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A large, stylized graphic on a purple background. It consists of a thick yellow wavy line that starts on the left, curves down, then up, then down again. A black railing with white vertical bars follows the curve of the line, appearing to be on top of it.

WAIKATO JOURNAL OF EDUCATION

TE HAUTAKA MĀTAURANGA O WAIKATO

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WJE 2006: Call for papers: Pacific education, Research and practice

The Waikato Journal of Education is a well-established peer reviewed publication that has quality articles on a range of topics related to education.

New Zealand has a strong presence in Pacific education, and Pacific communities have a strong presence in New Zealand schools. However, opportunities for publication of Pacific research in mainstream journals are limited. Therefore, this call for papers seeks articles that focus on Pacific education; both research and practice. Pacific research is reflective of the traditions of the past, as well as the present and future. It often embodies different paradigms, perspectives and critical stances that are not always captured in mainstream research and aims to benefit Pacific communities. Articles will be welcomed that theorise about Pacific research, report on research projects, report on an innovative practice or initiative, or a combination of any of these. As well as traditional manuscripts, the journal welcomes submissions in other formats, such as short stories, poetry and drawings.

Submissions please to Timote Vaoleti (vaoleti@waikato.ac.nz) and Jane Strachan (jane@waikato.ac.nz), School of Education, The University of Waikato, PB 3105, Hamilton. Please submit 3 blind copies and a separate page with author/s contact details by 30 April 2006. Electronic submissions also accepted for consideration.

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ACADEMIC DISHONESTY AMONG STUDENTS IN TERTIARY INSTITUTIONS: A LITERATURE REVIEW

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ABSTRACT *This paper presents the literature surrounding academic dishonesty issues in tertiary institutions both in New Zealand and overseas. It presents findings of investigations into the prevalence and perceptions of academic dishonesty, the reasons given for dishonest acts, ways in which academic honesty can be maintained in institutions, and the reasons for lack of action by academic staff.*

KEYWORDS

Academic dishonesty, Tertiary, Cheating, Education

INTRODUCTION

In this age of increased pressure for academic success and the endeavour for higher qualifications, academic dishonesty by students working towards qualifications has become a bigger concern than previously among tertiary teaching staff. Not only is this issue of interest to teaching staff in tertiary institutions but also to students, who may view the exploits of their academically dishonest peers as injurious to their own hard-earned success. Furthermore, employers of graduates may also feel concern about the legitimacy of the qualifications gained by prospective employees and fear the link between student dishonesty and subsequent workplace dishonesty (Nonis & Swift, 2001; Payne & Nantz, 1994; Sims, 1993).

The authors posit that academic honesty encompasses the submission of work for assessment that has been produced by the student who will be awarded the grade, and which demonstrates the student's knowledge and understanding of the content or processes being assessed. Students also need to acknowledge the legitimate work of others that they have included in their work. By default, therefore, the terms 'academic dishonesty' or 'cheating' include any behaviour that transgresses these criteria, whilst acknowledging that there are varying degrees of seriousness. Other authors define cheating as the breach of rules surrounding the submission of assignments and tests and concur that cheating can take a range of forms and degrees of seriousness; for example, collaborating with other students without authorisation, taking notes into a test, falsifying a bibliography and copying from another student (Finn & Frone, 2004; Pino & Smith, 2003)

But just how prevalent is academic dishonesty among tertiary students? What form does it take? Are differences in terms of dishonest practices which are apparent among groups of students differentiated by gender and age? To what

extent do teaching staff and students agree on the seriousness of dishonest acts and on suitable penalties for transgressions? What can be done to prevent academic dishonesty? This paper is concerned with answering these questions, based on a review of available literature related to academic dishonesty among students in tertiary education. It investigates prevalence, perceptions, justifications, responsive action and non-action, as well as penalties, policy and prevention at the institutional level.

The studies reported in this review were based primarily in universities in the United States of America and Great Britain, as most of the related literature seems to emanate from these countries. Reference is also made to a study undertaken in New Zealand by the authors in 2000, the results of which were published in 2002 and 2003 (de Lambert, Ellen & Taylor, 2002a, 2002b, 2003). A variety of techniques were used for data collection in the studies used in this paper, including questionnaires and interviews, both structured and unstructured.

PREVALENCE

The literature provides evidence of several studies that indicate a high prevalence of academic dishonesty by students in tertiary education. The authors' New Zealand study involved in-depth surveys of 113 tertiary academic staff and 380 tertiary students. The students' questionnaire included a list of 22 possible scenarios (see Appendix 1) from which the participants were asked to indicate which, if any, they had engaged in during their tertiary career. Academic staff were also asked to indicate which, if any, they had experienced with their students during their tertiary teaching career. Prior to circulating the questionnaires, the authors had drawn upon research and their own experiences to categorise 13 of the 22 as Serious, five as Minor and three as Not Cheating. These categories were not provided to participants. Of particular note is the high incidence of dishonesty involving information technologies and lack of referencing. Approximately 80 percent of staff indicated some experience of students' lack of referencing both when paraphrasing and copying directly from a source. Students also indicated lack of referencing direct quotes as the most common form of serious dishonest behaviour. An extraordinarily high proportion of staff (96%) had experienced dishonest practice in at least one of the offences defined as cheating during their tertiary teaching career. Of this number, 95 percent indicated at least one serious incident. Of the students surveyed, 80 percent reported they had engaged in at least one of the offences defined as cheating; with 63 percent indicating at least one serious incident. It must be borne in mind that these figures are not directly comparable as the length of a tertiary teaching career is likely to be greater than the length of a student's tertiary learning career. Nor do they reflect the magnitude of any individual listed offences (de Lambert et al., 2003).

Davis, Grover and Becker's (1992) study involved a survey undertaken with approximately 6,000 students in the United States in which respondents were asked if they had cheated and, if so, what form that cheating took. The findings from this research indicated that 76 percent of students surveyed reported some form of

cheating in high school or college – a comparable result to the previously cited study.

Payne and Nantz's (1994) study involved in-depth interviews with 22 university students, 86 percent of whom admitted cheating of some sort in their tertiary career.

The findings from a more recent study by Finn and Frone (2004) confirm Payne and Nantz's findings. Finn and Frone surveyed 315 United States students and found that 88 percent of participants reported cheating of some form (from a provided list), with 11 percent indicating frequent cheating.

Pino and Smith (2003) surveyed 675 American university students about their history of academic dishonesty. Students were provided with a list of scenarios that included what the authors of this paper would consider the more blatant forms of cheating. These included copying directly from another student, having another person impersonate the student for the purpose of sitting a test, taking unauthorised notes into a test, using another student's assignment paper, buying completed assignments, falsifying research data or bibliographic citations, or failing to cite copied or paraphrased work of another. Participants were asked to indicate how many times, during a typical semester, they had engaged in any of the academically dishonest acts. Interestingly, because of the contrast with the previous studies cited, results indicated that only 47 percent of students had engaged in some form of academic dishonesty at some time in their college career. However, it must be borne in mind that students were asked to recall only the prior semester, while other studies asked students to recall their entire tertiary learning career. This study also considered only the more obvious forms of academic dishonesty.

Gender and age determinants, within the more generic topic of prevalence, are discussed by several authors, with varying results. The majority of the literature indicates that women are less likely than men, and that older students are less likely than younger students, to engage in academically dishonest practices, although the differences are not large and may be due at least in part to differences in self-report styles (Davis et al., 1992; de Lambert et al., 2002a, 2002b; Finn & Frone, 2004; Payne & Nantz, 1994).

The results of a study undertaken concurrently with the Payne and Nantz (1994) study and at the same university showed 60 percent of male students and 55 percent of female students had acted dishonestly. Finn and Frone (2004) reported that a greater proportion of male and younger students admitted cheating than their female and older counterparts. Although the study by Davis et al. (1992) did not mention age categories, it did indicate "women consistently report lower cheating rates than men" (p. 17). Similarly, the authors' New Zealand study indicated that more male respondents than females had engaged in each of the categories of dishonest practice provided, although the differences were small for some types of offence. The largest differences between the gender categories in the authors' study occurred in the more serious examples of dishonest practice. The groups were more congruent in the minor examples. Those students in the 30 years and over age bracket self-identified as the group least likely to engage in any form of cheating, making up the smallest proportion in 14 of the 18 listed examples (de Lambert et al., 2002a, 2002b).

McCabe and Trevino (1997) and Rawwas and Isakson (2000), who surveyed 1,793 and 291 students respectively from US universities, found that younger students and male students were more likely to engage in dishonest academic practices than more mature students and female students.

PERCEPTIONS OF SERIOUSNESS

To some extent, the prevalence of academic dishonesty appears to be calibrated by staff and student perceptions of the seriousness of different dishonest practices in an academic context. The literature suggests that staff and students hold somewhat different perceptions and that students are more likely to engage in practices they either consider of minimal seriousness or do not consider dishonest at all.

The New Zealand study asked participants (both academic staff and students) to rank the listed cheating scenarios as being Serious, Minor or Not Cheating. Results indicate notable differences in perceptions of staff and students – for all but two of the scenarios a greater proportion of staff viewed them as serious, while for each individual scenario, more students than staff viewed them as not being an instance of cheating at all. The most significant differences in perception centred around plagiarism and research falsification scenarios; that is:

- 34 percent of students viewed “copying information directly from a website, book or periodical without referencing the source” as Serious Cheating compared with 74 percent of academic staff.
- 39 percent of students viewed “falsifying the results of one’s research” as Serious Cheating compared with 96 percent of academic staff.
- 28 percent of students viewed “paraphrasing information from a web site, book or periodical without referencing the source” as Not Cheating compared with 5 percent of academic staff.

Franklyn-Stokes and Newstead’s (1995) study, undertaken in Great Britain, also focused on staff and student perceptions of different forms of cheating. Twenty university staff members and 112 students were provided with a list of cheating scenarios and asked to rate them from 1 (not at all serious) to 6 (very serious). Once again, this study found that academic staff had a harsher view overall than students of the serious nature of the listed scenarios. The main differences in perception between staff and students related to inventing data, altering data and fabricating references, with staff viewing these as more serious than students.

One of the most pertinent studies in regard to perceptions was carried out by Roberts and Toombs (1993). The authors of the study developed a scale designed to determine student and academic staff perceptions of 30 different dishonest practice scenarios, relating to examination situations. Respondents (252 students and 180 staff) were asked to indicate what they thought was the most appropriate penalty (from a list of seven penalties provided) for each of the scenarios given. This was used to enable the researchers to deduce the degree of seriousness that participants attributed to each example of cheating. Roberts and Toombs (1993) posited that students would be more tolerant of dishonest practices than lecturing staff. As

hypothesised, significant differences in perception about the seriousness of the dishonest acts were found between the two groups, with academic staff allocating higher penalty ratings than the students for each practice.

Roig and Ballew's (1994) study of 404 students and 120 academic staff from two New York universities supports the findings reported above. Participants in the Roig and Ballew (1994) investigation were asked to rate their level of agreement (using a Likert scale) with 34 statements about academic dishonesty. Again, students were found to be far more tolerant than their lecturers of academic dishonesty. The students who participated in this study also believed that teaching staff held the same opinions as themselves, suggesting that staff do not adequately inform students about what constitutes dishonest practice. Some credence for this supposition comes from Ashworth and Bannister's (1997) investigation of student perceptions of cheating and plagiarism. Conducted in the United Kingdom, the study involved interviews with 19 university students. The students were found to view any form of exam-related cheating as far more serious than dishonest acts (notably plagiarism) performed whilst completing formative, unsupervised assessment. The authors concluded that an obvious lack of understanding by students about what constitutes plagiarism and requirements for adequate academic referencing underpinned their views. For example, the majority of those interviewed were not aware of plagiarism-related requirements, while others were "perplexed as to why academic staff tend to be so uptight about this issue" (Ashworth & Bannister, 1997, p. 197). The students generally considered referencing to be more an issue of politeness than of honesty.

Consideration of the effects of gender and age determinants on academic dishonesty showed similar results in perception to those found in the previous section on prevalence. Roig and Ballew (1994) found that female students were far less tolerant of academic dishonesty than their male counterparts. Franklyn-Stokes and Newstead (1995) found that students over the age of 25 years took a more serious stance on academic dishonesty than their younger peers.

REASONS FOR ACADEMIC DISHONESTY

A number of studies have focused on the reasons given by tertiary students for their academically dishonest behaviour, with varying results.

Franklyn-Stokes and Newstead's second study (1995) involved a survey of 128 university students in Great Britain, in which respondents were asked to indicate their reasons for cheating. They reported that the two most common reasons given were "time pressure" and the desire "to increase the mark", while the least common reasons were "peer pressure" and "monetary reward" (p. 8). They also mentioned that respondents typically reported that they wanted to help a friend, particularly in relation to coursework.

The questionnaire provided in the New Zealand study (de Lambert et al., 2003) listed 19 different reasons for cheating (see Appendix 2), from which students who admitted cheating were asked to identify the three most common reasons for their actions. Academic staff were asked for the three most common justifications which students had offered to them for their academically dishonest actions. The most

common reason (as reported by both staff and students) was “I didn’t think it was wrong” (de Lambert et al., 2003, p. 100). This could be interpreted in light of the fact that this study found that a large proportion of students rated plagiarism examples as Not Cheating and therefore did not think, when they committed these types of offences, that they were doing anything ‘wrong’. “No reason” was also indicated as one of the top three justifications given, as reported by both staff and students, with staff reporting “pressure to get good grades” as the fourth most common reason (de Lambert et al., 2003, p. 100).

An Australian study undertaken by Dick, Sheard and Markham (2001) specifically focused on reasons students give for cheating, in order that steps could be taken to reduce its incidence. One hundred and three post-graduate students were surveyed about their reasons for cheating. Respondents indicated that their main reasons for cheating were that they were afraid of failing and that the course workload was too high.

Payne and Nantz (1994) report from their study that the two most common justifications for cheating are that there is “success associated with cheating (behaviour leads to higher grades in courses and success in later life in a competitive, results-oriented world)” and “personal time and effort on studies is reduced” (p. 94).

Finn and Frone (2004) found also that students tended to cheat because of a fear of failure, particularly if they were performing poorly in their courses. Interestingly, from an institution’s perspective, they also found that students who did not have a strong sense of identification with their institution had a stronger tendency towards academic dishonesty than those students who had a strong affiliation, regardless of academic success.

MAINTENANCE OF ACADEMIC HONESTY

Many studies have considered the effectiveness of various techniques that can be used by lecturing staff and institutions to encourage academic honesty and ways in which to deal with instances of academic dishonesty. The results of such examinations vary but generally suggest that action is preferable to inaction. Some studies point to specific detection and deterrent practices, while others indicate that creating a climate within the institution that is not conducive to cheating is advisable. In regard to the former, Genereux and McLeod (1995) suggest that vigilance (when proctoring exams) and fairness of assessments are the best deterrents of academic dishonesty, while a lecturer who demonstrates his/her disapproval of cheating is not necessarily a deterrent. These findings are from a study involving 365 college students in Canada in which participants were asked to indicate how much influence a particular set of circumstances would have on their decision to cheat.

Most tertiary education institutions publish their policies regarding penalties for academic dishonesty on their web sites. Rutgers University in New Brunswick, Canada, for example, has published its policy, which categorises violations into four levels; the first level being those violations that may have occurred through lack of experience or knowledge about what is appropriate or where the offence

may be minor or may only involve a small portion of the course work. Such offences are generally dealt with by requiring the student to attend a non-credit session on ethics, or complete an assigned paper on a relevant topic, completion of another assignment at a higher level of difficulty or the awarding of no credit for the original assignment. Level two violations include offences such as lack of acknowledgement of the source of material used or assistance received, or submission of one piece of work for more than one course without permission, and may be sanctioned by a failing grade for the relevant assessment and notation on the student file of 'disciplinary probation' which remains on the student file for the duration of the probationary period. Level three violations are those offences that impact on a major piece of work for a course or are pre-meditated, such as copying in an exam (or facilitating others' copying), plagiarism of major pieces of work, fabrication of material, etcetera. These offences are dealt with at the university level and may be sanctioned by a minimum of suspension from the university for one semester. Level four violations, the most serious of all, may result in permanent expulsion from the university. These offences include continued acts of academic dishonesty after severe sanctions have already been imposed, or acts similar to criminal activity such as forgery, theft of an exam, impersonation, etcetera (Rutgers University, n.d.).

Simon et al. (2001) undertook a study at the University of Nevada in which 600 students and 234 academic staff participated. From the findings of the study, Simon et al. recommended to the institution that it should practise 'preventive medicine' by establishing first-year writing classes that emphasise plagiarism definitions, appropriate referencing methods, and explication of academic responsibility and expected codes of conduct.

Plagiarism in particular is an aspect of academic dishonesty that needs to be clearly explained to students and more importantly it needs to be outlined in a contextual manner; that is, in terms of the subject being taught and the institution in which students are enrolled. Cultural differences also pose problems in terms of the appropriateness of referencing and need to be addressed by teaching staff, particularly those involved in the ESL/EFL context. It is not sufficient to simply give students a written policy and then to assume that it is understood and adhered to; rather it needs to be explained fully and authorship needs to be taught so that students have practical experience of appropriately paraphrasing, quoting and citing sources. Furthermore, it is important that teaching staff and institutional management adhere to the same rules that they apply to students. That is, any written material produced should correctly and appropriately cite any sources used (Price, 2002; Yamada, 2003).

A study of 200 American campuses conducted by McCabe and Makowski (n.d., cited in McCabe & Drinan, 1999) found that as many as one in four institutions did not have clear written academic integrity statements, policies or procedures and that many of the institutions which had such procedures did not make them readily accessible to staff, students and others. Specifically, some of these institutions did not provide sufficient administrative support for their academic policies and procedures, thwarting the attempts of those who tried to use them. The authors also identify the need to continually assess policies for currency

and audit their effectiveness in order that students are not left with room to make assumptions in novel areas such as the use of new technologies, and so that all interested parties develop trust in them. This will require that attention be paid to the definition of academic dishonesty used in an institution's policy. For example, according to Wilson (1999), a definition that merely lists prohibited behaviours is more open to abuse than one that identifies values and behaviours to be promoted. Similarly, a policy that goes beyond mere repudiation of academic dishonesty and includes discussions about the importance of academic integrity and its connection to broader ethical issues and concerns is likely to be more effective.

Although publication of policy is commendable and viewed by most authors as recommended, it would seem from the New Zealand study that even when students have a good knowledge of the institution's policies, it may have no effect. The authors of that study found that 87 percent of students surveyed knew something of the policy of their institution, yet students still reported a high proportion of academic dishonesty (de Lambert et al., 2002a, 2002b).

Fishbein (1994) questions the ability of a standard policy and set of procedures to govern the issue of academic dishonesty, saying that the topic is better approached on a cultural level, with interventions that undermine a culture which legitimates cheating as a natural and necessary part of student life. Others have followed a similar line, saying that cheating is merely a symptom of poor moral development and that this root cause should be addressed rather than simply implementing policy to deal with the symptom. Kibler (1992) holds this opinion, saying the low level of students' moral development means that they do not consider issues (such as institutional policy) beyond their desire for a certain grade when deciding whether to cheat, regardless of how carefully the institution has formulated the policy. He argues that change will occur only when institutions stop treating dishonest academic practice as behavioural aberration and begin to see it as a moral issue. His approach is supported by research findings indicating that cheaters are less deterred by guilt and more deterred by fear of punishment than their non-cheating counterparts (Haines, Diekhoff, LaBeff & Clark, 1986, cited in Pulvers & Diekhoff, 1999).

McCabe (1993) and McCabe and Pavela (2000) suggest that students might be more willing to help deter academic dishonesty if they were part of the institution's judicial process governing instances of dishonesty, and that institutions with traditional academic honour codes have fewer incidents of cheating. They found that an overwhelming majority of the students they surveyed (86 percent of students at traditional honour code schools and 95 percent of students at non-honour code schools) felt that they should be involved in the campus judicial process in cases of suspected academic dishonesty. Most students thought that the faculty and/or administration should also be involved, seeing this as a critical element of an effective policy on ensuring academic integrity, presumably because all stakeholders would then be aware of the institution's attitude towards dishonesty, which would make the judicial process more transparent. Honour codes help to build a sense of allegiance for students and results suggest that this sense of

identification with an institution can lead to lower rates of cheating (Finn & Front, 2001; Fishbein, 1993; Kibler, 1992).

The New Zealand study asked academic staff to indicate what techniques they use to minimise academic dishonesty. Some respondents reported using plagiarism detection software such as turnitin.com or plagiarism.org as prevention (and detection) strategies. Suggestions offered by staff to minimise plagiarism include adding a statement to assessments that students may be called in to discuss the content of their work or that rough drafts will be collected throughout the process. These were thought to act both as confirmation of originality and as deterrents.

As discussed in the New Zealand study (de Lambert et al., 2002b), there is much that teaching staff and institutions can do to minimise the incidence of academic dishonesty. Staff need to provide clear guidelines for assessments, including about referencing expectations, unauthorised collaboration and limitations about submitting the same work for two courses. Staff need to investigate their own assessment practices, as students seem to resort to inappropriate means when they believe assessments contain unsuitable questions, are too much work or assess what is not taught. Other more obvious prevention methods include closely proctoring exams, checking for ID, scrambling test questions, including more essay type questions, and assigning seating in exams (de Lambert et al., 2002b).

Institutions need to clearly outline, in a policy, definitions of actions and behaviours that constitute cheating, how punishments are administered and communicate this to both staff and students in as many forms as possible. Students need to be involved in development and promotion of academic honesty within the institution.

Responsibility for academic integrity should be given to a small number of people, who receive training and act as coordinators for prevention of cheating, and who also may assess the effectiveness of policies and procedures promoting academic integrity within the institution. Having a central person or persons would restrict students' ability to negotiate privately with staff members, except in only the most minor offences.

Institutions, and departments within them, need to provide training for faculty members on appropriate assessment methodologies which limit academic dishonesty, and ways in which to deal with alleged cases (de Lambert et al., 2002b).

RESPONSE BY STAFF

As indicated, the response of academic staff to the dishonest acts (or suspected dishonest acts) of their students is extremely important in determining the climate of the institution regarding dishonest practice and thereby shaping the future behaviour of its students.

A study conducted by McCabe (1993) of 789 academic staff from 16 United States institutions highlighted the importance of context in staff decision-making on whether or not to take action against students thought to have behaved dishonestly. The author concluded, however, that generally staff were reluctant to get involved in designated processes for dealing with such matters, preferring to deal with the matter directly. Although McCabe did not ask respondents why they were reluctant

to use formal procedures, he suggested that the “modest level of overall dissatisfaction” expressed by staff with their institution’s handling of such instances would have been an “obvious factor” (1993, p. 654). Dissatisfaction centred around leniency on the part of the institution and the high degree of effort required by faculty staff.

A later study delved more specifically into the reasons for academic staff deciding not to follow up suspicions of academic dishonesty. Keith-Spiegel, Tabachnick, Whitley and Washburn (1998) surveyed 127 academic staff teaching in psychology faculties across the United States and concluded that the five most common reasons for failing to pursue suspicions of dishonest practice all related to various aspects of the process required to prove the allegation (detection, proof and penalty). The respondents’ concerns, in descending order, were fear that the evidence they provided would be insufficient, the anxiety/stress they were likely to experience during the process, the onerous nature of a formal hearing, insufficient time to prove the allegation, and insufficient time to engage with the process required to deal with the incident (Keith-Spiegel et al., 1998).

Other studies have uncovered a wider range of reasons for academic staff deciding not to pursue their suspicions of dishonest practice among students. For example, Schneider (1999) reported that academics (and academic institutions) sometimes fail to act because they fear personal reprisals from students, such as poor teaching evaluations or other more extreme forms of victimisation. Academics also seemed to fear reprisals from the institution, such as being overlooked for tenure or promotion, either as a direct result of the incident or because the time required in dealing with the incident meant the staff member has less time available for other more directly evaluated aspects of their job such as research. Schneider (1999) also reported that some staff faced intense questioning of their teaching and assessment techniques during the course of investigations into these matters. Moreover, she says institutions may not support their staff in these situations for fear of legal action and bad publicity in an increasingly competitive global market for education. In extreme instances, she says academics have feared for their personal safety. She concludes that many academic staff believe that “they are better off playing outside the rules than by them” (Schneider, 1999, p. A9).

Commenting on this issue, Sanders (1998) asserts that, similar to the mental process that students go through when deciding whether or not to cheat, academic staff undertake a rational cost-benefit analysis when deciding whether to follow up their suspicions of student cheating. Sanders cites particular examples of academic staff who found themselves on trial after making allegations of academic dishonesty against students, to make the point that staff often conclude that the perceived benefits of such actions are outweighed by the perceived costs, or perceived potential costs, of such action.

McCabe (1993) and Simon et al. (2001) report remarkably similar results in relation to academic staff’s feelings about engaging with their institution’s procedures on academic dishonesty. Only 42 percent of staff in the case of the former study and 43 percent in the latter indicated that they would be comfortable using their institution’s procedures; the remainder of staff in both studies indicated

that they would be more comfortable dealing with such matters internally and informally. As Fishbein (1994) comments:

Many campus policies on academic integrity are grounded on the commendable civil-libertarian goal of protecting due process. But in practice, this concern frequently has created systems that defeat their very end. Many administrative processes have become so cumbersome that virtually all faculty members resist using them, preferring inaction or creative solutions of their own. As a result, so few cases of cheating are prosecuted that enforcement of disciplinary codes seems arbitrary and capricious and, therefore, inherently inequitable and unjust. (p. 58)

The New Zealand study surveyed 14 tertiary institutions, which together host 69 percent of the country's tertiary students (Ministry of Education, 2001) and found that only 342 formal allegations of academic dishonesty had been made by staff against students in the 2001 academic year, representing 0.2 percent of the total number of students in the 14 institutions (de Lambert et al., 2002a, 2002b). This, compared with the 80 percent prevalence rate as reported by students (and cited previously), could indicate reluctance on the part of academic staff to engage with the formal policies of their institution, despite their knowledge of such policies, as well as a lack of detection by staff of incidences of academic dishonesty (de Lambert et al., 2002a, 2002b).

However, whatever the reasons for staff reluctance to take action, several studies reveal that students are well aware of this situation. For example, McCabe (1993) found that almost 40 percent of students believed that if they engaged in a dishonest practice that was detected by a staff member, that person would not take serious action; that is, report the incident to the appropriate authority or consider course failure. Only 50 percent of the students involved in the study believed the highest penalty they would incur would be a fail grade for that piece of assessment, and 12 percent believed they would only receive a warning. McCabe claims that student views of this sort indicate that they sense the reluctance by academic staff to take serious action and therefore it increases students' willingness to engage in "questionable academic activities" (1993, p. 653).

Conversely, the Simon et al. study (2001) suggests that students are less likely to take such risks when the institution at which they are studying demonstrably acts on matters of dishonest practice. Only 9.2 percent of students who participated in Simon et al.'s (2001) study considered that academic staff ignored cheating or plagiarism, although 25 percent of respondents held no specific opinion on the matter.

Given that students greatly outnumber staff in tertiary institutions, they could potentially be a valuable detection, and therefore deterrence, resource. However, studies have found that students are unlikely to 'police' their peers. Trevino and Victor (1991), define co-student or peer reporting as "lateral control [that occurs] when an in-group member discloses a peer's wrongdoing to higher authorities outside the group" (cited in McCabe & Trevino, 2001, p. 30), and note that group norms are likely to operate as a significant deterrent to behaviour that could be

perceived as challenging in-group loyalty. Simon et al. (2001) conclude that students “do not appear to feel that controlling academic dishonesty involves them” (p. F4A-2) with only 23.2 percent of the 596 students sampled indicating that they would inform a member of staff if they became aware that a fellow student had plagiarised or cheated. The authors of the study suggest, however, that the successful integration of an honour code or similar code, which requires and rewards peer-reporting at an institution, may alter group norms by redefining student role responsibilities, making peer reporting acceptable. However, the study by McCabe et al. (2001) found that the presence of such a code, while doubling the number of students who admitted having reported an incident of co-student dishonesty, had little effect; that is, the figure rose to only 7.9 percent, suggesting that “even honour code students have difficulty with reportage requirements” (p. 40).

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

Research surrounding dishonest practice raises the issue of whether or not respondents are in fact being honest in their responses. It could be that some are exaggerating their crimes because of a sense of pride in having beaten the system, while others may not report all instances because of a sense of guilt and regret. It seems clear from the literature presented, however, that the number of instances reported is fairly consistent across various studies. Tertiary institutions, therefore, are wise to be concerned about matters of academic dishonesty among their students. Dishonest practice is prevalent within a wide range of student populations and students have a consistently lenient attitude toward this type of behaviour. They also are less likely than staff to perceive such actions as serious and are extremely unlikely to take action against peers who they know or suspect to be acting dishonestly.

Although academic staff express concern about academic dishonesty and perceive particular examples as more serious than students, they appear, on many occasions, to be unwilling to pursue their suspicions. There seems to be a general level of dissatisfaction felt by staff about the process they would be required to use if they engaged with their institution’s formal policies, and fear of the consequences of taking such actions. As such, academic staff seem to prefer to deal with such matters privately (one-on-one with the student) or ignore their suspicions altogether.

The existence and content of institutional policies seems to be reasonably well known among staff and students but their effectiveness is reduced when policy-makers attempt to satisfy competing claims and when staff are unwilling to engage with them. Policy designed to detect and punish those caught misses a valuable opportunity to impose positive change by directly addressing students’ level of moral development as a prevention method.

Although the incidence of academic dishonesty is astoundingly high, it must be borne in mind that there is clearly a level of genuine misunderstanding among students as to what constitutes academic dishonesty, particularly in the area of plagiarism and referencing. Indeed, in a variety of ways, tertiary institutions are

actually contributing to the potential for academic dishonesty among their students by providing inadequate definitions of terms such as plagiarism, failing to abide by the rules themselves and set a good example for students, and being inconsistent and unpredictable in their requirements. This must have some bearing on the incidence of academic dishonesty as reported and also on the differing perceptions of what is serious, what is minor and what is in fact not cheating at all.

This indicates a need for clear guidelines and increased education in this area. Rather than just invoking punitive action, lecturing staff and institutions need to provide practical learning experiences for students, just as they do in their areas of educational content, so that students have a clear understanding of appropriate authorship, including the importance of using other people's work to support their own ideas and how best to use that work and to acknowledge the source. Lecturing staff and institutions also need to be cognisant of their own academic practices to ensure they demonstrate best practice. If students are unaware of what constitutes academic dishonesty, then most behaviour labelled as academically dishonest could well be inadvertent.

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APPENDIX 1 – CHEATING SCENARIOS

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| Scenarios |
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Examinations:

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| Copying from another student during a test. |
| One student allowing another to copy from them in a test. |
| Taking unauthorised material into a test – notes, pre-programmed calculator, etc. |
| Giving answers to another student by signals. |
| Receiving answers from another student by signals. |
| Using old test papers or other institutions' course notes for study purposes. |
| Getting someone else to pretend they are the student – impersonating the student in a test. |
| Continuing to write after a test has finished. |
| Studying from notes written by someone else. |
| Gaining access to material before sitting a test. |
| Using study techniques to aid memory. |

Assignments:

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|---|
| Padding out a bibliography with references that were not actually used. |
| Paraphrasing information from a web site, book or periodical without referencing the source. |
| Copying information directly from a web site, book or periodical with reference to the source but no quotation marks. |
| Copying information directly from a web site, book or periodical without referencing the source. |
| Copying information directly from another student (current or past) without their consent. |
| Paying another person to complete an assignment. |
| Falsifying the results of one's research. |
| One student allowing another student to copy their assignment. |
| Writing an assignment for someone else. |
| Collaborating on an assignment when it should be individual. |
| Preventing other students from accessing resources required to complete an assignment. |

APPENDIX 2 – REASONS FOR CHEATING

- a I didn't think it was wrong
- b The assessment was too time-consuming
- c The assessment was too difficult
- d I had a personal crisis
- e It was easy – the temptation was too great
- f The due date was too soon
- g The teacher hadn't taught me well enough
- h I wasn't likely to be caught
- i I was under pressure to get good grades
- j Other students do it (or urged me to do it)
- k I thought the assessment was unfair
- l I wanted to help a friend
- m I thought if I helped someone else, they might help me
- n I hadn't heard of other students being penalised before
- o The due date coincided with other assessments due
- p The content of the assessment was not of interest to me
- q My teacher encouraged it
- r Cheating is a victimless crime – it doesn't harm anyone
- s No reason