Combating academic fraud
Towards a culture of integrity
Combating academic fraud
Towards a culture of integrity

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International Institute for Educational Planning
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Presentation of the series

Several studies conducted during the last decade have clearly emphasized the negative impact of corruption on the economic, social and political development of countries, due to the fact that they increase transaction costs, reduce the efficiency of public services, distort the decision-making process, and undermine social values. They have also shown a strong correlation between corruption and poverty: statistical regressions suggest that an increase of the income per capita of a country by US$ 4,400 will improve its ranking on the index of corruption (international scale) by two points. Moreover, it has been observed that corruption tends to contribute to the reinforcement of inequities, by placing a disproportionate economic burden on the poor, and limiting their access to public services.

As a consequence, fighting corruption has become a major concern for policy makers and actors involved in development. In view of the decrease in the international flows of aid and the more stringent conditions for the provision of aid – due to growing tensions on public resources within donor countries, and the pressure exerted by tax payers on governments to increase transparency and accountability in resource management – it is regarded today as a major priority in the agenda of countries and of international agencies of development co-operation. The Drafting Committee of the World Education Forum has expressed this concern in the following terms: “Corruption is a major drain on the effective use of resources for education and should be drastically curbed” (UNESCO, 2000).

A rapid review of the literature shows that a number of attempts have already been made to tackle the issue of corruption, both globally and sectorally. In the social sector, for example, several studies have been conducted on corruption in the provision of health care services. However, it appears the education sector has not been given proper attention by national
education authorities and donors, despite the many grounds for attaching a particular priority to the challenge of combating corruption in education:

- No public sector reform aiming at improving governance and limiting corruption phenomena can obtain significant results as long as the case of education has not been properly addressed – given the importance of the education sector, which in most countries, is the first or the second largest public sector both in human and financial terms.
- Any attempts to improve the functioning of the education sector in order to increase access to quality education for all, cannot prove successful if problems of corruption, which have severe implications for both efficiency in the use of resources and for quality of education and school performance, are not being properly dealt with.
- Lack of integrity and unethical behaviour within the education sector is inconsistent with one of the main purposes of education; that is, to produce ‘good citizens’, respectful of the law, of human rights and fairness (it is also incompatible with any strategy that considers education as one of the principle means of fighting corruption).

In this context, the IIEP launched a new research project within the framework of its Medium-Term Plan for 2002-2007, which deals with ‘Ethics and corruption in education’. Corruption is defined as “the systematic use of public office for private benefit that results in a reduction in the quality or availability of public goods and services.” The main objective of this project is to improve decision-making and the management of educational systems by integrating governance and corruption concerns in methodologies of planning and administration of education. More specifically, it seeks to develop methodological approaches for studying and addressing the issue of corruption in education, and collect and share information on the best approaches for promoting transparency, accountability and integrity in the management of educational systems, both in developing and industrialized countries.
The project includes works on topics of relevance such as teacher behaviour, school financing, textbook production and distribution, and academic fraud. It also includes monographs on success stories in improving management and governance, as well as case studies which facilitate the development of methodologies for analyzing transparency and integrity in education management.¹

Within this framework, the IIEP asked Max Eckstein to write a study, which examines the various forms of malpractices in the area of academic fraud. He has successfully analyzed the various approaches developed throughout the world – especially, in developed countries – to detect, control and curb academic malpractices and improve ethical behavior. On this basis, he has made a number of useful conclusions and proposals for decision makers, educational planners and administrators.

The IIEP is very grateful to Max Eckstein for his valuable insight and contribution and would like to thank him accordingly.

Jacques Hallak and Muriel Poisson

¹ An information platform, called ETICO, has also been created within the framework of the project. It is available on the IIEP’s web site, at the following address: http://www.unesco.org/iiep/eng/focus/etico/etico1.html.
This study was prepared by Max A. Eckstein, Senior Research Associate, Institute of Philosophy and Politics of Education at Teachers College, Columbia University, under the supervision of Muriel Poisson, Programme Specialist at the International Institute for Educational Planning (IIEP), and Jacques Hallak, international consultant.
Executive summary

Academic fraud appears to be on the increase across the world, in developing and developed countries alike. It is a costly threat to societies, to their efficient operation and to public trust in the reliability and security of their institutions. Among the many causes are increasing participation in formal education, and competition to gain credentials for educational, occupational and social advancement. Competition has in fact intensified as a concomitant of the expansion of opportunities for advancement. One of the outcomes of the modern developing economic and social order becoming ever-more complex has been the bureaucratization of national systems, and the need to identify highly-educated and skilled manpower and to assess individuals in the course of their education and training.

Examinations have become a major and universal means to assess achievement, to select qualified individuals possessing relevant and advanced knowledge, and to distribute limited opportunities for study and employment, on the grounds that they can serve as instruments for making objective and neutral judgments. However, academic misconduct has become a matter of extreme concern, as the pressures associated with such achievement, selection, and demand for qualifications grow, and examinations increase in importance,. What was once regarded as a series of individual infractions has expanded to become a veritable industry of academic fraud. This fraud, though not precisely-speaking undercover, is also not always obviously illegal. Organized fraud is central to many aspects of such malpractice. It encompasses, among other aspects, degree and paper mills, system-wide bribery, facilitation of impersonation, plagiarism, and many other forms of misbehaviour.

Advances in electronic communication have added to the problems. Examination candidates now have access to devices such as miniature receivers and computers as aids to cheating, replacing tricks like notes on shirt cuffs.
The possibilities of plagiarism are enhanced by web sites such as the ‘Evil House of Cheat’ (www.cheathouse.com) where finished term papers are available for purchase and easy transfer to students, and other sources where examination candidates can obtain questions and answers. Furthermore, thanks to modern means of reproduction and distribution, examination papers and even more valuable documents such as college diplomas and transcripts of student records, can be purchased relatively cheaply. The response of examination authorities and civil authorities to these new developments is uneven and sporadic and only now beginning to materialize, in the form of increased vigilance, new security measures, and such fraud detection programs as www.turnitin.com.

There is increasing awareness that the infrastructures for supporting fraud-resistant examination systems, selection processes, and credentialing are often deficient, and that the constraints and controls on malfeasance are insufficient. This study seeks to inform interested parties of the forms, causes and consequences of academic fraud and to identify some means of limiting it.

The purposes of this investigation include updating the state of knowledge in the area of academic fraud, its forms and incidence, and expanding knowledge of ways of controlling academic malpractice. The emphasis is on school-based examinations at the upper secondary school level and the transition points to higher education and training. The main focus is on misconduct in “high stakes” external examination systems, including their preparation, administration, and scoring, and on ways of detecting and controlling misconduct. Attention is given to misconduct in the certification of the results (credentialing). This investigation also considers detection of, and protection against, plagiarism, fraudulent credentials and electronic means of fraud.
In the first chapter the author examines the importance and extent of academic fraud, in a context of the international flow of persons, global communication of information and ideas, and the ubiquity of corporate and other forms of fraud in contemporary society.

In the second chapter the author describes major varieties of academic fraud, which covers such categories of misconduct as cheating in high stakes examinations, plagiarism, credentials fraud, misconduct in reform policies, and so on. Recent examples from many countries of the world document these actions, indicating types of fraud, where they occur in the examination and education systems and when they involve professional misconduct of civil servants (such as administrators, head teachers, and teachers) – for example, cheating inside and out of the examination hall; theft of papers; bribery; impersonation of candidates; paper mills and degree mills; and the growing use of electronic devices.

In the third chapter, the causes, reasons and rationales for fraudulent behaviour are examined. They include motivations to succeed, pressures to achieve, and the neglect or avoidance of the problem of academic fraud. Attention is also drawn to such systemic factors as: ambiguities in the definitions of what constitutes misconduct, deficiencies in governance and oversight, and the poverty of teachers and school systems.

Finally, examples of measures to limit and control academic fraud are presented. This includes national and local government interventions, punitive measures, and the activities of academic and professional organizations. Current and possible controls on various forms of academic fraud are evoked, in particular: honour codes, security measures, the computerisation of examination procedures, and electronic means of detection.

Throughout the study, attention is drawn to increasing participation in academic activities, the importance of qualifications and printed credentials,
the international dimensions of academic fraud, and to the role of advanced technology such as the Internet and means of document reproduction in facilitating fraud and efforts to combat it. The author stresses the need for coherence, consistency, and transparency in the management of ‘high stakes’ examinations and the awarding of credentials. He also reflects upon the costs, consequences, and dangers of academic misconduct, and makes suggestions on how to promote continuing scrutiny of fraudulent activities and greater academic integrity.

The author concludes by identifying promising lines of fraud control by various agencies.
Chapter 1
Importance and extent of academic fraud

Academic fraud appears to be on the increase across the world, in developing and developed countries alike. It is a costly threat to societies, to their efficient operation and to public trust in the reliability and security of their institutions. One of the outcomes of the increasing complexities of the modern developing economic and social order is the need to identify highly educated and skilled manpower and to assess individuals in the course of their education and training. Thus ‘high stakes’ examinations and credentialing become an important part of the allocation system for professionals as well as other workers. Among the many causes of the growth in academic fraud is the fact that participation in formal education beyond the minimum required levels is increasing and that competition to gain credentials for educational, occupational and social advancement has grown.

The reasons for fraudulent behaviour are not hard to identify. Success in school and in academic life has great value. Success in examinations opens the doors to higher education and professional training. It makes available opportunities that were severely limited in the past, when birth and inherited wealth were the major determinants of social and economic status. Now, as the cognitive elite challenges the traditional elite of birth, the academic ladder has become a highway. Education has opened major new avenues of advancement to growing numbers of citizens, a process that has gathered momentum since the nineteenth century in the developed world and which now extends to the developing nations. These routes, while far broader and more open than in former times, are nevertheless not yet open to all, in all places. As participation has grown, so has academic competition. Thus, while selection points narrow the open track for opportunities, the result is ever more intense competition for valuable prizes.
Along with such increased competitiveness, numerous and complex forms of misconduct have developed, amounting to a wide variety of academic fraud. In former times, cases of academic misconduct had been limited to individual instances and to a few kinds of fraud. But nowadays, the number and range of dubious practices has extended to widespread misconduct, individual and systematic, organized and institutional. Society in general and the educational world in particular is increasingly becoming aware of this problem and looking for ways to limit it. This report will seek to update the state of knowledge in this area.

The ubiquity of fraud

Fraud and chicanery are all too familiar to us. The mass media report cases of corruption in all aspects of life almost every day, whether in high finance or law enforcement, in market trading, or in research, in the practice of medicine and in all forms of political participation. To cite only a few examples from the realm of financial affairs, for many years, efforts to raise the level of practice in corporate reporting and in accounting in the USA included the demand for more attention to forensic accounting in basic professional training (Razaee and Burton, 1997). The report of the Treadway Commission in the USA (1987) suggested that all public companies should develop written codes of conduct to promote honourable behaviour by corporations. The US Securities and Exchange Commission has been urged to take a more assertive role in establishing standards of good professional practice. The recent spate of cases of deceptive and fraudulent financial activities by corporate executives and accountants shows that much remains to be done. Recent revelations concerning large international corporations and their auditors have increased the demand for action to restore public confidence in the US financial system. Even those charged with the responsibility of discovering and punishing misconduct are often found to be complicit.
International concerns and cooperation on the subject of fraudulent business practice are demonstrated by Transparency International’s annual rankings of countries listed by order of ‘perception of corruption’ in business and other sectors of life (Crosette, 2002) and by OECD’s Anti-Bribery Convention (2000). And, as a singular demonstration of its concerns about corruption in the public sector, the Government of Uganda established a Directorate of Ethics and Integrity in 1998. In support of this venture, the UK Department for International Development, which underwrites various programs in that country, recently advertised for a Governance Officer – Anti-Corruption for Uganda to monitor and report on performance and to train DEI members in the fight against corruption. But fraud is repeatedly being exposed in many sectors of society, including trade, business affairs and government, from spurious art works to the manufacture of documents such as identity cards and passports. In Germany, the medical profession was recently hit with allegations of widespread bribery in which thousands of doctors and many public hospitals were accused of accepting inducements from drug manufacturers to use their products (Orellana, 2002). And an executive search agency in the US publishes an annual ‘Liar’s Index’ of job applicants who falsely claim educational qualifications (New Yorker, 2002: 44-46). These examples barely begin to document the global concern with the prevalence of fraud and corruption.

Fraud is arguably ubiquitous. However, we are not generally inclined to think of fraud in connection with education and academic research. In fact, traditionally, educators and the education system have been regarded as major purveyors of truth, honesty, and similar positive values and consequently as somehow ‘above it all’. Yet, as we have noted, “from time to time, teachers, professors, and educational administrators abuse the trust placed in them, and researchers fabricate or ‘massage’ their data and falsify their reports” (Noah and Eckstein, 2001:6). Attitudes toward educators nowadays are often ambivalent and contradictory: admiring and respectful toward those held to
be bearers of truth and knowledge, and at the same time negative and cynical about their roles and behaviour.

**Examinations and credentials**

Not that fraud in education is without precedent. As early as the seventeenth century, candidates for the oldest known national, public examinations, competing for entry into the Imperial Chinese civil service, no doubt smuggled notes into the examination hall. The evidence may still be seen at the Field Museum, Chicago and the Gest Library, Princeton University respectively: an exam crib in the form of a strip of silk inscribed with information, and the so-called ‘cheating shirt’.

Since that time, examinations have become a major and universal device for assessing achievement and selecting qualified individuals possessing relevant and advanced knowledge. Exams are a means to distribute limited opportunities for study, employment, and advancement on the grounds that they are instruments for making objective and neutral judgments about candidates. Credentials, such as records of accomplishment, diplomas and certificates are relied upon as significant evidence of achievement, and thus have great value for the possessor as well as employers and admissions officers in higher education. However, as pressures for achievement, selection, and qualifications grow and examinations increase in importance, academic misconduct has become a matter of extreme concern. What was once regarded as a series of individual infractions has expanded to a veritable industry of academic fraud, which, not exactly undercover, is also not always clearly illegal. However, organized fraud is central to many aspects of such malpractice. It encompasses, among other aspects, degree and paper mills, system-wide bribery, facilitation of impersonation, plagiarism and many other forms of misbehaviour.
Importance and extent of academic fraud

Technology

Modernization has brought the spread of education and training and the paraphernalia of assessment devices and credentialing that accompanies these developments. Advances in technology have added to the problems. Electronic means of communication have revolutionized cheating methods by examination candidates who now have access to devices such as miniature receivers and computers as aids to cheating, replacing the old-fashioned trick of writing notes on shirt cuffs. The possibilities of plagiarism are enhanced by web sites such as the ‘Evil House of Cheat’ (www.cheathouse.com) and www.Schoolsucks.com where finished term papers are available for purchase and easy transfer to students, and other sources of useful information for examination candidates can be located (Lathrop and Foss, 2000). Scores of web sites, many of them based in the United States of America, offer essays, research notes, and examination answers. While universities have long realized the potential of the Internet, they are now conscious of being undermined by that same technology which nowadays makes the international dimensions of academic fraud more evident than ever (Sydney Morning Herald, 2001: 12). These sources are trans-national in their reach, and profoundly disturb universities around the world with fears of sub-standard students and graduates. Furthermore, thanks to modern means of reproduction and distribution, valuable documents such as college diplomas and transcripts of student records can be purchased relatively cheaply. The response of examination authorities and civil authorities to these new developments is uneven and sporadic and only now beginning to materialize, in the form of increased vigilance, new security measures, and such fraud detection programs as www.turnitin.com.

Just as technology has advanced the forms and means of fraud, so too has the internationalization of education, in particular in higher education. Knowledge, credentials, and people in academic work are now highly mobile, so that fraudulent activities, just like electronic communications, transcend national borders. The infrastructures for supporting fraud-resistant
examination systems, selection processes, and credentialing are often deficient, and the controls on malfeasance are insufficient. This work seeks to inform interested parties of the forms, causes and consequences of academic fraud and the means of limiting it.

Scope and outline of this work

Fraud may be defined as actions that are intended to deceive, usually for profit. These actions may represent different degrees of seriousness and reprehensibility, from simple cheating at school to actual crimes. Academic fraud ranges from individual acts all the way to organized conspiracies, committed by many different persons within the educational world: students, teachers, administrators, and researchers, as well as others outside it, such as parents, professionals and politicians. Examples are presented in detail in the following section of this report, ‘Varieties of academic fraud’, concluding with some discussion of the international and global dimensions of academic fraud.

The next section reviews some of the reasons and justifications for committing fraud, and the consequences of this behaviour. The subsequent section focuses on some of the means of controlling or limiting fraud, and gives examples of detection and subsequent action, and of agencies involved in the efforts to control and prevent fraud. This will further highlight the complexity of the problems and the difficulties of constraining fraudulent behaviour. The fifth and final section of this paper centres on the desirability and the difficulties of creating (or restoring) a culture of integrity and suggests an international watchdog agency to monitor academic fraud.

The sources of evidence for academic fraud are limited, especially in the case of developing countries, though anecdotal evidence is plentiful (Greaney and Kellaghan, 1996: 169). Noah and Eckstein’s recent study of fraud in
education covers several aspects of academic misconduct in both the developed and developing world and serves in part as a model for this work (Noah and Eckstein, 2001: 6). Additional sources for this essay include recent published and unpublished reports and studies by individuals and organizations including examination authorities. Finally, these are supplemented by information from interviews with experienced and knowledgeable individuals and anecdotal reports from newspapers and journals.

Research in this area is impeded by a number of factors. Teachers, students, administrators, and parents are hesitant to report school and examination-related misconduct and may even deny its existence. Often there is no clear agreement on what constitutes malfeasance in academic life, such as plagiarism. Finally, electronic sources of information on web sites involved in fraudulent activities, and measures to prevent them, are constantly and rapidly changing. No sooner is one means or source of fraud unearthed than a countermove is introduced. As a result, as we have noted, research coverage of the topic is limited and uneven, especially in developing countries. However as evidence of the problem mounts, so does awareness of its extent and ramifications, in particular the costs of academic misconduct. A final proviso on the limits of resources and range of data used for this essay: examples of academic fraud of all kinds are drawn from many countries but, while the author’s perspective is international and comparative, English language materials and data from the United States of America and Western Europe form the basis for this work. In some sections of this essay, for example, the section on governmental and professional agencies concerned with control of academic fraud, the range of countries covered is quite limited. We make no claim to be comprehensively global. Much remains to be done on this critical topic in education and ethics. In conclusion therefore, we submit a proposal for collaborative action to study and publicize academic fraud on an international basis (see Appendix 2).
Chapter 2
Varieties of academic fraud

Fraud in academic life can take many forms. It occurs in schools at different levels just as in various sectors of the broader society beyond the academic world. The perpetrators include students, teachers, educational administrators, and other professionals, as well as members of the public at large. Widespread migration of people and their credentials and the global distribution of information make fraud more elusive and add an international dimension to this review.

We begin by considering the most familiar and common kind of academic fraud, cheating in high stakes examinations. This may involve not only candidates but also teachers, administrators, parents, and others. We continue with forms of professional misconduct such as plagiarism, fraud in research, and bogus credentials. Then, we note how even well-intentioned educational reform policies open new doors to fraudulent behaviours. This is followed by a special note on international dimensions of fraud: examination problems in developing countries and on academic misconduct as a world-wide phenomenon with international ramifications. Throughout, from time to time, we will indicate how advances in technology have facilitated the growth of academic fraud by electronic means.

Examinations

Student cheating on tests is the most familiar type of misconduct in education. The most common practice is to smuggle unauthorized material into the examination room. Candidates hide notes in their socks or pockets, or write them on their arms – the least sophisticated method. Now, however, technology makes it possible to import information in small electronic devices.
and even to transmit examination questions and answers within seconds to candidates in an exam room as well as to other locations within and even outside the country. Thus simple individual cheating becomes changed to fraud on a more systematic and extensive scale.

Researchers in the USA have described in detail how students cheat, how frequently they do so, and many of the correlates of cheating. McCabe’s studies of high school students in the USA. has revealed high levels of such misconduct, and provides a major contribution to knowledge of the forms and incidence of misconduct by students, and of the expressed reasons for such behaviour. He found that 75-80 per cent of students admit to copying from others or taking forbidden materials into tests or exams. Almost as many admitted that they had plagiarized work by others in written assignments (McCabe, Trevino, and Butterfield, 1999: 70, 211-234).

Student cheating on examinations has become so widespread that Professor Croucher from Macquarie University in Australia, among others, describes it as an epidemic and asks for a ban on all electronic aids (Croucher, 1997). While such cheating on examinations in general is common and, as a victimless crime, may not be considered very serious, cheating on ‘high stakes’ examinations assumes greater importance. These are exams that determine entry into a higher, selective level of schooling and to professional status. They are administered by regional or national examinations boards, some of which offer their tests in countries outside their own. Here misconduct goes beyond unfair practice by individuals and small groups and amounts to downright fraud. Perpetrators here too include not only students, but also teachers and administrators, as well as entrepreneurs at large, who profit from the sale of questions and answers to individual candidates wishing to ‘beat the system’.

In addition to theft and sale of examination papers, offences include bribery of invigilators and examiners, impersonation (candidates hire a
Varieties of academic fraud

replacement to take examinations in their place), forgery and falsification of the results. However, modern methods of examination cheating are a far cry from looking at a neighbour’s answer sheet, or covert, pre-arranged signals between exam-takers, and smuggling written notes into the examination room. The easy availability of relatively cheap and small electronic devices has increased the capacity of cheaters to obtain helpful information in the exam room itself. In some cases, candidates can even purchase questions in advance or have the answers delivered electronically in the exam room.

Leakage of information on exam papers is widespread, all the way from central administrative offices to local exam sites. In the case of examinations for entry to higher education, backdoor means such as bribery and personal or political influence are common in many places. On occasion, the extent cannot be ignored and system-wide corruption is exposed. This becomes especially evident when national or regional assessment of students and school is introduced. In Britain, the 1988 Education Act for the first time mandated a national curriculum and provisions for regular achievement tests. Immediately, allegations were made that educational personnel acted improperly by opening exam papers ahead of time and releasing information to teachers who may have informed their students, and that grading and record-keeping were done incorrectly. The number of complaints about irregularities has risen in recent years and some head teachers, invigilators, and graders have been investigated for a variety of improper actions such as allowing a pupil to take national tests before the official date, assisting students during examinations, and altering papers. Teachers in England have admitted that they bend the rules in national tests because of “relentless pressure to produce good results.” (Henry, 2002). The education correspondent for The Guardian newspaper asks, “What’s so surprising….Everyone in school learns to cheat.” (Williams, 2001: 6). Each year, schools and teachers are accused of improperly trying to boost results in the annual national assessment tests (Smithers, 2002: 7).
Similar misconduct occurs all over the world. Two thousand South African school leavers were in danger of losing their university places after education officials admitted altering the results (they faced charges of forgery and fraud) (The Guardian, 1999). Teachers and administrators in major US cities have helped their students cheat on standardized achievement tests (Hoff, 2000). A cheating scandal in the Austin, Texas school district involved manipulation of data from state tests by administrators (Keller, 2002). However, responses to such investigations reveal ambiguities in what constitutes malpractice and in ways of dealing with it. A 1999 report on cheating in New York City schools that found many teachers helping students cheat on tests was later criticized as unfair and inaccurate in a report commissioned by the local teacher union (Reid, 2001).

Fraudulent practices such as the sale of question papers and answers extend beyond regular school assessments to highly significant tests for admittance to professional status. For instance, a teacher-test proctor was indicted for accepting cash payments for giving candidates extra time or other assistance in the Praxis tests, used for initial teacher certification in many US states (Praxis tests are provided by the Educational Testing Service, Princeton, N.J. and administered at local sites across the USA) (Gewertz, 2000). In another case, document fraud was exposed in thirteen states of the USA after a lengthy investigation by government agents. Impersonators possessing documents in the name of foreign students took tests of English proficiency in their place, so that they would be permitted to remain in the USA. A Justice Department official stated, “This type of document fraud is a threat to our national security” (New York Times, 2000: A26). Even so prestigious an institution as Oxford University is not free from the taint of personal corruption. Recently, two academics from a member college were forced to resign after accusations that they offered student places in return for substantial cash donations.2

Long and well-established national examination systems have security measures in place to prevent, so far as possible, many such abuses of the system. These, usually part of the published rules, regulations and procedures, are intended to ensure the integrity of the process at every stage, from the creation of the examination papers, to their distribution to the test sites, and the return of completed answers to the graders. They may also include rules on how invigilators should perform their tasks. Provision is made for identity checks in order to prevent impersonation by candidates, and the procedures for investigation of malpractice and penalties for infractions spelled out. However, all systems remain vulnerable, some more so than others by reason of the large numbers of participants and geographical size, which make supervision and control especially difficult; and the rules and procedures require amendment in the light of changing local and national circumstances (see Appendix 1).

As testing agencies have discovered, when students take the same examination scheduled at different times, the door is wide open to pass information among candidates in different regions. Now that exams are distributed over large areas, this problem has become more common. The Educational Testing Service in the USA uses multiple forms of question papers for their nation-wide achievement tests to combat the possibilities of abuse due to staggered times of administration at different locations across the country. Examination boards in England which administer critical examinations across the world were alerted to this problem with overseas students who start the same examination papers at staggered intervals because of international time differences. Once the test papers have been distributed at one centre, mobile phones and the Internet make it possible to distribute the questions (and even notes on answers) speedily to any corner in the world (Owen and Peek, 2001).

A familiar form of fraud associated with examinations is impersonation of a candidate by another person believed to be better able to perform. Many
examples can be cited of hiring an impostor to replace a weak candidate. However, while most instances are of individual enterprise, there are more serious cases. The perpetrators of such fraud often come from within the education world, profiting from their insider knowledge of examination development and distribution. Instances of exam fraud perpetrated by teachers and examination officials thus represent systemic misconduct. On occasion fraud may be highly organized along business lines, as in some of the examples cited above. A ‘Total Test Center’ was exposed in 1993 in New York City that provided impersonators for all kinds of public examinations: licensing tests for various occupations, examinations for admission to graduate studies (the GRE), and university admissions tests (Noah and Eckstein, 2001: 6).

Copying and impersonation are not the only form of misconduct associated with examinations. Bribery, theft, and tampering with records are also quite common. While these forms of fraud and cheating in examinations are evident in developed as well as developing countries, the security regulations and the means to implement them are not universally provided and are often ineffective.

Plagiarism

Plagiarism in academic and professional activity has become more common as the demand for faculty productivity has grown and the volume of publication has increased. Students at all stages in education are able to purchase course papers and even doctoral theses over the Internet and are thus initiated into the market for ready-made academic products. In Britain, a study by Plymouth University found that over half the students surveyed had cheated on examinations by paraphrasing the work of others or by using programmable calculators with recorded formulae in the exam room. This is a modern variation of a familiar form of cheating that has been conducted since the establishment of schools and universities. Yet the subject is plagued
with ambiguity about what constitutes honest, acceptable behaviour, and what is illegitimate. As part of their initiation into proper practice, students are taught to acquire information from authorities and sources and to use it with acknowledgment in their writing. Their teachers may draw attention to the conventions and even impose penalties for infractions. But the Internet and e-mail are now the tools of choice for plagiarism. Advertisements in college papers and in the regular press as well as on the Internet announce the availability of student and professional services, sometimes couched in such euphemistic terms as ‘editorial assistance’, but often blatantly offering commercially prepared essays, academic papers and even theses for sale. The easy availability of such assistance from various web sites has increased student ‘cut and paste’ activity to the degree that it is now expected and regarded as common practice (Chronicle of Higher Education, 2000a).

Even experienced professionals have been culpable of misconduct, whether due to deliberate actions or simple carelessness and neglect, and have suffered damage to their reputations for it. A recent spate of charges of plagiarism and academic misconduct involved well-known authors such as respected popular historians Goodwin and Ambrose, as well as a New York State University classics professor and a vice-chancellor of Monash University, Australia (Anderson, 2002; Baty, 2002).

Fraud in research

Many cases of fraudulent research by professionals are the outcomes of conflict of interest, self-interest, and bias. Researchers are motivated by the prestige that comes from being first with a scientific discovery, or the financial rewards of marketing a new drug. The many reports of fraud in scientific (particularly medical and bio-medical) research, arise from cases in which academics perform or review subsidized research or investigate potentially profitable market goods, and, whether deliberately or not, lean
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toward satisfying the interests of their sponsors. Misleading use of statistics is not uncommon in all fields as researchers seek to make the case for their own particular theories and conclusions. Extreme cases of such unprofessional behaviour have been exposed, such as fabrication of test results and attempts to obtain support from a pharmaceutical manufacturer for false drug trials, resulting in investigations and punishment of the professionals involved (Laurance, 2001: 14). A distinguished research lab in the USA retracted a research paper that had announced the discovery of two new elements and dismissed its primary author, a scientist on its own staff, for falsification and mishandling of data (Morgan, 2002; Johnson, 2002: 14). The US Office of Research Integrity reports that on average each year it investigates 35-40 such cases. Peer review of research and associated publications is a practice that supposedly monitors such malpractice but, as a special issue of the Journal of the American Medical Association illustrates, this practice may itself be corrupted by biases and conflicts of interest among the reviewers (New York Times, 2002a: A19). Thus, despite exposure of individual instances, fabrication remains a common variety of academic fraud, together with falsification of data and of records and credentials.

Diploma mills and false credentials

When the world of higher education was smaller, networks of individuals and institutions were closer and better known to one another, and it was common to make appointments and promotions on the basis of personal recommendations. Nowadays, however, this practice is regarded as unreliable and subject to personal bias. It is largely replaced by the evidence of employment records, certificates and diplomas. As a consequence, such documentation has great value for career advancement and for status. Thus the demand for credentials is great and growing and false credentials as well as illicit ways of obtaining genuine ones have proliferated.
Cases of misrepresentation, ‘massaging’ records, and downright lying are common forms of professional misconduct all over the world. Routine checks of personnel records unearth questionable statements by applicants for academic positions that extend to claims for doctorates never earned, and publications that never appeared. Past employment is frequently upgraded and conflicting data presented in different forms of an individual’s curriculum vita. Claims of credentials from a foreign country increase the difficulties of verification, which is often neglected (Lagos Post Express, 2001; British Medical Journal, 1992: 779). But document fraud goes beyond misconduct by individuals. Forged documents such as diplomas from leading Tokyo universities, transcripts, and graduation certificates were sold in China and are believed to have been used in job applications in China and Japan (The Yomiuri Shimbun., 2000). This scheme was both international and ‘high-tech’, as Chinese nationals used computers to fabricate such documents and forge seals.

A more serious level of fraud is reached when academic qualifications are marketed on a large scale. Advertising in periodicals and on the Internet offers degrees for sale, requiring little effort and at not much expense. Internet advertisements by www.fakedegrees.com offer to sell spurious credentials from reputable colleges and universities in the USA. The University of Wisconsin, among others, sought to have its name removed from such advertisements. However, Internet publicity and a home office supposedly in Barcelona make this source an elusive target (Carnevale, 2002a: A44). In the USA, neglect by the educational authorities charged with supervising and accrediting the process, and the absence of legal constraints, have permitted the growth of a veritable industry of spurious colleges and universities and has limited the capacity of State education authorities to control such behaviour. During the 1980s and 1990s, new State laws and actions were initiated and even the Federal Bureau of Investigation took action against such misconduct. However, a recent investigation by the US General Accounting Office revealed that “obtaining counterfeit diplomas ... is fast, easy, and potentially effective”
(Potter, 2003). Since US credentials enjoy great prestige in many parts of the world, the market for them has grown in proportion to the ability of the entrepreneurs to advertise, the Internet being the prime means of doing so (Noah and Eckstein, 2001). Purchase of spurious degrees has now become global, whether offered for sale by unaccredited and dubious institutions or based on applications requiring no more than accounts of life experience rather than actual education and training. Such commerce in bogus credentials has reached international proportions (Lawnham, 2002). Since qualifications are so important for students and professionals seeking appointment to institutions in foreign countries, individuals have been duped into believing that they have gained credible certificates from reputable institutions (Noah and Eckstein, 2001: 72).

Reform policies and academic fraud

Educational systems across the world have instituted policies to effect positive changes in academic practice at all levels from primary school to higher education, and in teaching and research. These range from financial incentives supporting special programs to rewards for the improved performance by educational institutions. Such programs are frequently subject to abuse and even systematic corruption, and sometimes create unanticipated side effects. For example, it is a common policy to use differential funding levels to compensate schools or school systems for especially burdensome conditions such as a heavier load of disadvantaged students and others in special need. Such practices may encourage, say, school principals, to ‘inflate’ the numbers of poor children in their schools so that they may qualify for extra resources. By the same token, institutions may be rewarded with extra resources for superior results in student performance on public examinations. This too opens the door for professional misconduct and educational malpractice including inappropriate changes in the school curriculum, misuse of school resources and deliberate falsification of records. The US Department
of Education’s program of student financial aid has been subverted by parents and ‘financial aid advisors’ who, for a fee, assist applicants by providing false information and falsified tax returns.3

Policies intended to promote equity sometimes give occasion for institutional malpractice. Thus Canadian efforts to improve the proportions of women faculty and other underrepresented groups such as aboriginals in areas dominated by males (such as engineering and the physical sciences) led to a program of University Faculty Awards to help universities hire minorities. As a result, unqualified or ‘under-qualified’ people have been appointed to faculty positions simply to increase the number of ‘free hires’. It apparently took two years before administrators at the University of Regina took action to dismiss a minority female engineering professor appointed on the basis of fake credentials and her status as minority member (White, 2002). Action to rectify the misjudgement by those in authority was slow to come, but more fundamental questions are raised about the policy of funding positions restricted to particular groups.

An example of the unintended consequences of reform policy in higher education comes from Argentina. The university’s efforts to improve the quality of the institution and its faculty work included close scrutiny of faculty performance and financial incentives for academic productivity. In her assessment of the results, one researcher found a number of negative outcomes, notably in the growth of competitiveness among faculty members and its stimulus to various forms of academic fraud. Whereas research activity increased, this included a large amount of poor quality publication, repetition (and replication) of results, and plagiarism. Because of the importance of documentation, faculty inflated their curriculum vitae to improve their chances of promotion.4

In order to provide training opportunities for young people beyond standard school arrangements and beyond the years of compulsory schooling, government programs subsidizing private trade schools have been instituted and expanded in several countries, including Britain and the USA. Both financial and educational fraud have recently been revealed in Britain’s Individual Learning Account program. A recent investigation showed not only fraudulent records of student enrolment but also improper and deficient educational provision for students. The Department of Education and Employment has admitted that its supervision of the many private training companies was neglectful and suspended the whole program (Johnston, 2002: 12). In the USA too, the potential is great for fraud in under-supervised new programmes (Carnevale, 2002b: A27; and Times Educational Supplement, 2001c; and Computer Weekly, 2001: 3).

In the United States of America, similar programs to provide subsidies for vocational education to young people in proprietary schools have also been subject to abuse. Such institutions have been charged with providing inadequate and even non-existent programs and misuse of government funding. In order to regulate such practices, the State of California established the Council for Private Post-Secondary and Vocational Schools to accredit and supervise programs. Subsequent efforts by trade schools to abolish the Council became a hot political issue (Los Angeles Times, 1997: B8).

Educational policies in the USA have also been directed at raising teacher qualifications. Several States have emphasized the acquisition of qualifications through examinations for certification as a teacher. However, apart from imposing examination pressures upon aspiring teachers, school districts often find themselves forced to appoint unqualified or ‘under-qualified’ personnel to schools in their jurisdiction. Certain States like Massachusetts which lacked system-wide standards for teachers, only recently instituted tests in skills and knowledge for prospective teachers in 1998 (legislated five years earlier), as a remedy. The Massachusetts Department of Education stipulated a pass rate...
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but then lowered it when the failure rate appeared too great. Despite public and professional outrage at these policy decisions, school districts continue to appoint teachers lacking full credentials. A recent report by the (Federal) Department of Education found that many states hide data about inadequate teacher qualifications, failing to meet the federal commitment to have a ‘highly qualified’ teacher in every classroom with high poverty students (Schemo, 2002: A37). A recent survey of teachers in middle and high schools by the US Dept. of Education found that a quarter of academic subject teachers in secondary public schools lacked academic qualifications in the subject they teach, particularly in poorer school districts. Differences among states in the proportion of un- and under-qualified teachers range from 10 per cent to about 35 per cent (New York Times, 2002b: A12; Jerald and Ingersoll, 2002). Thus, in order to meet staffing levels, schools continue to perpetrate a fraud on the public and cheat students, their families, the tax-payers, and depress academic standards in schools and in higher education.

A relatively new phenomenon is the growth of distance education, a practice intended to bring education to dispersed and remote populations. This may also involve assessment ‘at a distance’. Once the limited province of a number of metropolitan examination and licensing boards, this is now a common practice in many countries and at different levels of educational systems. Distance education offers increased opportunities for fraud by students and institutions due to the difficulties in supervision of distant sites, and it is spurred by the growing demand for education, by expansion of such provisions and by both private and public financial incentives to acquire qualifications.

International and global dimensions of academic fraud

Examinations in developing nations demonstrate many of the same forms of misconduct as in the developed world. In many of these countries, the infrastructures necessary for efficient and fair management of education may
be lacking. Equally, perhaps even more important, public expectations and attitudes fundamental to efficient and impersonal management may be lacking. The record of misconduct is long and well-documented by many anecdotal records (Cizek, 1999: 75-81).

Spurious offers of help for students often conceal the offer of undercover assistance for a price. Indian police recently uncovered a scheme whereby a group posing as educational advisors advertised in local newspapers that they would guarantee admission to specialized postgraduate programs. Instead of the advertised educational advice and assistance, medical students who were candidates for a nationwide examination received answers to the test questions upon payment of a fee (Overland, 2002: 1). Corruption among teachers in Bangkok included payments to promotion panels, accepting bribes from publishing houses for ordering textbooks, and taking bribes from parents to admit their children (Bangkok Post, 2000). Blatant forms of misconduct are all too easily observed: in Georgia’s Tbilisi University, one faculty member, known for her refusal to accept bribes, states that “everything and everyone appears to be for sale: admissions, courses, grades, diplomas – you name it” (MacWilliams, 2002: A34). And an article on corruption in China includes the following description of a market display in a rural town, including “collections of forged official paperwork of almost every hue ... Nearby printers were offering to customize documents to individual specifications.” Graduation certificates (BA, MA, or PhD) were on display among resident booklets, business licences and other fake papers (Kynge, 2002: 6).

An Australian newspaper comments that the challenge to the integrity of Australian universities caused by Internet assistance to students cheating in examinations and on their supposedly independent work reduces confidence in the education provided by those institutions. They predicted that by 2003, a large proportion of enrolments will be from overseas, that visiting students with language difficulties are already especially targeted by web sites, and that measures are needed to prevent a flood of sub-standard graduates (Sydney
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Morning Herald, 2001). In a characteristic example of cheating assisted by modern devices, education officials and teachers in China provided examination candidates with answers to questions on the national university examinations by means of a pager (South China Morning Post, 2001).

Academic crimes ranging from hiring people to sit exams for them to tampering with grades are a concern to universities around the world. Makerere University is but one institution that fears that its good reputation built up over years can be undermined by such misconduct. Employers express dissatisfaction over the calibre of graduates and voices both within and outside the university demand institutional protection against fraudsters. A degree awarded in 1990 was cancelled ten years later after discovery that forged papers had been used for admission, the eleventh such case that university authorities announced in a year. The sudden growth of the student population is held to be partly to blame for the increasing number of cases of academic fraud (Africa News Service, 2001: 10).

The use of ‘high-tech’ facilities makes malpractice a growing international phenomenon. In the entrance exams for Jakarta State University, where candidates outnumber available places by roughly twelve to one, candidates can pay so-called ‘jockeys’ to supply them with answers from stolen exam papers. For a fee, they receive a mobile phone and codes for requesting and receiving information in the exam room. The authorities acknowledge that cheating is commonplace but claim that “little can be done while the culture of corruption within the bureaucracy is so endemic” (Guardian Weekly, 2002: 22).

The overall problem in less developed, newly independent nations of the world, and the pervasive nature of academic fraud, are well illustrated by the basic difficulties in administering national examinations. Two studies on equity issues and on the integrity of examinations are especially illuminating, not only in describing the critical role of examinations in student selection in
developing nations, but also the influence of their special context in determining and shaping malpractice (Greaney and Kellahan, 1995; Greaney and Kellahan, 1996). Each stage of the national examinations in developing countries is vulnerable to malfeasance of one kind or another. For example, before the actual administration of national exams upon which so much depends, leakage of information is common while the questions are being formulated, and the papers printed and distributed to examination centres. At the actual testing sites, papers may be opened ahead of time, copied and sold. Impersonation of a candidate, smuggling information into the examination room, and covert passing of answers between candidates, as well as conveying information from outside into the examination room, are all possible. Misconduct may occur during grading and reporting grades or marks. Finally, records and credentials such as certificates or diplomas can be falsified. Not only do the individual chances of candidates (for example, for promotion to the next level of schooling) depend on the results, but teacher and headmasters’ ratings too. It should be noted that vulnerability to fraudulent practices is not by any means limited to developing nations, though the preventative infrastructures may be deficient.

Conditions in Malawi are characteristic of less developed nations and typically difficult to cope with. In this small African country, formerly a British colony, misconduct of all the kinds described above at every stage of the national school examinations is common. The limited supply of rewards for success, such as places in higher education, stirs intense competition among candidates. Under these circumstances, success can provide enormous opportunities for advancement in education and in society, but official controls on misconduct have limited effects. The following anecdote by a former examiner assigned to a rural site to administer a national examination illustrates some of the pressures imposed by parents and local bystanders: he was prevented from implementing required security provisions through intimidation by community members and students and subjected to physical threats.5

5. Personal communication.
Scandals in the management of national examinations in fact forced Malawi’s President to dismiss top administrators from high office and establish a governmental panel to investigate and recommend appropriate action.

Many of these activities may be controlled by tight security and close supervision. For example, due to leakage during the process of printing examination papers, some examining boards in Africa and elsewhere arrange for this to be done in another country. Distribution from the national/central examination authority may be entrusted to police. Candidates attending examination sites are required to present identification. Invigilators at those sites are also charged with preventing candidates from copying one another’s answers, and from importing information into the examination room, communicating among one another and with persons outside the exam room.

Nevertheless, all of these actions occur. Bribery of personnel involved in the preparation and distribution of examination papers and of invigilators and graders is common in developing countries, where inefficiencies in management of the process are aggravated by poverty of the agencies and the personnel involved. Graders working for extra pay which may not be immediately forthcoming have been known to withhold students’ marks deliberately in order to obtain their marking fees first. Of course, such behaviour occurs in developed nations as well, as we have seen.

A concluding note on the incidence of academic fraud

Some researchers in the USA have attempted estimates for different kinds and levels of fraudulent behaviour. For example, some 30-40 per cent of primary-aged pupils are believed to cheat in US schools, rising to about 70 per cent in upper secondary levels. Similar results were found in a national study in Australia, where about 40 per cent of primary school students cheat, rising to about 70 per cent in the final year of secondary school. But it is
especially difficult to estimate the extent of academic misconduct by professionals, largely because the general practice is to treat reports and results of investigations with great confidentiality. According to the US Office of Research Integrity, an average of 130 to 200 allegations of misconduct per year are made in medical and bio-medical research and about one-third have been confirmed. However, more serious than the extent is the fact that misconduct of many kinds occurs, and that it tends to remain covert (Decoo, 2002; The Baltimore Sun, 2001: 15B; Hein, 1999: 11).

This section on varieties of academic fraud has described many different kinds of behaviour. These represent different degrees of seriousness, in how they affect the integrity of their respective academic settings. Some are acts by individuals, others are the products of organized or commercial fraud, and yet others are the result of systemic misconduct involving insiders in the education system such as professionals, administrators, and other functionaries. Expansion of education to increased numbers of candidates, particularly at the more advanced levels, and the geographical spread of educational opportunity around the world are two recent developments that have spurred opportunities for examination malpractice and the motivations for academic fraud in general. The next two sections will discuss the causes and consequences of fraud and problems of its control.
Chapter 3
Causes and consequences

What are some of the causes of academic fraud? What are the motivations of the perpetrators, the social and other forces influencing their actions, the reasons and the rationales they put forward for acting in the ways they do? And what are some of the consequences of their behaviour?

Academic fraud is a result of many factors, subjective and objective. Subjective causes of fraud are attitudinal and individual: the circumstances, ambitions, and competitive energies of participants in academic life. They also include simple ignorance of the rules and conventions that embody what is right and what is unacceptable, dubious, or even criminal. Objective causes include the pressures directed at individuals by society, family, and other external sources, as well as society’s demand for skilled and educated workers and professionals. Other objective causes are inconsistencies in defining proper behaviour, lack of rules to maintain and enforce it, and deficiencies in the mechanisms for detecting and dealing with infractions. The absence of any overall institutional or national policy on fraud deprives people of the positive effects of rules and definitions: a comprehensive and coherent outline of the general values that provide stability and control. When these are missing, such parts of the social system as its educational and credentialing practices, civil and criminal enforcement authorities and social sanctions on behaviour are likely to be in disarray. In addition, as we have already noted, modern technology makes fraud easier to commit. These are pervasive and universal causes that operate everywhere in academic life.

Causes

Students usually cheat because of concern about their performance. They are prompted by anxiety about their capacity to produce acceptable
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work, by fear of failure, by the demands and pressures made on them by such external sources as parents and teachers, and the importance of the results of their efforts for their future. They cheat because they are ill-prepared. They cheat because they have not learned the rules of honest behaviour, or to comprehend its longer-term value, or to appreciate the negative results of dishonesty for themselves and the society they live in. Some assert that cheating is part of a student sub-culture: they do it for fun and because their peers do it. There do not appear to be any victims of misconduct and the consequences are usually not serious. Moreover, as students, they believe, possibly correctly, that academic dishonesty is rarely detected or punished. Cheating is becoming so common (and so easy with the help of the Internet) that not to do so is to put oneself at a disadvantage. It is starting earlier, so that by middle school it has become just part of the familiar student environment.

However, it is not only students who are culpable of misconduct. When educators and other professionals inflate or falsify their credentials and their research reports, they also act out of competitiveness and ambition. Academic fraud is like other kinds of social misconduct, a result of market forces: the temptations offered by greed and the quest for profit. Substantial profits can be made by those who are able to deliver what members of the academic community want. Individuals and groups with the relevant skills and knowledge are drawn into dubious commercial activities, sometimes even incorporating criminal participation. These, like other forms of anti-social behaviour, are all ingredients in the stew of academic fraud.

Competition for a limited number of valued prizes is a primary cause of cheating in examinations as well as other forms of academic fraud. The rewards for success in examinations and for degrees or other professional qualifications are considerable, in some instances, inestimable. To the extent that the process of gaining these prizes is a competitive one, and it usually is, the temptation to obtain the rewards illegitimately is great. But the value of academic success
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and qualifications is not limited to educational advancement alone. It is accompanied by the prospect of improved status, power, and influence.

On occasion, the personal value of examination success may have special importance for an individual’s plans and life chances. For example, success in an English-language proficiency examination may be a condition for foreign students in the USA. to extend their stay in that country, a matter of overwhelming importance for the candidates. The consequences of failure include damage to career prospects, shame to the family, and the prospect of being returned to the home country, and may drive them towards dubious actions to avoid those consequences. In some instances, organized fraud and criminal involvement are invoked, all results of the urgent desire to retain a visa.

As a result of the phenomenal increase in the number of students and schools at early stages of the educational system, pressure to move on to successive stages has grown disproportionately. In some less developed nations, no more than 5 per cent of pupils who begin primary schooling reach the end of secondary school. Economic reasons predominate, personal poverty as well as limits on national resources. Selective examinations control the flow of students at key points in the education system to allow only a proportion to move on to more limited opportunities at advanced levels. Increase in the number of examination candidates has not always been accompanied by any corresponding increase in the number of places at the next level. In less developed countries, the ratio of candidates for higher education and the actual number of places available may be as great as 10 to 1. Heightened levels of competition are the result, making examination malpractice a major problem, particularly since budget constraints limit adequate training of administrative and supervisory personnel and the provision of security measures.

Examinations are commonly regarded as major arenas for student fraud. Misconduct associated with examinations is in part driven by the heavy reliance
placed upon the results of major regional or national tests. The ‘one-off’ criterion for promotion to a higher level of schooling places great pressure on schools, teachers, and students alike, driving some to find inappropriate if not illegal means to succeed ‘at all costs.’ Parents, too, are drawn into fraudulent conduct in the conviction that they are acting in their children’s interests. Thus bribery and personal influence enter into the process. This is further entrenched when education systems operate on the assumption that the results of a ‘high stakes’ examination provide reliable, objective evidence of a young person’s level of academic attainment and potential. While competition is a powerful motivation for study and for striving in all aspects of education, it is also blamed for the growth of examination malpractice such as theft and sale of papers, bribery of officials, impersonation, falsification of results, and forgery.

Clearly, students are by no means the only possible malefactors here. Teachers and schools, too, resort to fraudulent behaviour in order to improve their standing in examinations. While they condemn such actions as helping pupils in tests and altering their answers, the results are used to determine a school’s position in performance league tables and schools at the top receive benefits – a common motive for misconduct (Smithers, 2002: 7). Thus others in the academic system are also liable to conduct themselves improperly, whether directly or inadvertently. As a result of a traditional, institutional philosophy that is based on trust and responsibility, teachers, faculty members, and administrators are prone to turn a blind eye to misbehaviour on the part of their colleagues. They are also likely to neglect checking credentials in the belief that falsification is not part of the academic ethos. They are reluctant to see and report misbehaviour by colleagues. Furthermore, the academic tradition of free sharing of information still persists in many quarters. This permits faculty to ignore the possibility of malfeasance by their fellows, to neglect vigilance, and even to reject measures to detect and control fraudulent behaviour. The situation is aggravated by the fact that personnel in higher education are relatively free from any form of supervision that might police
their activities. While such beliefs may not necessarily be shared by all academics, nor by students and their teachers, nevertheless, in combination with one another, these conditions encourage fraud.

If selection by examination is the only route to an individual’s progress in a single-track system, then the fraudulent activities already identified are likely to be employed. A report by a parents’ association makes the distinction between ‘official’ and ‘unofficial’ examination malpractice. The first is planned, condoned or even carried out by the authorities, such as teachers, education officials, members and employees of the national examination board; the second is carried out by candidates and their parents. Both commonly involve bribery (financial or other inducements) and theft and sale of papers. Whereas inefficiency and venality are regarded as causes of the first, competition and ambition are the basis for the second. However, lack of integrity is seen as basic to all such misconduct.

Newer examination processes often increase the difficulties of making fair and objective judgments about student performance and leave the door open to fraudulent behaviour. School-based assessments have been introduced as a response to the criticism that the one-shot external exam is not a fair test of a student’s ability and that individual work, done independently and spread over a longer period of time is more indicative of a student’s capabilities. They comprise a portion, on occasions a substantial part, of contemporary major examinations, as for example in England and certain other countries. Such a progressive reform of examination practice, while responsive to a real problem, opens the door to illegitimate help that the examination door usually excludes: assistance by others. In this form of assessment, regulation depends on trust, supervision ‘after the fact’, and on the evaluator’s personal efforts and acumen. Similar considerations are involved in evaluating the work of learners in distance education programs, now increasing in number and size.

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around the world, particularly in higher education. Free of immediate supervision by teachers, free to use information from any source including the Internet, and free to obtain help from other persons that students can present as their own work, they are able to cheat and plagiarize with ease. New teaching and supervisory strategies have raised problems of reliability and suspicion of bias if not downright corruption.

Egotism and the personal drive for self-enhancement is a further cause of academic misconduct. It has given rise to a specialized industry that, though not criminal in itself, is highly deceptive and often fosters academic fraud. The desire to display a diploma from a distinguished higher education institution is not merely an exercise in vanity, but also a means of gaining status, impressing one’s friends and family, and an important conversation piece – these are the common claims made in advertisements by companies that sell such certificates and diplomas. More serious, however, is the use of such documents for actual fraud. They may be produced as evidence to support claims of holding educational and professional qualifications in order to gain entry to employment or to a selective institution. As a result of public demand for such tools of self-promotion, a number of commercial organizations manufacture and market documents that certify fraudulent qualifications. Technical advances in the means of reproduction have enhanced the manufacture of false credentials and as a result of the improved quality of the products and the seeming authority of ‘diploma mills’, these documents are usually extremely difficult to detect as false and as spurious.

Institutional policies may well contribute to academic fraud. One characteristic example comes from Israel where government workers gain automatic wage increases for advanced degrees, and where dozens of civil servants were recently investigated on suspicion that they had obtained fake degrees (Copans, 2001). In addition to the personal motivations mentioned, and the ease with which false credentials may be manufactured and purchased, underlying reasons for academic fraud also include political, social and cultural
characteristics. These shape definitions and judgments of what constitutes academic dishonesty. Some responses represent serious efforts to correct past errors and injustices, and may have significant political and social underpinnings. For example, anti-authoritarian attitudes toward the former colonial authorities have often subsequently been directed at new forms of independent governmental control and, perhaps ironically, take the form of actions designed to circumvent or even undercut the rules and regulations of the new authorities. In democratic societies, where public pressures influence political decisions and legislation, fraud may even be encouraged. Under some circumstances students have been known to resist proposed legislation that would punish infractions of codes controlling examination practice, even to the extent of demanding ‘the right to cheat.’

In this, they may have enjoyed the support of a major political party. In the Indian state of Uttar Pradesh, new legislation in 1992 introduced strong sanctions against examination cheating and, as a result, hundreds of students were jailed. Within twenty minutes of the opposition party coming to power in 1993, the strict laws were repealed. Five years later, an ‘Anti-Copying Ordinance’ was again greeted by strong opposition, with students claiming that it criminalized the education system. Another instance of political involvement in this issue comes from the Middle East. Freedom to commit fraud in examinations may even be regarded as a form of political protest, as in the case of admissions tests for Jordanian and other universities. Verbal and physical opposition to the administration of examinations created serious disruptions, despite the fact that civil authorities were assigned to maintain order and Hamas urged obedience to the rules and regulations.7

Ambiguity and lack of clarity about what constitutes cheating adds to the array of causes of academic fraud. Nowhere is this more evident than in cases of plagiarism. The very concept is a problematic one for many individuals and some cultures. To cite the words or ideas of others, even without

7. For details of these cases, see Noah and Eckstein, 2001: 36-38.
acknowledgment, may be regarded as a gesture of respect. The conventional concept is that knowledge is a communal possession, constantly built up over time, and is a view that teachers and researchers foster and promote. That ideas or words can belong to any one individual seems strange to some and the concept that they may be considered as individual intellectual property is a relatively recent one.

The reasons for plagiarism include simple carelessness and ignorance, but they are embedded in ambiguities and conflicting definitions of the term. This is often due to ignorance or uncertainty about what actions actually and accurately constitute this behaviour. Most would agree that individual cases are often marked by controversy over the principles and the details. Ironically, teaching methods and research techniques that students are themselves taught are also possible causes of misconduct as they misunderstand or misapply the lessons. However, for some students, the decision to plagiarize is a deliberate act to deceive, much like cheating in an examination.

Family values and traditional loyalties can also be a powerful factor in promoting academic fraud. Examination and selection processes may be corrupted through bribery, personal influence or intimidation, in order to favour candidates who are family members, or politically well-connected or otherwise advantaged. This accounts for much of the bribery and influence-peddling found in educational systems.

Of the few student characteristics associated with academic dishonesty, most have to do with beliefs and attitudes rather than their demographic or academic characteristics. According to one researcher, however, younger students and those who are poor performers and overloaded with work are more likely to cheat. Cheats also show patterns of minor deviance such as risky driving, lying to friends, negative on the job-behaviour, and bullying (Whitley and Keith-Spiegel, 2002: 29-32; Whitley, 1998).
Rationales

The explanations that offenders put forward for wrongdoing are manifold and often contradictory. Individuals deny wrongdoing, or claim ignorance of what may be wrong; or they assert that they place themselves at a competitive disadvantage if they do not act fraudulently, since others do it. In addition, pressures from family, friends, and teachers, and fear of failure are often put forward as justifications for misconduct. Like others, students frequently expect and often tolerate fraudulent behaviour, and as a consequence, practice it. Above all, lack of understanding of what constitutes ethical behaviour is often a root cause of academic misconduct.

Social policies in many countries are directed at drawing members of less privileged classes into the educational and social mainstream and thereby reducing the effects of class privilege and past discrimination and deprivation. Educational policies are a prime means of achieving this. However, programmes of ‘positive discrimination’ are frequently sabotaged by unfair use and those actions even defended. A common argument of individuals and groups accused of infractions of the rules is that they were merely “levelling the playing field” by using improper means to balance past and present inequities and the advantages of upper status, influence, and privilege held by others. Similar self-justifications are invoked when misconduct is defended by such statements as “Everyone cheats and takes advantage, so why shouldn’t I,” and “No one was there to stop me acting wrongly.” Such protestations and arguments, sometimes not altogether spurious, are often put forward by individuals and social groups who feel disadvantaged by a history of discrimination.

As a result of the increase in international academic communication and the movement of students and professionals, evidence of qualification is necessary not only for advancement in one’s own country but also for migration to another – especially important for academics and other professionals from
developing nations seeking to move to the developed world. Their visas and work permits in the host country may depend on the evidence they produce from their home country. Desperation and survival are often the motive for actions like fabrication of records, diploma fraud, and the like.

Consequences and costs

As we have argued, the educational effects of excessive competition and the over-reliance on examination results frequently produce negative outcomes, educational, psychological and financial. Educators point to the deleterious effects on the curriculum and how it is taught when teachers and students neglect those topics that are not expected to be examined. Many critics deplore the fact that in the cause of encouraging individual competition, teachers downgrade important social values and lessons such as cooperation and do little to discourage cheating. As a further consequence, educators themselves are drawn into dubious if not fraudulent activities by loyalty to their students and powerful concerns for their success. Commenting on rising claims of test malpractice by head teachers in Britain, a union spokesperson commented, “There is intense pressure on heads of successful schools as well as schools in difficulties. Performance management and performance-related pay is adding to the pressure” (Henry, 2001).

On occasion, in some countries, controversy over academic fraud may actually result in civil disorder and violence. For example, riots broke out in Bangladesh when college professors and administrators tried to prevent students from cheating in the compulsory national English examination. 321,000 candidates at 602 testing centres were involved and students became enraged when professors and administrators tried to prevent them from “using unfair means to pass”. Punishments were drastic: more than 3,000 students were expelled, nearly 100 were injured in the demonstrations. According to one college principal, students got help from local muscle men and political
leaders, as well as family members and friends. Such patterns of involvement and actions are not uncommon in Bangladesh since independence in 1971 (Overland, 2001: A45). But they are also characteristic of other countries which have large numbers of students to handle, remote areas to cover, and which suffer from severely limited manpower and financial resources.

The financial costs of fraud may be considerable. A World Bank assessment of the extent of leakage of public education funds in Uganda calculated that on average schools received only 13 percent of what the central government contributed to the schools’ nonwage expenditure, the bulk being used for purposes unrelated to education or for private gain (Reinikke and Svensson, 2001). The costs of security measures for administering national examinations in Malawi sapped an already inadequate budget for education. Years of political influence and misappropriation of funds in a Columbian university also fostered document forgery and bribery. The result was destruction of morale and educational efficiency (Easterbrook, 2002: A32). The costs of fraud are not only measured in financial terms.

In fact, the most serious consequences of academic fraud may be in the area of attitudes, frequently expressed and often acted out. These are clearly illustrated in the case of Colombia’s University of Atlantico just cited, but also in the overall effects of fraud upon the value of degrees (MacWilliams, 2002: A33). The rules of equity and fairness are a basis for trust and reliance in the process and the products of academic activities. But the consequences of academic fraud are a decline in trust and a self-generating cynicism about the academic enterprise at large and about the people and procedures they follow. Groups and individuals in many countries distrust their educational system and its reward systems and nowadays cynicism may be so widespread that it extends to areas that were once above suspicion and criticism. As a Russian critic of the public education system comments, “bribes have so corrupted institutions that they have virtually disintegrated ... Now students can buy good grades ... Instead of awarding degrees to our smartest young
people, we are awarding degrees to our most able corrupters” (Tavernese, 2003: A3). Like a communicable infection, the view that “Everyone does it” only leads to tolerance of further fraud, a vicious cycle that reinforces and extends the problems of cynicism, distrust, and apathy.

The likelihood is great that problems with fraud will increase, as a result of the processes of modernization, personal, social, and technological. Modernization includes such developments as increased participation in education and the credentialing associated with promotion through the system, reliance on bureaucratic and formal qualifications, internationalization and growing mobility of the labour force, especially educated professionals, and the growth of distance education. Traditional loyalties are challenged by new ones, in which the social costs include a struggle between local, personal, familial and tribal loyalties and impersonal, legalistic, nationalistic moral principles and values. These are among the fruits of globalization and the world-wide expansion of educational provision.

Out of successful progress come increasing complexity, pressures to perform, and the impulse to succeed by any means, including fraudulent ones. Issues of integrity and ethics are fundamental here in a world where norms are increasingly relative and authoritative guidance and controls are insufficient. This is not the place to raise these troubling moral and philosophical dilemmas, but it does lead us to a discussion of some of the means of controlling academic fraud and the factors involved.
Chapter 4
Problems and issues in controlling academic fraud

Authorities sought to prevent cheating in the Imperial Chinese civil service examinations by searching candidates for crib notes and isolating them from all others for the duration of the examinations. If detected, cheats could be subject to serious punishment, even the death penalty. Today’s lines of defence against such cheating are considerably less severe though they remain similar in principle: security rules and regulations surround important examinations and, upon discovery of infractions, punishment may be invoked. Comparable approaches apply to other forms of academic fraud: specification of rules of behaviour and the consequences of infractions, enforcement by responsible authorities. This resembles the broader problem of controlling any forms of transgression in society and establishing the rules of behaviour, punitive measures and security related to the kinds of offences.

Modern advances in technology such as electronic means of communication and improvements in the processes of document reproduction have facilitated fraud in many areas. By the same token, however, ‘high-tech’ detection devices are being increasingly used to deal with some of the problems. The Republic of Azerbaijan, concerned with inefficiencies and graft in its higher education admissions processes, computerized many aspects of examination construction, administration, and processing of results; this improved efficiency and integrity and made it easier to identify and take action against offenders (The State Student Admission Commission, 2001). Finally, professional and other public agencies recognize that the prerequisite for control of academic fraud of all kinds is awareness of its prevalence, its different forms and of the need for vigilance. In recent years, they have become increasingly active in this area and in protecting and promoting the idea of academic integrity.
Among the obstacles to combating academic misconduct of all kinds is unwillingness by students and teachers alike to be ‘whistle-blowers’ on their superiors and colleagues in the system. Denial by parents, teachers and the institutions themselves tend to inhibit action to detect and punish misconduct. Additional factors include uncertainty about what constitutes proper and improper behaviour, the difficulties of dealing with infractions, and the consequences of accusing someone of misconduct (such as the time demands and psychological pressures of procedures that may be in place to investigate an instance, and then the responses from colleagues, fellow-professionals and others).

Lax supervision is responsible for many types of academic misconduct, a responsibility that is not limited to educational administrators. The British Government has conceded that its agencies were negligent in carrying out only minimal checks on the operation of its ILA program (see above, ‘Varieties of academic fraud’). Finally, a serious problem exists in those situations where responsibilities for determining and acting on cases of fraud are unclear or unspecified. The particulars of academic fraud are not clearly specified in all countries: what constitutes a criminal or civil offence, what the punishments might be and who is responsible for curbing such behaviour. In the United States of America, where regulation of educational activities is largely decentralized, and standards are commonly unspecified, voluntary and unmonitored, concerns remain great about educational practices ranging from diploma mills to the growing new field of distance education.8

Research on control and detection of academic misconduct ranges from studies of classroom cheating at all levels to plagiarism, fabrication and falsification. Controlling dishonesty in schools at lower and higher levels and in academic research is understandably the subject of considerable concern. Studies include descriptions of fraudulent practices and suggestions for actions ranging from those commonly understood and implemented by teachers to

those that are highly organized, ‘high-tech’ and sophisticated. Many writers on what has been described as the ‘plague of cheating’ focus on cheating on tests and student assignments and encompass both ‘high-tech’ and more traditional ‘lo-fi’ cheating in schools at all levels, and how to detect and limit it (Cizek, 1999; Lathrop and Foss, 2000). In his work, Decoo (2002) focuses in particular on higher education and misconduct in academic research and cites a number of international examples. Among other topics, he discusses electronic means of detecting plagiarism, cautions on their uses, and in his concerns for fairness and ethical firmness, emphasizes careful reporting and handling of all cases of misconduct. Like Decoo, Whitley (2002) in his work on academic dishonesty in higher education, focuses in particular on faculty misbehaviour, their motivations for and responses to misconduct, and the need for fairness in dealing with transgressions. He also discusses classroom strategies for countering plagiarism.

Methods of control depend on the type of misconduct. Traditional forms of cheating in examinations, such as copying, smuggling information into the exam room (even in the more sophisticated modes available today) and impersonation are dealt with in traditional ways: teacher vigilance, security, identity checks, and so on. Penalties for infractions, similar to those invoked in the past, continue to be used, ranging from cancellation of results, repetition or exclusion from exams, and even fines and imprisonment in the most serious cases. Theft and sale of examination papers, alteration of the results, and forgery of diplomas, may be punished in similar ways. Familiar measures to deter fraud connected with classroom tests are multiple versions of papers, warning announcements, and additional proctors. Educators have called for a ban from the examination room of all kinds of electronic devices such as handheld calculators, computers, transmitters and receivers (Croucher, 1997; Noah and Eckstein, 2001: 33).

The following examples illustrate the wide variety of measures implemented or under consideration for dealing with the many forms of fraud
in different countries. They represent approaches that range from pedagogical actions to security measures, and punishments of various degrees of severity. Some educators seek to change the format of examinations in the belief that multiple choice examinations not only have negative effects on learning but also make cheating easier. Thus, in South Africa, where some observers consider examination cheating to be rife, cheat-proof exams are the goal of some authorities (MacGregor, 1997: A17). Other measures involve civil and even military forces to maintain security for examination sites. The Cambodian Government deployed hundreds of soldiers and police to cordon off high schools in an effort to prevent cheating in their national annual examinations. Armed personnel prevented parents and others from passing answers to students inside the schools and nearby photocopying shops were ordered closed (The Australian, 2001: 8). Jakarta’s Ministry of National Education instituted strict security controls over the national final examinations for junior high schools after cheating was discovered in the senior high school exams the previous week. Test papers were distributed under strict supervision, exam officials were urged to stay overnight at schools in order to guard them and supervise their distribution and collection. Students were subject to sporadic searches and in one region required to leave their belongings outside the exam room.

Strict penalties are often invoked in the belief that they will deter examination fraud. However, this may not be supported by actual experience, and reliance is more likely to be placed on greater security and on less punitive measures. According to one report, stringent measures imposed to check examination malpractice in Nigeria in 1984 have not turned out to be very effective. A penalty of 21 years of imprisonment for those found guilty was believed to be too severe and difficult to implement.

Given the difficulties of supervision in so vast a country and the competition to enter higher education in China, reports of corruption in that country’s national examinations are common. The means to control misconduct have included new rule-making, administrative and pedagogical changes, severe penalties for infractions, and ‘high-tech’ detection devices, largely
Problems and issues in controlling academic fraud

directed at teachers. Offenders were given jail terms under a new revised criminal law that made it illegal to allow favouritism to influence enrolling students. In one case, teachers, students, and education officials were sentenced to up to 3.5 years in jail for involvement in a scheme whereby answers were sent by pagers to students who had paid for this service, and others were charged with a variety of offences, including ignoring irregularities in the exam procedures (South China Morning Post, 2001). Similar means were employed for fraudulent practice and its detection in an experimental scheme in Dianbai county (Guangdong Province) where school authorities installed television cameras in classrooms to monitor examination sites. Cameras were to be connected to a computer network that would enable invigilators to closely watch the conduct of college admission exams. The county’s reputation was damaged by the discovery of organized fraud in which teachers passed the answers to multiple-choice questions to a third party outside the exam room by means of telephony. The answers were then paged to students. The district policy barring teachers from invigilating students of their own school and other controls on abuse was found to be ineffective. Exam results were nullified, and teachers and officials involved in the scheme were punished (The Straits Times, 2001: A2). In the attempt to reduce the pressures on students that are commonly held to be the cause of widespread cheating, the Chinese government banned all national academic competitions other than the normal ones (Times Educational Supplement, 1999).

Whether for reasons of lack of time or other resources, routine checks on credentials and on the authenticity of documents submitted as evidence in applications for admission to universities and to professional status are all too frequently omitted, in the developed as well as the less developed world. On occasion, a university has cancelled a degree awarded years before because it was based on false documentation.9

False claims of qualifications are a serious challenge to academic authorities all over the world. In response to the submission of fake secondary examination certificates for admissions, Dar Es Salaam University (Tanzania) proposed to introduce its own entrance examinations for all applicants. The National Examinations Council opposed the plan as a challenge to the credibility of its certificates, claiming that all that is necessary is for admissions officers to check their authenticity (Kigotho, 1999). But revelation of fraudulent behaviour previously unknown in higher education in that country sent shock waves through the German academic world, when news appeared of the purchase of academic titles and of forged supporting documentation. A proposed solution was to establish a unified and consolidated PhD register (Brookman, 1996: 10).

However, the growing sophistication of the means of reproducing and falsifying documents makes detection more difficult. In a recent move against the use of forged credentials, ‘forge-proof’ features are being introduced in Britain for GCS and A-level certificates in the form of holograms (Henry, 2000: 2). But neglect of checking diplomas and credentials by institutions evidently remains a major cause for the frauds perpetrated through faked documents and personal curriculum vitae which have been ‘massaged’ if not completely fabricated. Such neglect is well illustrated even in so critical an area as medical qualifications (Douglas, 1992: 779).

In the USA, where no central educational authority exerts system-wide control over the award of degrees, credentials fraud, and fraudulent test-taking, Federal authorities have on occasion pursued investigations when the law and public pressure call for it. The FBI investigation, ‘Operation Dipscam’, was successful in closing down a number of diploma mills during the 1980s and 1990s, and a decade later a year-long probe by the FBI led to indictments
for federal fraud and conspiracy in 2000. In this case, a former test proctor for the ETS (Gewertz, 2000: 13).

However, in the USA, authority in such matters usually devolves to State authorities and preventative legislation at the State level is growing. In 1998, Missouri was to become the seventeenth state to pass a law addressing academic dishonesty in the form of cheating on college entrance exams by copying or impersonation, and by punishing diploma mills. At that time, the State of New York was also weighing a proposal to prohibit the sale of theses or term papers and at present North Dakota is considering a law prohibiting the use of fake degrees (Sandham, 1998; Carnevale, 2003).

Detection of some forms of misconduct such as plagiarism is often more challenging still. Teachers, whether at the high school or more advanced levels, have usually considered it part of their responsibility to uncover such behaviour and teach their students the proper, responsible, and ethical uses of other people’s written material. However, several conflicts confuse the issues here. Certain forms of knowledge are seen as private intellectual property. This is a fairly recent legal concept and by no means clear or universal. Students are taught that it is perfectly appropriate to base their knowledge on the works of others, and that, as in science, knowledge is cumulative, built upon the knowledge of others, and, as such, highly estimable. However, they are not always effectively instructed in the rules of attribution, which are often inconsistent and even glossed over. This may conflict with the concept that knowledge is universal, generating further confusion over

10. The Educational Testing Service is the major purveyor and administrator in the US of numerous educational tests. It offers examinations used for entry into higher education and professions such as law and medicine. It is a private agency, develops its own materials in collaboration with experts in relevant fields, and monitors its own activities) and nine others were charged with a cheating scheme that extended over three years in several states. Those charged had received payment for such services to candidates as giving extra examination time to aspiring teachers, testing at unsupervised sites, assisting candidates, and impersonation.
the definition of ‘fair use’ which often becomes a major problem with writers and researchers. However, material tailored for individual needs (term paper essays and even theses) is now widely available for purchase and open to all to study and use as they see fit. While making use of Internet material without attribution may be no different from using library materials in the same way, its widespread availability and common use raise fraud to a new level.

Teaching strategies to deal with fraud may be offered as solutions but can themselves give rise to contradictions and ambiguities. Independent student assignments and take-home examination questions obviously offer an open door to plagiarism. However, teachers regarding these as desirable pedagogical and assessment techniques have to contend with the increased ease with which students can act in fraudulent ways, and need to develop means to prevent this. Cheating by students working on their own or at remote sites beyond the school itself creates a special problem. The growth of school-based assessment is an attempt to depart from the standard, often multiple-choice examinations. It is a popular addition or alternative used in some major examinations in England and elsewhere which opens the door to student plagiarism and to improper assistance by parents and commercial organizations. Such misconduct is difficult to determine. Furthermore, the great acceleration in the growth of distance education in Europe, South America and other parts of the world has similarly increased the problems of dealing with fraud and drawn attention to pedagogical alternatives. Distance education is an increasingly popular and economical means of extending higher education to dispersed populations. Close supervision of programs, record-keeping, closer relations among staff and students and between central and local sites are all recommended, but are highly expensive, as well as hard to implement (Whitley and Keith-Spiegel, 2002: 106-109).
‘High-tech’ defences against cheating

A distinction should be made between classroom management techniques and electronic, statistical methods for detecting cheating: differences of scale that suggest ‘high-tech’ approaches that are more economical and feasible only under specific circumstances. A notable distinction exists between such instructional measures to deal with student cheating, and statistical techniques used for detection. These, as Cizek observes, are severely limited to multiple choice testing involving large numbers of candidates, and to uncovering plagiarism (Cizek, 1999).

In response to students who purchase papers from commercial agencies, schools and colleges can make use of widely advertised services for detecting plagiarism and software solutions to examination problems. These programs will, for a fee, compare student papers with millions of papers on the Web, digital books and other papers submitted for analysis searching for matching sequences of words and provide teachers with an assessment of a student’s work. One company estimates that about a third of papers analyzed are “less than original.” Some instructors and even some colleges and schools use the services of such software agencies (Trotter, 2000). Like electronic fraud itself, software tools to detect plagiarism have increased in number during recent years and have received widespread publicity in the popular press (Frey, 2001: T1; Thomas, 2001; Guernsey, 2001: D8; Ellis, 2002: 1C). Such detection programs are now easily available to individuals and institutions and are publicized, as indicated, on various web sites (Lathrop and Foss, 2000: 239). The Houston Independent School System has launched a new software program in its high schools that permits teachers who are suspicious about a student’s paper to compare it with what is available on the web (Hewitt and Mack, 2002: A1).

Glasgow University’s antiplagiarism software was developed in response to pleas from aggrieved students who felt cheated by their colleagues who used Internet material unfairly. This program flagged student papers with patterns of similarity with those of others and therefore called for closer scrutiny, a practice that, according to some instructors, also served as a deterrent and “could be a tool for higher education worldwide” (Wotjas, 1999). In some cases, punishments such as written warnings, reduction of marks, and resitting the exams have been imposed. Other universities in Scotland have taken similar actions to combat electronic plagiarism and are improving guidelines and regulations to combat academic dishonesty, but note that uncertainty about what constituted misconduct was a common problem with students and teachers alike. In Britain, the Joint Information Systems Committee has signed up with iParadigms, a US-based software company which already has an online detection service to detect plagiarism in student essays that show similarities with material on web sites (Utley, 2002: 3).

As in the case of plagiarism, uncertainty about the rules of examination behaviour on the part of the examiners themselves is also a matter of concern. Britain’s Quality Assurance Agency developed rules to end “wide variations in the roles, responsibilities and powers of universities’ external examiners.” These are to define the roles, set policies governing nomination and appointment of external examiners in order to avoid conflict of interest, and to specify ways of training (Saty, 1999).

Official agencies in the USA and the UK involved in combating academic fraud

Distinctions should be made between official, governmental agencies and professional and institutional organizations all working in their several ways to combat academic fraud. Reference here is largely to the US and Europe. The first type of organization is usually related to particular aspects
of academic activity, subsidized by public money and of broad public interest. Thus, in England, as curriculum reform and assessment became a central feature of that country’s educational system, a governmental agency, the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority, was established as an examination watchdog. A series of highly publicized blunders in the management of examinations and a substantial rise in the number of cases of misconduct reported to it, seriously damaged public confidence in the new system. Newspapers reported that hundreds of teachers cheated in the recent national secondary school achievement tests (SATS) by helping their students or by altering the final results. The Authority published and revised rules about test security and has the power to investigate head teachers in schools accused of malpractice. It also urges parents to report schools if they have evidence of falsifying results so that they may investigate (Henry, 2002; *Times Educational Supplement*, 2001a; *Times Educational Supplement*, 2001b). While head teachers condemn such professional malpractice, they blame the growing pressure on schools to perform well (a school’s position on performance league tables is determined, among other criteria, by examination results, and high performing schools receive extra funding for extra pupils) (Smithers, 2002: 7).

The US Office of Science and Technology Policy has developed policies to control research misconduct through a federal oversight agency, the Office of Research Integrity and investigates cases brought to its attention. In 1999, the ORI found a well-known scientist at a prominent University of California laboratory guilty of scientific misconduct in his research, and recently, after an internal investigation, another researcher was fired from his position at that same lab, accused of extensive scientific fraud in research that led to the announcement of the discovery of two new elements (Morgan, 2002). The federal government on occasion acts to prevent fraud of various kinds in higher education through the offices of the US Attorney General (Coggins, 2000: 657-666).
However, in the absence of a central ministry of education in the USA, it is left to regional agencies and professional organizations to regulate such fraudulent activities as diploma mills and accreditation agencies. This means that large gaps may exist in coverage of many types of academic misconduct and no uniform national requirements for pursuing them. In some regions, the State Department of Education may alert local school systems if students show a pattern of similar answers on important state-wide examinations such as high school graduation (Gray, 2001: 1). Or an independent examining authority will discern a pattern of answers that may be investigated for possible fraud, a standard practice for the Princeton-based Educational Testing Service in the USA. In Britain, university examinations boards that administer important tests toward the conclusion of secondary education, specify in considerable detail the behaviour that is considered improper, if not illegal, and the consequences of such infractions. They list the procedures required to ensure security before, during, and after administration of the examinations, and hold schools and invigilators responsible for implementing these. They will also investigate infractions and invoke the associated penalties where appropriate. In many countries, including France, Germany, the UK, and others, examination authorities follow similar procedures (see Appendix 1 for a generalized list of vulnerable points in the process of managing large-scale examinations).

On the maintenance and teaching of academic integrity

Troubled by the extent of academic misconduct, organizations in several countries have become more active than ever before in their efforts to control fraud. They seek to raise awareness by publishing examples of misconduct and procedures for dealing with them and to engage professionals in discussion of the subject. They promote and teach ethical behaviour in universities and academic societies. At the same time, they attempt to ensure that both whistle-blowers and those accused of fraud are protected from unfair treatment by
their fellows and the authorities. These agencies include a host of national commissions, governmental agencies, professional and academic organizations in different countries, such as the US Office of Research Integrity; the American Association of University Professors; the Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft and the Max-Planck-Gesellschaft in Germany; the French Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique; and the Koninklijke Nederlandse Akademie van Wetenschappen in the Netherlands (Decoo, 2002: 1, 35).

In the USA, for instance, the American College Personnel Association conducts programs related to legal rights and responsibilities within the academic community. The Committee for Publication Ethics (COPE), created by the editors of leading medical journals, is specifically concerned with truth in publishing the results of scientific research. In performing its watchdog activities in this field, COPE has recently stepped up its campaign in the UK for a national body with powers to tackle scientific fraud. The number of detected cases has increased over recent years, and includes unethical treatment, failure to obtain consent, and fabricated results, all of which emerge regularly in scientific reports. But according to doctors, there is no formal system for detecting or dealing with them. The President of the Royal College of Physicians has observed that “there is a tendency to hush things up…and there is a major deficit in training in good practice.” Though the General Medical Council hears cases of professional misconduct, and on occasion will strike a doctor off the medical register, doctors fear that many cases go undetected because there is no verifying system or even expectation of investigation in medical research (Laurance, 2001: 14). The European Committee on Publication Ethics is similarly involved, while professional societies in the USA periodically calls for actions to promote research integrity (Chronicle of Higher Education, 2000b).

Research by McCabe (see above) revealed the alarming extent of cheating by university and high school students. However, he has expressed the view that “effective strategies are being increasingly implemented to
reduce high rates of cheating even at large universities.” He points to honour codes and efforts by faculty and student leadership in changing student behaviour and enhancing academic integrity (McCabe and Pavela, 2000: 32). Published institutional policies announcing what constitutes proper behaviour and what the consequences of misconduct may also be is an important basis for combating fraud. But it is only one means of teaching academic integrity. The lessons may be taught in the home, at earlier levels of the education system and in society at large. And such lessons are supported by a whole series of devices: laws, regulations, sanctions, and specialized agencies that draw attention to the problem in different sectors of academic life. Researchers in the USA suggest that schools with honour codes have had somewhat lower rates of academic dishonesty than schools without them. However, the effectiveness of honour codes appears to be on the decline, according to some. The University of Virginia, among others, has begun to take steps to counter signs of weakening in the system. After revelations of student cheating that received wide attention, its Alumni Association instituted a fund drive for an ‘Honor Endowment’ to pay for ethics seminars. Other colleges, too, are attempting to shore up their honour systems by raising money for special publicity, activities, and seminars (Macgillis, 2002: 1A).

In response to the finding that a majority of students admit to cheating at college, and to the concerns of higher education institutions about such behaviour, several agencies have been established in the USA to combat academic fraud by promoting academic integrity. These organizations seek to study and remedy the causes of misconduct by improving communication among the interested parties, publicizing the problems and attempted solutions. These include the Center for Academic Integrity, Duke University, NC, a national network of colleges and universities which provides a forum to identify and promote the values of academic integrity, and the Josephson Institute of Ethics, California and The Values Institute, University of San Diego, California which are both mainly concerned with integrity at the college level and ethics in the workplace, and similarly encourage teaching of academic integrity.
The Center for Applied and Professional Ethics (CAPE) is one of several institutional members of the Center for Academic Integrity which serves as clearinghouse for relevant information on ethics, character education and academic integrity.

In a federal system such as that of the USA, much of the authority for providing education is decentralized and the autonomy of higher education institutions is jealously guarded. This creates special problems for determining what constitutes academic fraud, what measures should be taken to control it, and by whom. In this case, powers and responsibilities devolve to the states and professional organizations. Missouri and New York are among the states that have made cheating on college entrance exams a legally punishable misdemeanor and prohibit the distribution of ‘online’ term papers and theses. Thus State agencies may serve as watchdogs and prosecute offenders if necessary. However, regulations and enforcement differ. ETS, the leading independent testing agency in the USA, takes care of the security of its own tests, scrutinizes the results for evidence of fraud, and does its own internal investigations. On occasion, ETS withholding an individual’s results or requires repetition of the test. In response to general and widespread concern about fraud, ETS and the Advertising Council planned a joint effort to attack educational misconduct in 1999. However, this unofficial and voluntary public relations effort was abandoned (due to inadequate funding, according to an ETS source).

In summary, it seems clear that approaches to controlling academic fraud are tailored to the characteristic system of governance of a given country, to the type of institution, and to particular kinds of misconduct and to the perpetrators. The measures that are invoked to deal with academic as

well as other forms of social misconduct are very much determined by the particular national infrastructures and by the respective national traditions.

The distinction is made between shorter and longer-term measures: shorter term considerations have to do with teaching strategies: these may include information about the risks and costs to the student and to the larger community, efforts to define the nature of fraud associated with student infractions, such as plagiarism, and the use of electronic aids to defraud. Teachers may take a negative approach, drawing attention to the risks and consequences of being detected, or they can stress the positive, emphasizing the benefits of honesty and training their students in how to study and learn effectively, and pass their exams in more efficient ways (Morrow, 2002: 3). Immediate strategies to deal with academic fraud also include close scrutiny of institutional arrangements such as security related to examinations and measures to track and punish offenders. But larger and more long term considerations include legislative actions to ensure coverage of the different areas of fraud: what they are, who is responsible for what aspects of detection and prosecution, and associated questions. This is especially difficult in those societies with traditions that relegate the responsibilities for self-policing and control of malfeasance to independent professional groups or local and regional educational institutions. Thus while they enjoy strong traditions of self-government, so-called democratic, decentralized nations such as the USA may be at a considerable disadvantage here.
Chapter 5
Summary and concluding observations

In recent years, academic fraud has become a major issue. The alarmist words of recent publications indicate the seriousness of current concerns: a headline from The Chronicle of Higher Education announcing that “Corruption plagues academe around the world,” and a study of academic misconduct in the USA and elsewhere entitled “Crisis on campus” (The Chronicle of Higher Education, 2002: A32; Decoo, 2002). However, a number of factors render the topic difficult to address comprehensively and systematically. First of all, as indicated in our review of varieties of academic fraud, misconduct takes many forms, and definitions of what constitutes academic misconduct are many and often ambiguous. Some forms of misconduct are time-honoured and traditional, but others are quite new, employing ‘high-tech’ methods, and are increasing in number. Clear consensus seems to be lacking on the seriousness of various offences. Moreover, the potential for cheating in examinations administered on the Internet is becoming greater as more exams take place ‘online’ (Hoare, 2001: E44). The basic causes of academic fraud are rooted in human frailty, greed, and ambition, but the motivations are many and varied, as more and more people become involved in academic activities. Finally, the means of prevention used today are entwined in a country’s general methods of social control, and are thus intricately bound up in particular cultural traditions and structures. However, the times are changing and new conditions create new challenges.

Causes: a summary

Putting aside human greed and ambition, several reasons account for the growth and pervasiveness of academic fraud. All are outcomes of contemporary conditions. The first, dominant in almost every sector of social,
educational and economic activity, is the demand for credentials and the need for evidence of good performance in education and training. As we have noted, these are prerequisites for employment, for appointment to positions, and for advancement in academic life. Competitive pressures are a significant cause of academic fraud as increasing numbers participate in academic activities. At the same time, because of the rapid expansion of academic activities and institutions, systematic professional control is inadequate.

Ambiguities in what actually constitutes misconduct in academic life are also a source of misbehaviour and, together with traditions of privacy and self-policing, result in a high level of tolerance of academic fraud. Advances in technology are another explanation for the extent and pervasiveness of academic fraud. Electronic communication and the Internet, modern means of communication and document reproduction all facilitate varieties of fraud ranging from cheating in examinations to misrepresentation of all kinds, including falsification of records, plagiarism, bogus credentials, and fabrication of the results of research. Like others, academics and researchers are ambitious, and driven by the pressure to succeed. Moreover, they are generally relatively free from any form of policing of their professional actions. Combined with an educational philosophy that is based on trust, collegiality, and professional responsibility, these conditions have become a breeding ground for fraud. Finally, ethical codes that used to be a powerful source of control and restraint in the professions have eroded in the academic world as they have in the larger worlds of commerce, politics, and other critical sectors of society.

The relativity of norms, insufficiency of guidance and of controls, are all widely discussed and deplored as problems in contemporary academic life. The corruption of academic and moral values reflects and is no doubt reinforced by prevalent public values. The account of a recent incident in a town in Kansas well illustrates these elements. A high school teacher found that a number of her students had used Internet material for their botany project, without acknowledgment. She gave them zero as a grade for the
plagiarized work and, as a consequence, many faced failure for the semester. After parents complained to the school board, the teacher was ordered to raise the grades. Rather than follow the order, she resigned (Wilgoren, 2002: A1). For a brief period, members of the community debated these actions as did observers in the national press. According to a local reporter, “Board members committed an act of educational sabotage,” when they ordered the teacher to reduce the punishment of 28 students. Some parents claimed in extenuation that the students were unaware that they had done anything wrong (Times-Picayune, 2002: B6).

Ironically, educators, politicians, and planners have in some ways become victims of their own success in promulgating progressive social policies. Complexity in social life and advances in technology have combined to make education a basic requirement for living, in the developed world and increasingly in the developing one. Schooling for all, the spread of opportunities over and above the basic level, and the high value placed on formal education have generated a kind of merit system whereby individuals are now identified less by birth than by education and training.

The costs of academic fraud are considerable

Cheating in examinations, like other forms of misconduct, is but one aspect of corruption and, as one observer has commented, “derails the educational system of a country.” The whole system is rendered meaningless when the school system fails to instruct the young to fulfil society’s requirements, exams fail to select the best according to stated criteria, and certificates and diplomas fail to record the true quality and accomplishments of students. Not only are standards of performance reduced but the quality of the necessary services to maintain and improve life is diminished. The confidence of employers and the general public in the system and in the competence of their qualified professionals is eroded. The social costs in such
sectors as schooling, medicine, and administration, are incalculable. The financial costs are considerable too. Where finances are limited, as in the case of poor countries and poorer systems in wealthier nations, examination security measures, investigation and adjudication of malpractice, repetition of assessments, are all an expensive drain on resources. And as programs of study abroad proliferate and more students seek to study in foreign countries, the extent of corruption abroad limits the confidence of the host country in such programs. Professors may ask if foreign students who are used to buying grades and credentials instead of earning them will import those habits to the host country. Similarly, the moral and financial support that nations give to education in developing nations is threatened by the knowledge of improper uses of that support. But the major long-term educational cost may simply be loss of confidence in the system and the cynicism that spreads in all directions, contaminating teachers, students, and professionals alike.

Attempting to deal with academic fraud

Attempting to deal with academic fraud in a world marked by misconduct in all sectors of life brings to mind King Canute’s efforts to stop the sea’s incoming tide. At best, it is a valiant effort; at worst, it is presumptuous and uninformed. And the human drive to gain profit from the misfortune of others is powerful. Fraudulent claims following the World Trade Center disaster in New York amounted to at least $2.5 million, attesting to the fact that “no catastrophe is off limits to fraud” (Berry, 2003). However, some American researchers point to the good news hidden behind the headlines of what has been called the epidemic of fraud sweeping the schools. They note institutional policies such as modified honour codes that have had positive effects on student behaviour and could serve as models for further improvements. They also emphasize the work of professional collaborative activities such as the Center for Academic Integrity and the Committee on Publication Ethics as positive efforts to deal with aspects of academic fraud (see above). And actions by
official agencies, national and regional, offer encouraging signs of progress in countries like the US where they have successfully investigated and prosecuted a growing number of cases. Here the expansion of both federal and state activities to control fraud in education has raised public awareness of bogus activities such as unaccredited colleges and diploma mills and systematic examination fraud.

Accountability by personnel involved at all stages and levels of academic affairs is a basic condition for dealing with academic fraud. This is similar to the desiderata for government and management in general: bureaucratic accountability and transparency, structured and impersonal public administration, predictable behaviour of officials, and a legal framework and regulations dealing with relevant practice. Many of these conditions are well developed in established social and academic systems (for illustrative purposes, see Appendix 1 for a generalized schema of the major stages in managing a large-scale examination system identifying participants and vulnerability to fraudulent practices).

Maintaining protection against possible malfeasance forms part of the security concerns and practices of examination authorities. However, these may require strengthening and expansion in developing systems. In order to effectively tackle the problems of academic fraud, the first priority is to raise general awareness of its extent and negative effects and to give attention to further study and publicity on the subject. The second is to remove so far as possible the proximate causes such as the excessive pressure on levels of performance in the form of single criteria for advancement and one-shot examinations. Such practice contributes to the dominance of competition above other values and a view of success at any price. It could be replaced by alternative modes of assessment such as cumulative records of achievement or independent studies and reports. The third is to strengthen the measures to deal with academic fraud. For individual countries, this requires assessing the effectiveness of the means of control, the rules and practices that govern
specific behaviours in particular contexts, and the necessary steps to ‘fill the gaps.’ Such measures embody good governance of academic malpractice in ways appropriate to the values and practices of the particular culture. A balance between positive measures and punitive action involves heightening awareness by students, faculty, and the public, of the individual and social costs of fraud and demonstrating its negative consequences. To coordinate sanctions for academic misconduct in higher education is possible, given the international nature of the academic world. Some of the measures taken in different countries and the agencies described in the preceding section of this work may serve as models for study.

In considering what measures need to be taken, the distinctions between different forms of academic fraud and between short and more long term action should be noted. Thus practitioners (teachers, examiners, graders, etc.) must be alert to problems of security and improve measures to deal with them. Employers need to be diligent in checking credentials. Educational institutions and their personnel must accept their responsibilities for controlling academic misconduct. In some countries, certain forms of academic fraud need to be ‘criminalized’, that is specifically written into the laws of the country, with the means and authorities to implement them identified and appropriate penalties outlined. But fundamentally, the academic world must work harder to police itself by teaching integrity, diffusing knowledge of infractions, and making suitable arrangements for performing these duties. Several writers provide summaries of practical but principled recommendations for the whistle-blower, for protecting the accused, and for institutional action (Whitley, 1998; Cizek 1999; Decoo, 2000: 202-203). Decoo goes further than most in recommending coordination of sanctions for academic misconduct on an inter-university and international scale.

In its simplest form, modernization causes conflict between impersonal, legalistic, moral, national and general values and principles and local, personal, familial/tribal loyalties. This creates tension between loyalties to the rule of
law and the infrastructure and values that support them, and loyalties to family, friends, tribe, and to values supporting these. The supports for each may be powerful, conflicting, and subject to social, political, and economic changes. In general, similar forces are at work in both developed and less developed nations, with similar conflicts among loyalties. However, such tensions are likely to be more marked in those situations undergoing the rapid and radical political and social changes characteristic of the developing world.

Differences between more and less developed nations point to the likelihood that problems will increase because of such factors as increasing participation in education; formalization of careers; credentialing; reliance on bureaucratic and formal qualifications; internationalization and growing mobility of labour force, especially educated and professional personnel and of their qualifications; and the expansion of distance education. The fruits of globalization and the world-wide growth of educational provision generate such developments. Out of success comes increasing complexity and pressure to perform well and, as a consequence, impulses to misconduct. The need is great for national and international attention to expose such behaviour to public scrutiny and to control it.

A model for an international watchdog agency

A timely and significant model for such activity is the work of the non-governmental agency, Transparency International, which suggests possible ways of studying and exposing academic fraud on a world-wide scale. Appendix 2 contains preliminary thoughts on the possibilities, and a proposal for action. At this time, sporadic studies from selected places make it difficult to generalize about the extent and kinds of fraud and measures to limit it. However, as a result of its sustained work over several years, TI’s latest annual index rated 102 countries on corporate corruption and graft while its Bribe Payers Index surveyed 15 emerging market economies and the
involvement of multi-national corporations as “sources of unfair business practices.” This noteworthy example of gathering and publishing highly sensitive information in order to expose and reduce corporate and political corruption on a global basis provides a blueprint for studying and restraining academic fraud. Collection and dissemination of studies and reports from many countries can not only expand knowledge but also help to systematize the efforts of governments, educators, and other professionals to contain misconduct.13

The context to concerns about academic fraud is not only modernization and bureaucratization but also changing social conditions in an era of globalisation. These are held to be causes of decline in national and international value consensus and a consequent tension between individual and collective values. Some believe this to be the result of a decline in the teaching of values in schools (Cummings, Tatto and Hawkins, 2001: 7, 9-13). The norms and values that shape social behaviour are undergoing change and eroding the social constraints on fraudulent and unethical behaviour. But it will be no easy matter to find a balance between exaggerating the extent and dangers of academic fraud and minimizing its costs and longer-term effects.

A final note

Progress in dealing with academic fraud on an international basis will require meeting several challenges. First is the increasing mobility of students, teachers and researchers. This requires greater familiarity with foreign credentials, their equivalence and transparency, and more energetic supervision

of their validity. Next is the challenge of managing new systems of educational provision such as distance education, growing at a rapid rate in many places. A third challenge, as we have reiterated, is to confront the potential for fraud made available by new technology. For all of these, it is imperative to raise awareness of the nature and forms of academic fraud and their ramifications for society and its quality of life.

Two approaches are common in dealing with any kind of misconduct: the punitive and the pedagogical. In addressing the latter as both an immediate and a long term strategy, attention needs to be given to strengthening, and if need be, to restoring, a culture of integrity. This has long been the goal of philosophers at least since the assertion of virtue in classical times. As John Locke wrote concerning education: “Virtue is harder to be got than knowledge of the world; and, if lost in a young man, is seldom recovered.” Nothing has greater importance or potential than early and continuing educational effort.

Finally, moving from a culture of ‘success by any means’ to a culture of integrity requires concerted efforts to combat a number of growing threats to the quality of society. It calls for a program of public re-education in all sectors of activity, involving not merely regulation and punishment but a social program that would heighten public awareness of the effects of fraud and corruption. But as a basis for such a broader and long-term program, action on the pedagogical front is imperative in order to eliminate some of the causes of academic fraud. This includes early and continued education in ethical behaviour, reduction of excessive pressure upon students and teachers to meet performance standards, replacement of exclusive, single measures of meeting these by varied and multiple criteria, as well as sharpening awareness of academic fraud.
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Introduction

In order to illustrate some of the issues and problems in managing national and regional examinations, the main steps in the process are listed below with the participants most likely to be involved. Examination authorities are likely to be mindful of these considerations and to have appropriate protective measures in place.

- **Preparing the examination paper**: subject specialists and testing experts, clerical personnel.
- **Printing and distributing papers to exam sites**: bureaucrats and carriers.
- **Administering examinations**: teachers, invigilators.
- **Grading**: teachers, graders, clerical staff.
- **Recording results**: clerical staff.
- **Certifying results and issuing diplomas**: bureaucrats, clerical staff.

Notes on security considerations and the possibilities of fraud at each stage

- Security and confidentiality of the final exam content and format are clearly priorities.
- Selection and training of examiners/invigilators and graders is paramount.
• Security in and around the examination rooms is essential. Depending on the type and location of exams, this includes: excluding impersonators and preventing importation of illegitimate aids to candidates such as printed materials and electronic devices.

• Appropriate forms of supervision at different levels is necessary. Levels and types of personnel include bureaucrats and clerical employees, educators, and other professionals.

• Leakage of information by participants and bureaucrats is fostered by personal interests and influence, and achieved by theft, bribery, falsification of answers and of records.

• Means of deterrence and control depend on the vulnerabilities to misconduct at each stage, the status of the actors, the procedures and codes of behaviour of the respective cultural settings.
Appendix 2

Proposals for an information and communication centre on academic fraud

Preamble

This proposal is suggested by the example of Transparency International, with which it has several parallels. A voluntary, non-governmental agency, TI is dedicated to studying and to making public corporate fraud on an international basis. This is a first draft of how a similar effort could be mounted against academic fraud.

Background and rationale

The problems of dealing with fraud in academic settings are analogous to those involved in the corporate and political world. The costs to society are great whether the misconduct is committed by individuals or groups or whether measured in financial or other terms. Detection and means of control are elusive. On an international scale, legal and social constraints and infrastructures are uneven, sometimes even lacking.

Transparency International, established to confront such problems in corporate life, can serve as a model for studying academic fraud. TI is a non-governmental group, funded by philanthropic foundations, corporations and Western governments, which is dedicated to battle corruption and increase government accountability. Its publications include annual surveys, which in 2002 compared 102 countries on an index of perceived corruption, and a new Bribe Payers Index that reveals the propensity of companies in given countries...
to bribe overseas. In addition, TI’s national centres report on their own countries.

Proposed

It is proposed to establish an agency along the lines of Transparency International, to monitor and report on academic fraud on an international scale. The agency will focus upon fraudulent activities associated with higher education and research and assemble and disseminate data gathered from national and international sources.

Purposes

The overall purpose would be to serve as an international clearinghouse on academic fraud, dedicated to gathering and disseminating information internationally. Its premier purpose is to raise awareness of the forms and extent of academic fraud and of how it is/may be controlled. The proposed centre will be a resource centre for those seeking more effective means of limiting corrupt practice and will also provide a meeting ground for individuals and groups concerned with combating academic fraud, such as professional organizations, governmental and non-governmental agencies concerned with identifying and controlling fraud.

Suggested activities and scope

The proposed centre will describe and define major forms of academic fraud, including such practices as: cheating in high stakes examinations; plagiarism; credentials fraud; and policies that foster fraud. It will also study the incidence of various types of fraud, and the means used to control these.
It will devote special attention to how electronic means promote fraud and how they may be used to limit it, to the problems of detecting forged credentials, and to fraud involved in international movement of students, faculty, and professional personnel.

Development plan

The first of several steps would be consideration of the feasibility of project. This requires close study of how TI operates, consultations with TI staff to explore the idea, and exploratory discussions with possibly interested parties. In the course of these discussions, it will be necessary to identify the major parameters and foci of the proposed new agency and to consider such questions as: what kinds of academic fraud will be considered (e.g. high stakes exams, higher ed. and research, plagiarism, bogus credentials, etc.); how technology is used to promote and combat fraud; challenges to academic integrity; the issues raised by international mobility of people and ideas; relevant laws and regulations; and functions and interrelationships of existing national and international agencies concerned with misconduct both governmental and professional.

A tentative organizational plan will be developed, including consultants and a network of existing agencies, both international and national; structure – international organization related to UNESCO/IIEP; functions and funding.

Finally, a formal plan of operation will be developed, containing, *inter alia*, founding personnel and cooperating organizations and first activities.
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