QUERY

Is there a correlation between lack of academic integrity and deviant behaviour in the workplace?

PURPOSE

The purpose of this question is to find out how much attention the chapters should pay to cheating prevention when designing youth integrity programmes.

CONTENT

1. Academic dishonesty can lead to unethical behaviour
2. Preventing unethical professional behaviour through integrity education

SUMMARY

Many studies produced in the last 20 years have demonstrated a link between the lack of academic integrity within the students’ group and future dishonesty in their professional life. Without focussing specifically on corruption, many of the articles featured in this literature review show that an inclination to cheating or plagiarism can be a predictor of potential unethical decision-making in professional practice.

Turning the problem around, some researchers, arguing for ethics to be included in university curricula, have also worked to prove that exposing students to the issue of business or professional ethics can influence their behaviour and responsibility in the workplace.

Author(s)

Sofia Wickberg, Transparency International,
tihelpdesk@transparency.org

Reviewer(s)

Marie Chene, Transparency International

Date

22 November 2013
1 ACADEMIC DISHONESTY CAN LEAD TO UNETHICAL BEHAVIOUR

For the last 20 years, a substantial number of scholars specialised in education and business have focussed their work on searching for potential linkages between the lack of academic integrity in students’ behaviour and future misconduct in the workplace.

All the studies featured in this paper find linkages between academic dishonesty, such as cheating, and unethical professional behaviour. However, they use different methods to identify such a correlation: some researchers chose to survey individuals that share their time between studies and work; some use fictional scenarios to illustrate the perceived link between academic and professional dishonesty; and others base their work on students’ own understanding of cheating to show where the latter place the bar of acceptability.

Finally, it is interesting to note that many studies have used self-reported cheating as a variable to measure the lack of academic integrity which might induce bias and social desirability issues. Only one article, from this non-exhaustive list, analyses academic dishonesty using actual plagiarism behaviour as a variable.

To Cheat or Not to Cheat? : The Role of Personality in Academic and Business Ethics
Virginia K. Bratton, Connie Strittmatter, 2013, Ethics & Behavior, 23 (6)

The authors cite past research that revealed a correlation between academic and business ethics. Using a sample survey, this study extends this inquiry by examining the role of dispositional variables (neuroticism, extraversion, and conscientiousness) and academic honesty on business ethics perceptions. Results indicate that (1) neuroticism and conscientiousness were positively related to more ethical perceptions in a work context, and (2) academic honesty partially mediated the relationship between conscientiousness and business ethics. Implications to business practitioners and educators are discussed as well as directions for future research.

Plagiarism, Integrity, and Workplace Deviance: A Criterion Study
Lloyd R. Sloan, Daniel E. Martin and Asha Rao, 2009, ETHICS & BEHAVIOR 19 (1)

Plagiarism is increasingly evident in business and academia. Though links between demographic, personality, and situational factors have been found, previous research has not used actual plagiarism behaviour as a criterion variable. Previous research on academic dishonesty has consistently used self-report measures to establish the prevalence of dishonest behaviour. This study uses actual plagiarism behaviour to establish its prevalence, as well as relationships between integrity-related personal selection and workplace deviance measures. This research covers new ground in the respect that it establishes the relationship between actual academic dishonesty and potential workplace deviance/white-collar crime.

Student Cheating Habits: A Predictor of Workplace Deviance
Sharron M. Graves, 2008, Journal of Diversity Management, Volume 3, Number 1

This article reports the results of a student survey documenting the self-reported cheating habits of business and non-business majors and their reported involvement in deviant activities in the workplace. The research indicates that a higher percentage of non-business majors report cheating on tests and homework than business majors and students who cheat in high school and/or college are more likely to engage in certain deviant behaviours in the workplace, such as dishonesty or unethical business practices. In addition, the article also compares the percentage of students engaging in property and production deviance with the results of an earlier study by R. C. Hollinger and J. P. Clark examining workplace deviance among employees in the retail sector.

Is Plagiarism a Forerunner of Other Deviance?
Imagined Futures of Academically Dishonest Student
Gwena Lovett-Hoope, Meera Komarraju, Rebecca Weston, and Stephen J. Dolling, 2007, ETHICS & BEHAVIOR, 17 (3)
This study explored the relationship of current incidences of academic dishonesty with future norm/rule-violating behaviour. Data were collected from 154 college students enrolled in introductory and upper-level psychology students at a large Mid-West public university who received credit for participating. The sample included students from many different majors and all years of study. Participants completed a self-report survey that included a measure of Academic Dishonesty (including three subscales: Self-Dishonest, Social Falsifying, and Plagiarism) and an Imagined Futures Scale (five subscales that included Norm/Rule Violating, Physically Threatening, Culturally Diverse, Emotionally Distressing, and Agentic Futures). Correlation analyses indicated a significant positive relationship between all three Academic Dishonesty subscales and an imagined norm/rule-violating future. Further, regression analyses revealed social falsifying as being significantly predictive of a norm/rule-violating future. Suggestions are made alerting educators to the importance of monitoring and discouraging academic dishonesty as it may lead to rule-violating behaviour in the future.

The Implications of Academic Dishonesty in Undergraduate Engineering on Professional Ethical Behaviour


Student academic dishonesty, commonly referred to as cheating, has become a serious problem at institutions of higher education. This is particularly true of engineering students who, according to previous research, are among the most likely to cheat in college. In addition, research on college students in all fields has indicated that such behaviour is more common among students who participate in academic dishonesty at the high school level and that it is correlated with other deviant or unethical behaviours, such as petty theft and lying. If, in fact, such correlations do exist, one might hypothesise that there is also a relationship between academic dishonesty in college and deviant or unethical behaviour in professional practice.

Placing this relationship in the context of higher levels of academic dishonesty among engineering students only increases the seriousness of the problem for engineering educators, professionals, corporations, and society. To investigate this concern, the authors have undertaken two research projects. The first project focused on the Perceptions and Attitudes toward Cheating among Engineering Students (PACES-1). The goal of the research was to develop a better understanding of what students and faculty perceive as cheating and to use this knowledge to help instructors and institutions increase the level of academic integrity. The second project examined the correlation between academic dishonesty and unethical behaviour with a majority of the students in the sample having worked for a considerable period of time during their college years. This provided a unique opportunity to study the connection between academic dishonesty and professional behaviour within the same sample of individuals.

This paper discusses some of the implications of academic dishonesty on professional ethical behaviour and provides an overview of the two investigations conducted by the authors.

Does Academic Dishonesty Relate to Unethical Behaviour in Professional Practice? An Exploratory Study


The authors base their research, focussing on engineering students, on previous studies demonstrating that deviant behaviour in University is a reasonable predictor of future deviant behaviour at the workplace. This combination of factors leads to a situation where engineering students who frequently participate in academic dishonesty are more likely to make unethical decisions in professional practice. The authors propose the hypotheses that (1) there are similarities in the decision-making processes used by engineering students when considering whether or not to participate in academic and professional dishonesty, and (2) prior academic dishonesty by engineering students is an indicator of future decisions to act dishonestly.
The sample consisted of undergraduate engineering students who alternate studies and work. Responses to open-ended questions on an exploratory survey indicate that students identify common themes in describing both temptations to cheat or to violate workplace policies and factors which caused them to hesitate in acting unethically. As indicated by the responses to forced-choice questions for the engineering students surveyed, there is a relationship between self-reported rates of cheating in high school and decisions to cheat in college and to violate workplace policies. Thus, this exploratory study demonstrates connections between decision-making about both academic and professional dishonesty. If better understood, these connections could lead to practical approaches for encouraging ethical behaviour in the academic setting, which might then influence future ethical decision-making in workplace settings.

An examination of the relationship between academic dishonesty and workplace dishonesty: A multicampus investigation

This article addresses academic integrity in both the classroom and the work environment. The authors distributed an in-class questionnaire to a sample of about 1000 business students from 6 different campuses. The study was an attempt to bridge the gap between findings related to academic dishonesty and those regarding dishonesty in the workplace. The authors found that students who believed that cheating, or dishonest acts, are acceptable were more likely to engage in these dishonest behaviours. Additionally, students who engaged in dishonest acts in college classes were more likely to engage in dishonest acts in the workplace.

The Relationship between Academic Dishonesty and Unethical Business Practices

This article investigates whether the range and severity of academic dishonesty engaged in during undergraduate studies is related to the range and severity of dishonesty engaged in later during employment. Self-reported data was collected from 60 MBA students. Findings indicate that subjects who admitted to having engaged in a wide range of academic dishonesty also admitted to a wide range of work-related dishonesty. Additionally, those subjects who engaged in behaviours considered severely dishonest in college also engaged in behaviours considered severely dishonest at work.

2 PREVENTING UNETHICAL PROFESSIONAL BEHAVIOUR THROUGH INTEGRITY EDUCATION

After having featured studies establishing a link between misconduct at university and later in the workplace, this section presents two articles that propose a solution. The papers below argue that exposing students to business and professional ethics has a chance to improve their future professional behaviour and awareness of corporate and managerial responsibility.

Business education and business integrity: An invaluable opportunity waiting to be fully harnessed

The influence of business education on individual and collective integrity is difficult to measure, and the evidence is not fully conclusive. Even so, several studies confirm that (1) being exposed to business integrity makes students more aware of business integrity issues and (2) after completing a course in business ethics there is a good chance that students become even more conscious of ethical and corporate social responsibility issues. In addition, this integrity-promoting role of business education may be even more pronounced in many emerging economies, where a critical engagement of civil society with these issues may not be completely developed yet.

In this context, business schools can serve as
beacons of progressive thinking on corporate integrity and introduce these notions to a business community that is only beginning to consider these issues more fully. When it comes to national and global business elites, moreover, this formative impact is extraordinarily concentrated in a relatively small number of schools. Just five business schools in the United States, for example, have educated fewer than 75 of the CEOs of the top 500 US companies. In short, business education and a few business schools are tremendously important venues for shaping the integrity and anti-corruption commitments of the private sector.

Management Education for Professional Integrity: The Case of University Centre for Economic and Managerial Sciences, University of Guadalajara, Mexico

This paper is aimed at analysing professional integrity as an improvement concept to the actual values, virtues, managerial capabilities and attitudes needed to assume any professional task. The study analyses a case of management education for professional integrity at the University Centre for Economic and Managerial Sciences, University of Guadalajara. The research uses life stories complemented with field work supported by in-depth interviews analysed using a comparative method. The results of the research show that management education for professional integrity can positively impact on business culture through influencing the behaviour of key actors. The article also provides the basis to develop a code of conduct and regulation policies.

“Anti-Corruption Helpdesk Answers provide practitioners around the world with rapid on-demand briefings on corruption. Drawing on publicly available information, the briefings present an overview of a particular issue and do not necessarily reflect Transparency International’s official position.”