ABSTRACT

This study explores the extent to which academic integrity is upheld in the academic endeavours of South African and American university students. The study further examines the degree of difference in the extent academic integrity between the two sets of sample was maintained. The prevalence of academic integrity was determined on the basis of the extent participants admitted to having engaged in plagiarism and academic misconduct in its various manifestations. The findings of the present study clearly confirm that indeed academic dishonesty is widely practised by both South African and American university students. The extent to which this held true varied from one item to another of the sixteen questionnaire statements with the highest score being in items related to plagiarism. Overall, 12% South Africans and 14% Americans engaged in academic dishonesty. The rate at which academic dishonesty was reported was very low compared to what has been reported in other studies not only in the US, but also in other countries. As low as it may be, it is serious enough to call for attention in the form of bringing it under control so that the highest academic integrity is assured.

INTRODUCTION

It is probably safe to say that all institutions of higher education regard academic integrity as a premium in all their academic endeavours. It is an unconditional expectation that both students and academics will uphold principles of honesty, trust, fairness, respect and responsibility. In view of this, numerous research studies in many countries the world over have explored academic integrity on the basis of academic dishonesty or cheating in tertiary institutions. Academic integrity goes beyond mere avoidance of dishonesty. It entails conscious intent to apply intellectual honesty, which is in keeping with academic excellence. Academic dishonesty has many meanings, which may be identified as follows: misconduct, dishonest behaviour, unfair practice, irregularity, cheating and plagiarism (Lipton and Chapman, 2002; Park, 2003; Teferra, 2001; Cummings, Maddux, Harlow and Dyas, 2002; Mwamwenda and Monyooe, 2000). One of the major aspects of academic dishonesty is plagiarism, which involves literacy theft, stealing the words or ideas of someone else and passing them as one’s own without crediting the source (Park, 2003; Athanasou and Olabisi, 2002). Apart from plagiarism, lack of academic integrity manifests itself in the form of:

• inventing data
• fabricating references
• taking notes into the examination room
• having advance knowledge of the examination
• manipulating academic staff for better marks
• allowing one’s work to be copied by others
• copying another student’s work with his or her knowledge
• submitting work that has been done with the assistance of another student
• doing course work for another student
• copying from another student during an examination without their knowledge
• copying in an examination with the knowledge of another student
• writing an examination for another student
• misplacing materials in the library
• changing research data to obtain desired results
• producing false medical certificates
• exchanging answers in the examination room.

Academic dishonesty has been a subject of interest not only in the US and UK, but also in many other countries, including: South Africa, Ethiopia, Nigeria, Canada, Russia, Germany, Austria, India, Pakistan, Bangladesh. (Teferra, 2001; Lupton and Chapman, 2002; Brown and Emmett, 2001; Mwamwenda and Monyooe, 2000; Millerville University, 2005; McCabe and Trevino, 1996; Hanson, 2003; Kennedy, Nowok, Raghuraman, Thomas and Davis, 2000). Commenting on academic dishonesty, Park (2003: 471) states that ‘There is mounting evidence that students cheating in general, and plagiarism in particular, are becoming more common and more widespread’ to the point that it has reached an epidemic level (Alschuter and Blimling, 1995). This holds true in many countries involving both undergraduate and graduate students irrespective of whether they are studying in a small or large, private or public institution of higher learning (Park, 2003). Cheating among university students in the past fifty years has been such a common phenomenon that students who have not engaged in such behaviour are referred to as ‘exceptional and deviant’ (Cummings et al, 2002). Teferra (2001) reported that cheating goes beyond university to include a long chain of students, teachers, examination paper setters, examination-board officials, examiners, tabulators, invigilators as well as parents, law officers and politicians. Moreover, (ibid: 164) ‘Academic misconduct in the West has evolved into more complicated and hard-to-detect schemes owing largely to the advancement and proliferation of high-tech gadgets and settings.’

LITERATURE REVIEW

From the review of literature on academic dishonesty, there is ample evidence that indeed there is a widespread academic unfair practice. In the US, it is reported that academic dishonesty is in excess of 70%. Such behaviour has been researched and reported for the past century resulting in over 200 journal articles (Lupton and Chapman, 2002). According to Cummings et al (2002) some studies in the US have reported that for every four students, three admit to having engaged in academic misconduct in one form or other at one time or other. Some of the academic misconduct listed was plagiarism, copying another student’s test answers, sneaking crib notes into the examination room, doing homework with another student without the express permission of the instructor. At the University of Millersville (2005) in the US, it was concluded that ‘overall, the number of college students who cheat in one way or another is getting very high.’

In the UK studies have shown that on the average, more than 50% of university students reported that they had engaged in academic dishonesty at one time or another (Mwamwenda and Monyooe, 2000; Newstead, Franklyn-Stokes and Armstrong, 1996). In a study of South African students at Walter Sisulu University, there was clear evidence that academic misconduct was a common practice, not only in response to the questionnaire, but also on the basis of the observation of the researchers; who were members of teaching staff (Mwamwenda and Monyooe, 2000). Students acknowledged in their responses that they had cheated by not acknowledging the original author or source of information used, using false references, not acknowledging joint work, misplacing library reference books and journals and using false medical certificates for missed tests/assignments, examinations (ibid).
In Russia, it was reported that more than 80% of the students interviewed said they had cheated by using crib sheets during examinations, looking at other students’ work while in an examination, using lecture notes in the examination, copying from another student’s homework, buying term papers and engaging in plagiarism (Lupton and Chapman, 2002). In a comparable study of Russian and American students, 55% of American students admitted cheating comparative to 64% of Russian students (Lupton and Chapman, 2002). While Russian students did not think it was bad to cheat, American students thought otherwise. Partly on this belief, Russian students had a greater propensity to engage in academic dishonesty.

Teferra (2001) argues that academic dishonesty is not an unfamiliar phenomenon in Ethiopia, as there have been reports on irregularities such as stolen examinations, answers for sale, collusion of invigilators, impersonification, copying from other students with or without their consent as well as exchanging worksheets. In a study of 60 Ethiopian academics, 60% reported they had caught students cheating in the examination session (Teferra, 2001). About 25% reported having witnessed five students engaged in academic dishonesty. Overall close to 90% of those who participated in the study reported having detected students cheating. Only 6 of the 60 academics reported no incidence of academic dishonesty.

### REASONS FOR CHEATING

Research studies on academic dishonesty have not only examined the prevalence of cheating among university students, but also have explored the reasons for its occurrence (Park, 2003; Teferra, 2001; Millerville, 2005; Cummings et al, 2002; McCabe and Trevino 1996; Mwamwenda and Manyooe, 2000). Some of the reasons why cheating occurs and is on the rise are as follows (Park, 2003):

- Some students engage in plagiarism because they are not familiar with rules governing quoting, paraphrasing, citing and referencing.
- Students plagiarise to save time as well as score good marks.
- Students are engaged in numerous activities at university for which there is not adequate time to do all that is expected of them and for this reason, they opt for cheating as a shortcut.
- There are students who cheat because they consider doing so as clever and adventurous. Moreover, they see no reason why they should not engage in such behaviour.
- Some students engage in cheating as a form of defiance against authority.
- Some students cheat because they are of the view that their lecturers do not take students’ work seriously and therefore may not even detect that cheating has occurred.
- Denial and neutralization. Some students do not accept the fact that they are cheating and instead project such behaviour to others.
- As a result of easy access to information through the internet, it becomes rather easier for them to copy the needed information. The digital sources of information are available 24 hours a day and can be downloaded from the comfort of their rooms.
- The risks of getting caught cheating are outweighed by the benefits derived from cheating and therefore they opt for cheating rather than academic integrity. This is even more so when they think there is little or no chance of getting caught and there is little or no punishment if they are caught (ibid: 480).

In most developing countries, there are additional reasons for the occurrence of academic dishonesty (Teferra, 2001). To begin with, the importance attached to examinations is supreme. This is even more so where there is economic insecurity, competition and a prevalence of unemployment (Teferra, 2001). In fact, examinations serve as a passport to government and private jobs available on the labour market, which inherently facilitate and enhance one’s social mobility and economic security. A qualification from university guarantees better job opportunities, better livelihood, better social value, personal development, life chances, earnings, status as well as lifestyle (Teferra, 2001). Given such a scenario, many students find it extremely tempting to engage in academic dishonesty (Hanson, 2003; McCabe and Trevino, 1996; Cummings et al, 2002).
STUDENTS WHO ARE VULNERABLE

It is further interesting to note that research has identified students who are likely to be vulnerable to academic dishonesty (Teferra, 2001; Cummings et al., 2002; Athanasou and Olabisi, 2002; McCabe and Trevino, 1996).

- Male students are more prone than female students to academic dishonesty.
- Younger students more than older ones are likely to engage in academic dishonesty.
- Urban students more than rural are likely to cheat.
- Students who are performing poorly, are frequently absent, or repeating, are more vulnerable.
- Students who are eager to score high marks are more likely to cheat.
- Students who are enrolled in larger universities are more likely to cheat.
- Students who attend universities more for the purpose of the degree than the knowledge gained.
- More students cheat when their instructors assume that they are honest.
- Cheating may be practised when students perceive that the chances of being caught and punished are rather slim.
- Students with a low level of moral reasoning are vulnerable to academic dishonesty.

McCabe and Trevino (1996) argue that cheating is carried out by students who have no understanding of the value of education. In the students’ view, all that matters is obtaining a university degree in preparation for a career in the world of work. Similar reasoning is advanced by Millersville University (2005) where it is stated that one of the reasons cheating at the university level occurs is that students do not view university as a centre of learning and excellence, but assume that it is primarily there for conferring degrees.

ADVOCACY FOR ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

Academic dishonesty is not only incompatible with principles of education, but also erodes academic standard and integrity (Mwamwenda and Monyoee, 2000). Lupton and Chapman (2002) argue that academic dishonesty cannot be condoned on the following grounds:

- It devalues the educational experience.
- It leads to inequitable grades/marks.
- It is a misrepresentation of what the student has learned and can use following graduation.
- The academic qualification obtained is of a dubious nature.

Similarly, Park (2003) reaffirms that academic misconduct poses a serious challenge to academic integrity as well as a threat to institutional quality assurance. The credibility of a university is essential for the recognition of its degrees within the country, as well as outside countries where its graduates may seek employment or wish to pursue further studies (Teferra, 2001). This cannot be realised when dubious standards are practised with the condonation of the institution.

According to the University of Washington (2005) a number of reasons advanced against academic dishonesty are as follows:

- It hurts the university community as it undermines academic principles.
- Students who are honest feel frustrated by the unfairness of cheating that is not discovered and therefore not meted the appropriate punishment.
- Cheating leads to skewed scores favouring those who are cheating and disadvantaging those who worked hard.
- Cheaters deny themselves of the knowledge they would have acquired by genuinely learning it.
- The university image and value of qualifications offered are questioned when prospective employers and community gather that students cheat to get such qualifications.
MAINTAINING ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

Many years ago, Chinese punished cheating by death for both the examinee and examiner (Lupton and Chapman, 2002). While no one would advocate such a measure as a way of maintaining academic integrity, the point is made that academic dishonesty is a serious matter that ought to be given attention to deter it from being a common phenomenon in institutions of higher learning. Park (2003) emphasises that academic dishonesty must be addressed and punished where detected as a way of bringing it under control. In Ethiopia, cheating behaviour is punished by annulling all examination results or dismissing the misbehaving student from the university (Teferra, 2001). Similar methods dealing with academic dishonesty are used worldwide with varying degrees of success.

In response to the alarming rate of academic dishonesty, North American universities devised various ways of combating this scourge.

HONOUR CODES

A Center for Academic Integrity Consortium of 200 Universities was established at the University of Duke North Carolina. In this Centre the emphasis is placed on the fundamental values of academic integrity such as honour, trust, fairness, respect and responsibility (McCabe and Pavela, 1997). Students are given exposure to what is meant by academic integrity and why it is important in their academic work. This is concluded by encouraging them to sign a pledge to the effect that they will uphold the principle of academic integrity by ensuring that they will not knowingly engage in cheating behaviour of any form. Through the few years that the honour code has been in operation, significant difference has been observed. Park (op cit. 483) writes: ‘There is mounting evidence that students in institutions with academic honour codes view the issue of academic integrity and treat cheating behaviours in very different ways to those at institutions without honour codes. Academic honesty is higher and levels of self-reported cheating are lower in institutions that have honour codes.’

In an Ethiopian study (Teferra, 2001) the majority of respondents indicated that cheating can be controlled through academic awareness. It was further proposed that more institutional commitment was crucial to the control of academic dishonesty. Introduction of an honour code was yet another measure to be considered in the control of the irregular behaviour. It was also suggested that examinations must be set in such a way that they are less prone to cheating such as may be the case with essay writing.

McCabe and Trevino (1996) point out, institutions that have established honour codes experience less cheating than is the case with institutions without them. It is important that students be provided with adequate familiarity with what is meant by cheating and plagiarism (Millersville University, 2005). According to Lupton and Chapman (2003: 24), ‘Instructors should educate students on the virtues of not engaging in cheating and the penalties for cheating, with the hope that this will reduce the incidences of academic dishonesty.’

WHY STUDY ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

It is important for educators to understand academic dishonesty as practised by students as such knowledge will enable academics to communicate with students regarding the serious educational implications of such behaviour (Mwamwenda and Momyoee, 2000; Ashworth, Bannister and Thorne, 1997). Studying academic dishonesty familiarises all those concerned with higher education with what is going on so that appropriate measures can be put in place to control the occurrence of such behaviour.

It was with this in mind that the present study was undertaken. It sought to find out the extent to which both South African and American university students maintain academic integrity in their academic endeavours.
in pursuit of their higher learning. The study also aimed at comparing and contrasting the extent to which academic dishonesty is prevalent between the two sets of students. It was expected that the findings of this study would be similar to what has been reported, though not necessarily in terms of the extent to which it has been reported.

**METHOD**

**Sample**

The participants of this study comprised 245 South African Education students and 60 American undergraduate students drawn from University of KwaZulu-Natal, Durban and New York Metropolitan College, New York City respectively. In both samples students were engaged in their second year of university studies. The South African sample consisted of 120 men and 145 women, whereas the American sample of 60 had only women as participants.

**Procedure**

During lecture time, students were requested to fill in the answers to a questionnaire, which took them about twenty minutes. Participants were asked to respond with a ‘no’ or ‘yes’ response. At the end of the allocated time, the completed questionnaires were handed in.

**Questionnaire**

The questionnaire started with a preamble, which stated as follows: ‘This questionnaire aims at determining the behaviour of university students as regards writing assignments, research papers, tests, and examinations in pursuit of academic or professional qualification.’ The students were asked to tick under ‘yes’ or ‘no’ the appropriate statement showing whether at one time or other, they had engaged in the described behaviour. In addition, participants were asked to indicate their gender and date of birth. For the purpose of confidentiality, they were forbidden from revealing their identity in any way. This was adhered to by all participants.

The questionnaire comprised sixteen statements covering most of the activities in which university students engage. The objective for each statement was to detect whether or not academic integrity is strictly observed and maintained. The questionnaire was the same as those used in similar studies carried out in many countries at numerous times. The questionnaire had to be similar given that the scholarly activities students engage in are of a universal nature.

**Scoring**

Scoring was simple and straightforward. For each participant both ‘yes’ and ‘no’ responses were counted against each statement and then tabulated for all the participants.

**Results**

On the basis of the tabulated scores for each of the sixteen statements, the total number of ‘yes’ responses was identified and scored as an essential element for statistical analysis. The total score was converted into a percentage to determine the magnitude of the participants who engaged in academic dishonesty. This is displayed in Table 1. Having calculated the percentage for each statement, an overall percentage was calculated for all the statements and the entire sample as displayed in Table 1. For each statement, a two-sided significance test for the difference between the two percentages was carried out.
Table 1
Performance of American and South African university students on academic integrity questionnaire

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>South African N</th>
<th>South African %</th>
<th>American N</th>
<th>American %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Paraphrasing material from another source without acknowledging the original author</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Allowing own coursework to be copied by another student</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Fabricating reference or a bibliography</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Copying material for coursework from a book or other publication without acknowledging the source</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Copying another student’s coursework with his or her knowledge</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Ensuring the non-availability of books or journal articles in the library by deliberately mis-shelving them so that other students cannot find them, or by cutting out the relevant article or chapter</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Submitting a piece of coursework as an individual piece of work when it has been written jointly with another student</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Doing another student’s coursework</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>18 **</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Copying from a neighbour during an examination without them realising</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Lying about medical or other circumstances to obtain an extended deadline or exemption from a piece of work</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Taking unauthorised material into an examination [e.g. cribs]</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. Illicitly gaining advance information about the contents of an examination paper</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. Copying another student’s coursework without their knowledge</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. Premeditated collusion between two or more students to communicate answers to each other during an examination</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. Lying about medical or other circumstances to get special consideration by examiners [e.g. the Exam Board to take a more lenient view of results; extra time to complete the exam]</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16. Taking an examination for someone else or having someone else take an examination for you</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overall percentage</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>14</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

** significant, p<0,01
Table 1 shows the total number of participants who responded positively to each one of the sixteen statements. The responses in percentage ranged from as low as 2% in response to writing an examination for another candidate to as high as 30% in response to fabricating references/bibliography. The next highest number of responses was the number of respondents (26%) who indicated that they engaged in plagiarism in response to statement one. In response to allowing one’s coursework to be copied by others, 20% of the students admitted having engaged in this behaviour. 18% copied material for coursework without appropriate acknowledgement. An identical percentage admitted that they copied other students’ work without their condonation. A sizeable number of participants acknowledged lying about medical or other circumstances in order to be exempted from either meeting deadlines or submitting an assignment. In response to misplacing library reading materials, 11% of the respondents said they had done so at one time or other. There were those who admitted doing coursework for others. For each one of the sixteen statements, there was not one where some respondents did not indicate that they had engaged in the described behaviour.

The sixteen statement responses from the total sample were consolidated to work out the overall percentage of responses. This resulted in a percentage of 13%. Leaving the individual responses aside, 13% of the South African students engaged in academic misconduct.

New York Metropolitan College

The performance of American participants was comparable to that of South African participants. The responses in percentages ranged from 2% to 32%. In copying other students’ work with their knowledge and assistance were 30%, which was similar in magnitude to 32% who engaged in plagiarism by not acknowledging the source of information as they paraphrased information from original sources. Another statement with a large number of respondents was allowing one’s work to be copied by other students where 28% respondents admitted engaging in such behaviour. 28% participants admitted that they copied material from either a journal or book, but failed to acknowledge the sources of information. Other areas where 10% or more admitted engaging in academic dishonesty were: fabricating references/bibliography; misplacing library reading materials; illicitly gaining advanced information on an impending test or examination; producing false medical certificates to get an extended deadline or exemption from an assignment. The overall level of academic dishonesty was 14%. While responses to various statements were as high as 32%, overall it was much lower though still remained sizeable and worthy of being taken seriously.

**DISCUSSION**

In view of the numerous reports on academic dishonesty prevailing in higher institutions of learning particularly in the US, the present study explored similar practice between both South African and American university students as its first objective. The second objective aimed at a comparative study of South African and American university students for the purpose of establishing whether academic dishonesty would be just as prevalent among South African students as it is among American students. The rationale for undertaking such a study cannot be overemphasised from a societal and scholarly perspective. Academic dishonesty is the antithesis of academic principles and erodes academic excellence and integrity. The university as well as the community expects students to uphold the principles of trust, integrity, fairness, respect, responsibility and excellence. Through research such as this there will be quality assurance that there is fitness for purpose in higher institutions of learning.

On the basis of the objectives of the study and data analysis, there was ample evidence that academic dishonesty prevails between both South African and American students. Comparatively, there was hardly
any significant difference in the extent to which one is engaged in academic dishonesty. Overall, the findings were in keeping with the worldwide trend so far as academic misconduct is concerned.

It was clear from the findings that cheating was not at the same level in every aspect of academic activities. For example, very few respondents admitted involving themselves in taking an examination for someone else or they having someone else take an examination for them. Equally true, not many students admitted taking unauthorised material in the examination or copying from another student during an examination. However, there was as high as 30% admitting having engaged in academic dishonesty. The overall cheating rate for the entire South African students was as high as 13%, but which is much lower than what has been reported in previous studies carried out in other countries.

With the American sample, the pattern of academic misconduct was similar to the South African sample. Very few American students reported engaging in behaviour such as: taking unauthorised material in the examination room; copying other students’ work without their knowledge; writing an examination for someone else or asking someone else to write an examination for them; lying about medical certificates. When it comes to plagiarism, the number of respondents acknowledging engaging in this act was as high as in the South African sample. For example, 32% said they paraphrased information without acknowledgement. In addition, 28% copied materials without acknowledgement while 30% copied other students’ work with their assistance. The overall percentage was 14%, which is comparable with the South African one of 13%. However, it is nowhere near the extremely high percentage of students reported to be cheating in American colleges and universities.

An item-to-item analysis of the South African and American results showed that there were only two significant differences between their respective percentages. On item 3, which addressed the issue of fabricating references or bibliography, 33% of the South African students responded positively compared with 13% American participants, this difference being statistically significant ($p < 0.01$). Item 9, which focused on copying from a neighbour during an examination without them realising, also showed a statistically significant difference ($p < 0.01$), with only 2% of the South African students admitting to their behaviour, compared with 10% of the American students. All other differences were not significant.

On the basis of previous research findings, there is no basis for disputing that academic dishonesty is common at the tertiary level of education. This has been confirmed in the present study. This is in agreement with Mwamwendo and Monyooe’s (2000) South African study in which it was concluded that cheating was a prevailing factor in the area of plagiarism and other aspects of academic misconduct. Furthermore, the present findings confirm Teferra’s (2001) study of Ethiopian respondents in which a range of academic dishonesty was revealed.

It can be further argued that the present findings are a confirmation of various assertions and findings that have been reported in countries such as the US, UK, Nigeria, Canada, and India (Brown and Emmett, 2001; Teferra, 2001; Kennedy et al., 2000; Park, 2003). The major difference between these studies and the present study is the level of cheating. Whereas most of the British and American studies report a range of cheating being between 40% and 75%, there was no evidence in support of this for either the South African or American sample. The level of cheating for the South African sample stood at 2%, whereas that of Americans stood at 12%. Neither of them was anywhere near the alarming percentage as reported by Park (2003); McCabe and Trevino (1996); Lupton and Chapman (2002); Cummings et al. (2002), Alshuler and Blimling (1995).

Although it is true that the magnitude of academic dishonesty amongst the South African and American students who participated in the present study is very low comparatively, it is still a matter of concern. It
is the position of the author that there should be zero tolerance for academic dishonesty and that its presence in institutions of higher learning is an anathema and an enemy of higher learning that must be wrestled to the ground.

While the ancient Chinese method of dealing with academic misconduct was the most brutal method reported in the literature, there are other methods that are less harsh and have been employed by many universities. For example, at the University of KwaZulu-Natal, cheating may lead to expulsion and exposure to the university community. Teferra (2001) reported that in the case of Ethiopia, academic dishonesty is punished by either annulling examination results or expelling the student involved. These and others are appropriate punitive measures for dealing with academic misconduct. As useful as they may be, however, they are management by crisis and it is rather late to salvage the situation.

What would be most valuable would be the introduction of what is known as honour codes as used in a number of South African, Canadian and American institutions (McCabe and Pavela, 1998; Park, 2003; Lothammer, 2005). In this programme, the objective is to stop cheating and plagiarism and bring about a culture of academic honesty and foster values that embrace integrity in all scholarly endeavours (Lothammer, 2005). According to McCabe and Pavela (1997) in an honour code programme as used in the States, the emphasis is placed on the fundamental values of academic integrity such as honesty, trust, fairness, respect and responsibility. A similar programme is offered to students at the University of KwaZulu-Natal during orientation, when they are told what cheating and plagiarism is, and are expected to sign a pledge that they will not engage in academic dishonesty during their tenure at the university.

Since the introduction of such programmes in some of the universities in the US, follow-up studies have investigated the impact they have had on academic integrity. The results have been rather encouraging and positive. There is mounting evidence that students in institutions with academic honour codes view the issue of academic integrity and treat cheating behaviours in very different ways to those at institutions without honour codes. Academic honesty is higher and levels of self-reported cheating are lower in institutions that have honour codes’ (Park, 2003: 483).

Academics have a responsibility of educating students on the virtues of not engaging in plagiarism and cheating in the hope that this will serve to maintain academic integrity and ensure academic dishonesty is brought under control. This can be realised through commitment, vigilance and determination on the part of all stakeholders, particularly students and academic staff.

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