Academic dishonesty: Zimbabwe university lecturers’ and students’ views

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Abstract
The study sought to establish Zimbabwean university lecturers’ and students’ views on academic dishonesty with a focus on the forms of academic dishonesty practised by undergraduate students; reasons for the dishonesty; and ways of minimising the dishonesty. A survey design was used and 31 lecturers and 77 second- and third-year Bachelor of Arts undergraduate students participated in the study. Frequencies and percentages were used in the analysis of the data. The study established that a number of forms of academic dishonesty were practised by students at the university, including: plagiarism; copying other students’ assignments; fabricating sources of information; taking unauthorised material into the examination room; exchanging notes in the examination room; faking illness to justify late submission of assignments or non-attendance of lectures or tutorials; and writing assignments for other students. Students viewed the reasons for academic dishonesty as mainly externally determined, while lecturers viewed them as mainly internally determined. Strategies suggested by both lecturers and students to minimise academic dishonesty included: taking stringent measures against offenders; thorough and strict marking; teaching students about how to cite sources of information; improving the provision of reading resources; improving ways of lecturing; and imposing strict invigilation. Lecturers felt that students needed to be encouraged to study hard consistently.

Keywords: academic dishonesty, academic integrity, higher education institutions, lecturers, student cheating, university students, Zimbabwe

INTRODUCTION
Despite academics regarding academic integrity as being of undisputed importance in educational environments (Mwamwenda 2006, 34; Theart and Smit 2012), academic dishonesty is reported to be a widespread phenomenon in many countries’ higher education institutions (HEIs) (De Bruin and Rudnick 2007, 153; Jensen, Arnet, Feldman and Cauffman 2002, 209; Lim and See 2001, 273; Lin and Wen 2007, 86; Mwamwenda 2012, 452; Teodorescu and Andrei 2008, 268; Theart and Smit 2012; Thomas and De Bruin 2012, 20). The phenomenon is viewed as very prevalent and reportedly increasing in schools, colleges and universities (Diekhoff et al. 1996, 487; Franklyn-Stones and Newstead 1995, 160; Haine, Diekhoff, LaBeff
and Clark 1986, 342; Jensen et al. 2002, 210; McCabe, Trevino and Butterfield 2001, 224; Thomas and De Bruin 2012, 20). Blachnio and Weremko (2011, 15) are of the opinion that the existence ‘of the phenomenon of academic dishonesty is undeniable in all cultures’.

Gaberson (1997, 14) defines academic dishonesty as intentional participation in deceptive practices regarding one’s academic work or that of another. Although there is lack of consensus on the meaning of academic dishonesty among academics (Pincus and Schnmelkin 2003, 196), different authorities seem to point to the following forms of academic dishonesty, namely: copying each other’s work; plagiarism; altering and inventing research data; allowing course work to be copied; exchanging scripts in examinations; fabricating references; doing another student’s work; copying from a neighbour during an examination without them realising; taking unauthorised material into the examination; copying another student’s assignment without their knowledge; stealing a test; purchasing term papers; failing to report a grading error; delaying taking an exam or submitting a paper due to a false excuse; taking an examination for someone else; paying someone to write a paper; using signals during an examination; and manipulating lecturers (Blachnio and Weremko 2011, 14; Franklyn-Stones and Stephen 1995, 159; Jensen et al. 2002, 210; Lin and Wen 2007, 89; Lupton and Chapman 2002, 18–19; Mwamwenda 2006, 34–35; Park 2003, 472; Pincus and Shenmelkin 2003, 197). The above forms of academic dishonesty all point to the concept of cheating by students in HEIs.

Academic dishonesty is also viewed as a strategy students use to cope with the demands of higher education (HE) level work and the pressure to succeed (Asworth, Bannister and Thorne 1997, 194). Similarly, Maramark and Maline (1993) cited by Diekhoff et al. (1996, 489) argue that academic dishonesty is viewed by some students as a legitimate way for getting ahead and coping with stress.

Welsch (1993, in Diekhoff et al. 1996, 501) argues that academic dishonesty exists in a broader social and educational context which includes accusations of lecturer plagiarism, administrative misuse of institutional and government funds, insider trading and other forms of dishonesty by national leaders. Thus, academic dishonesty is only a reflection of the normative patterns of society in which it occurs (Diekhoff et al. 1996, 501).

A number of reasons for academic dishonesty have been put forward in the literature. For example, to help a friend; time pressure; to increase the mark; pressure to get high grades; parental pressure; a desire to excel; pressure to get a job; poor self-image; a lack of character; a lack of pride in a job well done; peer pressure; monetary reward; fear of failure; laziness; immaturity; lack of commitment to academics; classroom environment conducive to academic dishonesty; unreasonable assignments; competing assignments; lack of preparation; poor grades; competition for higher grades; will to succeed at all costs; poor quality teaching; unclear instructions on major assignments; knowledge of others who are cheating (De Carlo and Bodner 2004, 49; Gaberson 1997, 16; Franklyn-Stones and Newstead 1995, 158; Haines, Diekhoff, LaBeff and Clark 1986, 352; McCabe and Trevino 1993, 535;
Academic dishonesty: Zimbabwe university lecturers’ and students’ views

McCabe et al. 2001, 220). Ashworth, Bannister and Thorne (1997, 194) state that life is about competition and that not cheating might jeopardise your future. Thus, the increasing competition for the most desired positions in the job market results in students experiencing mounting pressure to succeed. McCabe et al. (2001, 220) cite literature, for example, Bowers (1964) which states that the above pressures lead to decisions to engage in various forms of academic dishonesty.

Most of the above reasons for academic dishonesty relate to neutralisation and excuse-making. Neutralisation and excuse-making are the common strategies students use to justify their academic dishonesty (Diekhoff et al. 1996, 489). The offenders neutralise so effectively that they actually do not think academic dishonesty is wrong either for themselves or for others (Haines et al. 1986, 344). They evaluate or judge academic dishonesty as acceptable (Jensen et al. 2002, 221–222). Neutralisation is similar to rationalisation which can be used before, during or after deviant behaviour to deflect the disapproval of others and self (Haines et al. 1986, 344). ‘The neutralisation process is presumed to free the individual to deviate without considering himself or herself a deviant, thus eliminating or reducing the sense of guilt or wrong-doing’ (Haines et al. 1986, 346).

Despite high rates of academic dishonesty, very little is being done by universities or individual lecturers to overcome the challenge (Diekhoff et al. 1996, 488). Thus, academic dishonesty is often either overlooked or treated lightly by lecturers. According to Teadoresu and Andrei (2009, 272), university lecturers practise academic dishonesty themselves. So, if lecturers are practising academic dishonesty, they are unlikely to condemn it. The lecturers’ reluctance to condemn academic dishonesty results in the acceptance of the dishonesty (Blachnio and Weremko 2011, 19). By not condemning academic dishonesty, lecturers may force honest students to convince themselves that they cannot afford to be disadvantaged by fellow students who cheat and go unpunished. They begin cheating in order to level the playing field (McCabe et al. 2001, 220). Thus, the decision to engage in academic dishonesty is influenced by the presence of another person engaging in academic dishonesty (Blachnio and Weremko 2011, 18; Teodorescu and Andrei 2009, 281). The students will adjust their behaviour (they cheat) to the norms adopted by the dishonest peer. As such, peer approval of dishonesty and peer cheating are positively related to academic dishonesty (McCabe et al. 2001, 223).

Academic dishonesty is not only unethical but also compromises learning and undermines the assessment process (Lim and See 2001, 273). Park (2003, 483) and Thomas and De Bruin (2012, 23) see academic dishonesty as a significant challenge to academic integrity as well as a serious threat to institutional quality assurance. It also provides offenders with an unfair advantage over those who do not practice it (Lim and See 2001, 273).

Successful academic dishonest behaviours in college may carry over as a way of life after college (Lin and Wen 2007, 88). Students who either participate in or witness cases of academic dishonesty at college will leave college with poor work habits and questionable ethical foundations (Teodorescu and Andrei 2009, 267). Research has
shown that there is a positive correlation between unethical academic practices and future unethical professional behaviour (Theart and Smit 2012). Dishonest students will carry forward the dishonest behaviours into society in their professional careers (Thomas and De Bruin 2012, 13). Thus, higher education institutions should take a leading role in addressing and curbing student academic dishonesty as a way of contributing to a greater ethical society (Garofalo 2003 cited by Thomas and De Bruin 2012, 13). Lin and Wen (2007, 96) believe that academic dishonesty must be overcome for students are the future major stakeholders in society. Their unethical behaviour now should be addressed to avoid problems for society in future.

Lecturers need to understand students’ perspective on academic dishonesty in their effort to communicate appropriate norms (Ashworth et al. 1997, 187). Mwamwenda (2012, 456) states that lecturers should understand academic dishonesty as practised by students given that such knowledge will enable them to make informed communication with students regarding the educational implications of such behaviour. In addition, lecturers need to agree among themselves as to what constitutes academic dishonesty and how students may be taught regarding such behaviours (Kolanko et al. 2006, 35).

The prevalence of student academic dishonesty may be under reported (Thomas and De Bruin 2012, 22). The under reporting may result in the phenomenon not being addressed within institutions. Franklyn-Stokes and Newstead (1995, 170) believe that lecturers may not be aware of the extent and nature of the academic dishonesty hence conducting studies of this nature is a must. The present study was undertaken to bring out the picture on academic dishonesty in a Zimbabwean university with a view to suggesting solutions for the phenomenon. Studying academic dishonesty familiarises all those concerned with HE about what is going on and assists them in coming up with appropriate measures to control the occurrence of such behaviour (Mwamwenda 2012, 456).

While a number of studies on academic dishonesty have been carried out in a number of countries for example, in the United Kingdom (UK) (Franklyn-Stones and Newstead 1995, 159); in the United States (US) (Curry and Rainey 2007; Gaberson 1997, 14; Gull, Kohler and Patriquin 2007; Lupton and Chapman 2002, 17); in Canada (Gull et al. 2007; Tam 2008); in Russia (Lupton and Chapman 2002, 17); in Taiwan (Lin and Wen 2007, 85); in Romania (Teodorescu and Andrei 2009, 267); in East Africa (Mwamwenda 2012,452); and in South Africa (De Bruin and Rudnuck 2007; Govender 2007; Mwamwenda 2006, 34), to the knowledge of the researcher, little has been done in Zimbabwe. A related Zimbabwean study on stress and coping strategies among Midlands State University by Kasayira, Chipandambira and Hungwe (2007) reported cheating as one of the coping mechanisms.

The researcher has personally experienced situations of academic dishonesty while invigilating at the Zimbabwe Open University and the Great Zimbabwe University. He caught some students with unauthorised material in examination venues and also noticed that some students copied each other’s work in written assignments. The lack of research in the area and the experience of observing incidents of cheating
among Zimbabwean students encouraged the researcher to carry out the present study. The aim was to develop a study that would advance Zimbabwean academics’ understanding of academic dishonesty; explain why undergraduate students commit academic dishonesty; and suggest possible solutions to the phenomenon. Because of the sensitivity of the issue, students were not asked directly to report their own academic dishonesty or cheating but what they believed was practised by their peers.

GOALS OF THE STUDY
The study sought to establish Zimbabwean university lecturers’ and students’ views on:

• the forms of academic dishonesty practised by Zimbabwean undergraduate students;
• the reasons given for the academic dishonesty; and
• how the academic dishonesty may be minimised.

METHODOLOGY

Design
A survey design which was mainly quantitative in nature was used. Surveys are normally used when researchers want to gather data that describes the nature of existing conditions (Cohen, Manion and Morrison 2000, 169). The design was found suitable because it assisted the researcher to understand the nature of academic dishonesty practices by students at a Zimbabwean university.

Sample
Thirty-one lecturers and 77 second- and third-year Bachelor of Arts students at a university in Zimbabwe participated in the study. The lecturers’ lecturing experience ranged from 2 to 34 years. Second- and third-year students were selected because they had been in the university for long enough to have noticed any forms of cheating among students. The lecturers and students were conveniently selected. In convenience sampling, the sample is chosen simply because it is within easy access to the researcher (Cohen et al. 2000, 102). In the current study, the researcher had easy access to the students and lecturers.

Instrumentation
Questionnaires (one for lecturers and the other one for students) were used. The questionnaire for students had included both closed and open-ended items. The first part of the student questionnaire had a list of forms of academic dishonesty drawn from the literature and students were asked to tick if they agreed or disagreed that
students from their university practised the particular form of academic dishonesty. The second part of the questionnaire had three open-ended items. The first asked students to list other forms of academic dishonesty that were not included in the first part of the questionnaire; the second asked the students to give reasons they thought that led students to engage in academic dishonesty; and the third asked students to give suggestions as to how academic dishonesty could be minimised. The lecturers’ questionnaire requested them to list the forms of academic dishonesty behaviours either they or their colleagues had encountered; to suggest reasons why students engage in academic dishonesty behaviours; and to suggest solutions for the phenomenon. The questionnaires were pilot tested to check on their usability.

**Procedure**

Students were asked to fill in the questionnaire after having finished their tutorials while lecturers were given the questionnaire in their offices. Participation was voluntary. The students were informed that they could withdraw from the study at any given time during the study. They were asked not to write their names or any information that would lead to their identification being known.

**Data analysis**

Data from the closed items were converted into percentages. Listed responses to the open ended items were recorded and tallied into frequencies. Frequency tables were used.

**RESULTS**

**Lecturers’ responses**

Table: 1. Forms of academic dishonesty

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Form of academic dishonesty</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Plagiarism</td>
<td>28 (90.3%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Copying other students’ work</td>
<td>26 (83.9%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fabricating sources</td>
<td>20 (64.5%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bringing unauthorised material into exams</td>
<td>13 (41.9%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Availing one’s work to a colleague/exchanging notes in exam</td>
<td>5 (16.1%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Getting quotations from others without necessarily reading the text</td>
<td>4 (12.9%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tearing out chapters/pages from library book</td>
<td>3 (9.7%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lying after missing lecture/tutorial/exam/test</td>
<td>3 (9.7%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 1 shows that the lecturers viewed plagiarism, copying other students’ work, fabricating sources and bringing unauthorised material into the examination rooms as the most practised forms of academic dishonesty. The forms of academic dishonesty least practised included writing notes on body parts in an examination and falsifying information.

Table 2 shows that the lecturers who participated in the study viewed laziness; shortage of reading resources; lack of examination preparation; pressure of work; and poor time management as the main reasons for academic dishonesty by Zimbabwean
university undergraduate students. The reasons given least included lecturers setting the same questions over the years; and students’ failure to comprehend question requirements.

Table 3. How academic dishonesty may be minimised

| Suggestion                                                      | Frequency |
|                                                               |          |
| Encouraging students to work hard consistently                 | 17 (54.8%) |
| Thorough and strict marking                                    | 16 (51.6%) |
| Following university regulations on academic dishonesty         | 14 (45.2%) |
| Teaching students how and why they should cite sources correctly| 12 (38.7%) |
| Improving provision of reading material in library              | 11 (35.5%) |
| Thoroughly preparing students for assignments and exams         | 10 (32.3%) |
| Vigilant examination invigilation                               | 8 (25.8%) |
| Changing assignment/exams questions every year                  | 5 (16.1%) |

Table 3 shows that the lecturers suggested encouraging students to work hard consistently; thorough and strict marking; following university regulations on academic dishonesty; teaching students how and why they should cite sources correctly; improving learning material provision; and thorough preparation of students for assignments and exams as the major strategies to minimise academic dishonesty among students. They also suggested vigilant examination invigilation and changing examination questions over the years.

Students’ responses

Table 4. Agreement to existence of forms of academic dishonesty

| Form of academic dishonesty                                      | Agreement by gender |
|                                                               | Male               | Female              |
|                                                               | Agree | Disagree | Agree | Disagree |
| Copying other students’ assignments                            | 25 (80.65%) | 6 (19.35%) | 30 (65.22%) | 16 (34.78%) |
| Faking illness to justify late/no submission                   | 25 (80.65%) | 5 (16.13%) | 24 (52.17%) | 22 (47.83%) |
| Downloading assignments from internet without acknowledgement   | 19 (61.29%) | 6 (19.35%) | 28 (60.87%) | 17 (39.96%) |
| Hiding library books for selfish reasons                       | 25 (80.65%) | 5 (16.13%) | 35 (76.07%) | 10 (21.74%) |
| Copying assignment from books without acknowledgement           | 16 (51.61%) | 15 (48.39%) | 27 (58.70%) | 18 (39.13%) |
| Writing assignments for others                                 | 21 (67.74%) | 10 (32.26%) | 17 (39.96%) | 28 (60.87%) |
Table 4 above shows that Zimbabwean students agreed that academic dishonesty was being practised in their university. From the table, the most prevalent forms of academic dishonesty were copying other students’ assignments; faking illness to justify late or non-submission of assignments; hiding library books for selfish reasons; writing assignments for others; copying assignments from books without acknowledgement; and copying from former students’ work. The forms of academic dishonesty least practised were exchanging answers in the examination room; and taking unauthorised material into the examination room.

Other forms of academic dishonesty
Students gave the following as other forms of academic dishonesty: stealing other students’ assignments (30%); using cell phones in examination rooms to Google answers and exchange information (21%); acknowledging false scholars from the internet (20%); inventing one’s own sources for reference (10%); leaking examination papers to other students (10%); exchanging information through phones (9%); not contributing to group assignments (6%); exchanging question papers with jotted points in examination room (5%); and writing formulas on student IDs (5%).

Possible reasons for academic dishonesty
Reasons for academic dishonesty included: lack of reading material (75%); laziness on the part of students (62%); work overload (49%); lecturers not detecting academic dishonesty (47%); poor/little exam invigilation (45%); poor exam preparation (40%); poor lecturing (31%); fear of failure (28%); not understanding demands of the question (20%); and lecturer-student sexual relationships (10%).

Possible strategies to minimise academic dishonesty
Students felt that academic dishonesty would be minimised through: increasing resources (70%); suspending students found cheating or imposing stiffer penalties for those caught cheating (69%); strictness by lecturers (64%); giving enough time for assignments (60%); strict exam invigilation (57%); thoroughness by lecturers (55%); good lecturing by lecturers (30%); lecturers giving different assignments each year (19%); teaching students how to cite references (15%); and banning the use of cell phones in examination rooms (10%).
DISCUSSION

The study revealed that both lecturers and students believed that academic dishonesty was practised among university students in Zimbabwe. This finding confirms the findings of studies from other countries (Curry and Rainey 2007; Franklyn-Stokes and Newstead 1995, 159; Govender 2007; Lupton and Chapman 2002). The forms of academic dishonesty practised by the Zimbabwean students, such as copying other students’ assignments; faking illness to justify late submission of assignments; plagiarism and copying assignments from former students; and stealing other students’ assignments confirm what is prevalent in the literature (Franklyn-Stokes and Newstead 1995, 169; Lin and Wen 2007, 90; Pincus and Schmelkin 2003, 197).

The students revealed that some students Google information and exchange notes in exams using cell phones. This finding supports Kolanko et al.’s (2006, 36) finding that text messaging via cell phones can serve as a medium for passing answers. To this end, Lee (2009, 171) advocates for the banning of bringing programmable computers and cell phones into examination venues.

A unique finding on the forms of academic dishonesty was a revelation by some lecturers that some students tore out chapters or pages from library books. Similarly, some students revealed that they were hiding library books from other students for selfish reasons. This would imply that other students would not see the material. The motive for this would be to outdo the other students in the assignments or examinations since they would not have accessed the relevant reading material.

Faking illnesses could be minimised if medical practitioners were thorough and professional in their jobs. From the findings of the study, lecturers did not see faking illness as a major form of academic dishonesty while the students viewed it otherwise. This could be because lecturers may have faith in their fellow professionals and may believe that the doctors are professional and ethical in their conduct and thus, would not suspect any foul play from the sick notes.

The finding on the reasons for academic dishonesty, for example student laziness and unpreparedness, confirms the literature (McCabe and Trevino 1993). The lazy and unprepared students are sure to fail and may thus search for alternative ways in which to perform well (De Bruin and Rudnick 2007, 161–162).

Some students in the study mentioned that lecturers were not detecting academic dishonesty. Thus, the lecturers were not playing their role in maintaining academic integrity. The belief that lecturers are not playing their role in overcoming academic dishonesty is supported by McCabe et al.’s (2001, 229) finding that students believe that academic dishonesty can be minimised by lecturers being fair, providing deterrents to cheating; and removing opportunities to cheat. The above finding relates to Lin and Wen’s (2007, 95) finding that students perceived that many lecturers did not treat cases of academic dishonesty very harshly. Like in the literature, the students could have engaged in academic dishonesty because the lecturers were turning a blind eye to those cheating. Lee (2009, 173) states that lecturer laziness can be detrimental to maintaining a high standard of academic integrity. The lazy lecturers may not pay
attention to academic dishonesty and this may worsen the challenge of academic dishonesty in HE (Lin and Wen 2007, 95). From the findings of the current study, lecturers who are paying a blind eye to academic dishonesty may not be following university regulations on academic dishonesty as all universities have rules and regulations on academic dishonesty which must be followed.

Lecturers could be reluctant either to detect or pursue identified cases of academic dishonesty because their expectation of promotion due to good teaching rating by students conflicts with reporting and pursuing cases of student dishonesty (Bertram-Gallant 2008, 71). If the lecturer punishes students engaged in academic dishonesty, he/she will not get good teaching ratings and forfeit the promotion. Thus, he/she may ignore the dishonest behaviour for his/her own good.

Both lecturers and students gave pressure of work as one of the reasons for academic dishonesty. Park (2003, 479) views pressure to complete multiple work assignments in a short amount of time as a reason for academic dishonesty by students. He cites Silverman (2002) who states that students’ overtaxed lives leave them vulnerable to the temptation of academic dishonesty.

It can be inferred from the reasons given for academic dishonesty by the students, that the students were trying their best to justify the cheating. Except for reasons such as student laziness, the majority of the reasons (e.g., lack of resources; lecturers not doing enough in terms of lecturing, preparing the students for exams, invigilation, detecting cheating) point to the belief that academic dishonesty is unavoidable because the environment allows or encourages it. The students seem to attribute the reasons for academic dishonesty to external factors and thus, believe they cannot control the factors. Pointing to external factors assumes that the students believe that the environment forces them to engage in academic dishonesty and thus, it is not their fault. There appears to be a blame game here. The students pointed to external factors while the lecturers seemed to point to the students as their own enemies. The lecturers accused the students of being lazy, not being prepared, and lacking confidence and commitment.

Students’ belief that external factors are at play suggests that they have a neutralising attitude towards the behaviour. The students find ways of legitimising academic dishonesty by passing the blame on to others or external factors (Park 2003, 479). A Zimbabwean study by Kasayira et al. (2007) revealed that university students used cheating as a stress coping strategy. It may be concluded that these students were justifying their cheating and saying that academic dishonesty was not bad after all.

Another unique finding of the study on the reasons for academic dishonesty was the offence being committed to impress a boy/girlfriend. In this case, the boy/girlfriend would most likely write an assignment for his/her boy/girlfriend or would allow the boy/girlfriend to copy his/her own assignment. There is also a likelihood that students copy each other’s work or exchange notes for sexual favours. A few students also mentioned that lecturer-student sexual relationships caused academic
dishonesty. This finding confirms Teodorescu and Andrei’s (2009, 275) revelation that students mentioned a professor making sexual advances to students as a form of academic dishonesty. Lecturers in such relationships would probably leak examination or test papers to student-girlfriends or offer the girlfriends reading material other students could not access.

The finding on lack of resources as a reason for academic dishonesty confirms Ashworth et al.’s (1997, 194) finding that students copied from peers if they did not get the textbooks to read. De Carlo and Bodner (2004, 49) also established that students cheated because of poor facilities and lack of resources. The current economic situation in Zimbabwe may explain the lack of reading resources in the university. Universities do not have enough money to pay staff let alone to buy reading materials for students. The shortage of resources may lead to large classes and lecturers may not be able to monitor all the students in such classes especially during examinations.

Checking if lecturers were meticulous in their marking was another unique finding of the present study. The students would deliberately engage in academic dishonesty as a way of testing the lecturer. In these situations, the offenders copied another student’s assignment and submitted exactly the same with a view to check if the lecturer would award similar marks to the same work submitted by different people at different times or at the same time. Academics have encountered situations where students complain about the marking. They mention that their mark was significantly different from another student’s yet they had submitted exactly the same work under different names. Alert and vigilant lecturers would easily detect this form of dishonesty.

The finding on thorough marking, strictness by lecturers and punishing those caught as deterrent measures are in line with Lee (2009, 17) who sees intensifying efforts to detect academic dishonesty and imposing potential penalties as ways to reduce the incidence of student academic dishonesty. Earlier suggestions by Park (2003, 484) also focus on robust detection of academic dishonesty and penalty systems that are transparent and applied consistently as deterrent measures to academic dishonesty.

It also emerged from the study that academic dishonesty could be minimised through teaching the students how to do citations. This finding is related to Lim and See’s (2001, 272) proposition that academic dishonesty may be deterred by providing guidelines to students at the initial stages of their studies regarding lecturers’ expectations with respect to behaviour during examinations, tests and assignments. Mwanwenda (2006, 43) and Lee (2009, 174) echo similar sentiments when they state that lecturers have a responsibility to educate students on why engaging in academic dishonesty is wrong.

Thorough preparation of students for assignments and examinations was also suggested by the lecturers. This suggestion relates well to students’ suggestion that lecturers needed to be good lecturers. Lecturer thoroughness is one of the key elements of good instruction (Chireshe 2011, 268–269). Teodorescu and Andrei
Academic dishonesty: Zimbabwe university lecturers’ and students’ views

(2009, 281) argue that when students’ satisfaction with instruction declines, they may devalue it. Devaluing instruction makes it easier to justify cheating. Thus, lecturers must improve the quality and relevance of their instruction.

The suggestion from some lecturers and students that academic dishonesty may be minimised through the setting of different examination or assignment questions every year relates to Lee’s (2009, 173) plea to academics to refrain from reusing old examinations. He urges lecturers to commit the time and effort necessary to set new examination questions each year. Lecturer laziness or reluctance in setting new questions may be detrimental to academic integrity.

Both students and lecturers suggested that the situation of a shortage of reading resources should be addressed. The finding on improving resources is related to Diekhoff et al.’s (1996, 501) argument that institutions must demonstrate their commitment to the enforcement of policies on academic dishonesty and must provide the resources necessary to deter dishonesty at classroom level. If more reading resources are availed, behaviours such as tearing a chapter out of a textbook would be minimised since the other students would still get the same material from similar textbooks.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

From the findings of the current study, it can be concluded that the university lecturers and students who participated in the study believe that academic dishonesty is taking place in a number of forms in their university. The majority of the reasons given by the students for the dishonesty were external to the student, while the lecturers seemed to point to the students themselves as having the problems. It can also be concluded that academic dishonesty can be minimised if both the lecturers and the students play their parts well. For example, lecturers detecting and deterring the dishonesty while the students study hard in their academic endeavours.

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations are made: There is a need to educate students and lecturers about the importance of academic integrity. Universities should maintain academic integrity by educating students about their expected behaviours in assignments, tests and examinations and by punishing students caught engaging in academic dishonesty. Higher education institutions should put in place policies that support lecturers taking disciplinary action against students engaged in academic dishonesty. Lecturers who either do not detect academic dishonesty or ignore it should be disciplined. Universities can also prevent academic dishonesty by providing students with enough reading materials and encouraging lecturers to prepare their students thoroughly for assignments and examinations. There is also a need to make the lectures interesting and relevant as a way to reduce laziness among students. Since the study was carried out at one university, there may be a need to carry it out at other universities in the country to establish the nature and extent of academic dishonesty in the country.
REFERENCES


Academic dishonesty: Zimbabwe university lecturers’ and students’ views


