the usefulness of the knowledge and skills acquired during their studies for their future professional activities. Studies show that those students who do not plan to work in their specialty are more likely to cheat than those who plan to go to work in their field of study. Thus, the use of the approach makes it possible to study not only justifications for dishonest practices by students, but also their criticism, taking into account different arguments and ways of thinking and perceiving by students of the fairness and acceptability of academic fraud at the university, which allows us to overcome the limitations of previous theoretical approaches.

To study the problem of academic fraud of students, this theoretical framework is used for the first time. Therefore, it is also important to develop a tool that allows one to quantify the prevalence of each mode of criticism and justification used by students, which will allow, first of all, to develop measures that correspond to the most common modes.

Thus, the scientific novelty of this study lies in the development of a new theoretical and methodological approach for studying academic fraud of students. In this paper, for the first time, an approach is used to study the dishonest behavior of students, followed by a description of how each mode of criticism and justification manifests itself in situations of academic fraud of students. In addition, a tool was proposed and tested for assessing the prevalence of home, market and industrial regimes of criticism and justification of dishonest behavior at the university.

According to the results of the survey, it can be concluded that the modern student tries to avoid personal responsibility for the committed actions, to find an excuse, a moral and ethical explanation for dishonest behavior. Excuses and explanations, in turn, are necessary to avoid feelings of shame and guilt. Future



education specialists must realize that any violation of the principles of academic integrity leads to a large number of negative results.

Neglect of academic culture in education directly affects the formation of the specialist's mentality. If a person is used to plagiarizing while studying, what will prevent him from behaving unethically in professional activity and life?

Comprehensive work on overcoming manifestations of academic dishonesty will be successful only if there is a system of actions, mechanisms for overcoming dishonest behavior, clear standards and moral principles. Yes, European universities have "Codes of Ethics" that clearly regulate the principles of educational activity. They establish rules and norms of ethical behavior for teachers and students. In order to teach students how to write scientific papers correctly, the discipline "Academic writing" is taught. In order to instill moral and ethical values in students in educational and research activities, the discipline "Scientific Ethics" is taught. University libraries also play an important role in popularizing the postulates of academic integrity among educators.

European countries are characterized by the desire to create a single democratic and cultural educational space, which will be based on the following principles: professional training, multiculturalism, self-improvement, mobility, openness to the world. Corporate ethics, partnership between students, teachers and administration are the main characteristics of a European university.

European scientists suggest focusing attention on the characteristics of the institution of higher education, which facilitate or hinder manifestations of academic dishonesty. The number of violations of academic principles is significantly lower in those institutions of higher education, where the relevant legal framework has been developed: recommendations, rules, regulations, declarations, codes. Institutions of higher education should direct their efforts to the formation of a culture of academic honesty, education of motivated students for the sake of their own image.

Foreign researchers emphasize academic values, which are the basis for both the educational environment and society in general.

Academic integrity is one of the most important academic values that form a competitive specialist in the global labor market.

Academic integrity has acquired a special importance for the educational environment, and only with the joint efforts of the entire academic community is it possible to finally form the corporate culture of the university. It is necessary to deal comprehensively with the tolerant attitude of students towards negative phenomena of violation of ethical principles in educational and scientific activities.

## Conclusions

Thus, on the basis of a systematic analysis, the conceptual foundations of the formation of academic integrity in future specialists during professional training were outlined, it was proved that that this category is the rules and moral and ethical principles that should be used by all participants of the educational process to build an atmosphere of mutual trust in the academic environment, to update the education system. Understanding and acceptance of academic norms, created on the basis of systematic work and motivation, is a necessary phenomenon for future education specialists. It is possible to update the system of higher education only if it is active student participation in reforms, proposals for ways to improve the educational process. Many institutions of higher education in Ukraine already have "Codes of Ethics" that prescribe the principles of academic integrity at the legislative level. The next step to restore the academic culture of our country will be the creation of ethics commissions that will clearly regulate sanctions and punishments for non-compliance with ethical standards in the educational and scientific environment.

Taking into account the increase in cases of violation of ethical norms in institutions of higher education, it will be appropriate to direct further scientific research in the direction of studying the specifics of development academic integrity as a component of professional training of future specialists.

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