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Academic Integrity as a Teaching & Learning Issue: From Theory to Practice

In 2008, I argued that a new approach to academic integrity in the 21st century was needed because the dominant approaches had been proven to be relatively ineffective (Bertram Gallant, 2008). This new approach, the teaching and learning approach, challenged educators to situate integrity practices within the goal of improving student learning, in essence shifting the focus from how educators could stop students from cheating to how they could ensure students are learning (Bertram Gallant, 2008, p. 112).

I argued that this shift could be realized through “fostering a learning-oriented environment, improving instruction, enhancing institutional support for teaching and learning, and

reducing institutional constraints to teaching and learning” (Bertram Gallant, 2008, p. 89). Although the latter 2 strategies are critical for realizing the teaching and learning approach, I do not address them here. Instead, I focus on applying empirical research to elucidate the practical methods faculty can use in the classroom to foster learning orientations and improve instruction. I will also introduce a 5th strategy of the teaching and learning approach—leveraging the cheating moment as a teachable moment. This 5th strategy is instrumental for faculty members who hope to create a teaching and learning environment in which cheating is the exception and integrity the norm.

Fostering a Learning-Oriented Environment

The first goal of the teaching and learning approach to academic integrity is to foster a learning-oriented environment, that is, one that

is mastery rather than performance oriented. In performance-oriented environments, the assessments are superficial (i.e., earn points by doing the text problem sets), easy (e.g., earn points by writing summaries of each of the course readings), or contrived (e.g., assessments that do not seem aligned with the learning objectives). Such assessments encourage surface learning or just enough learning to achieve external goals (e.g., test scores, products and grades; Anderman, Griesinger, & Westerfield, 1998; Meece,

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Anderman, & Anderman, 2006; Murdock & Anderman, 2006).

On the other hand, mastery-oriented environments reduce cheating naturally by reinforcing students' motivations to learn and developing their meta-cognitive skills, that is their self-awareness of the knowledge they have, the knowledge they need, and how they can develop new knowledge (Ambrose, Bridges, Lovett, Dipietro, & Norman, 2010; Day, Hudson, Dobies, & Waris, 2011; Lang, 2013; Palazzo, Lee, Warnakulasooriya, & Pritchard, 2010). Mastery orientations can be developed by using meaningful assessments, providing students choice and control over grading, and nurturing deeper approaches to learning (Ambrose et al., 2010; Donald, 1997; Lang, 2013; Patall, Cooper, & Robinson, 2008.).

Assessments can be made meaningful by being clear about the learning to be gained, ensuring assessments are relevant to students' interests and lives (including their future professional lives), and by ensuring assessments represent authentic, real-world tasks (Ambrose et al., 2010; Kember, Ho, & Hong, 2008). For example, in my class on ethical decision-making, I do not ask students to analyze a case study from a case study book or from someone else's life. Rather, I have students analyze an ethical dilemma they are currently facing in their own lives.

Choice and control over grading can be particularly powerful; when students can choose the method for earning their grades, the power of the external reward to negatively impact learning motivations is mitigated (Patall, et al., 2008). Pattall et al. (2008) caution, however, that too much choice or the pressure to choose can be a bad thing; educators want students to feel some autonomy in the classroom but not to be overwhelmed. This can look like a menu of assessments from which students can choose, or a choice in what percentage of their grade comes from individual versus group assessments. In my class, students are afforded the latter choice; as a class, they must negotiate and come to a consensus (that is, each individual does not get to choose their own combination). Because they do in this in the very first class, it appears to generate significant good will between instructor and

students, as well as enthusiastic commitment to the learning environment.

Finally, deeper approaches to learning can be nurtured by allowing multiple attempts at an assessment or scaffolding assessments to lead to a final culminating demonstration of mastery (Day et al., 2011; Lang, 2013). Deeper approaches to learning can also be nurtured by active learning pedagogies that provide students with continual opportunities to master skills through repeated attempts in the presence of instructional guides or coaches who encourage critical thinking (Abeysekera & Dawson, 2015; Blasco-Arcas, Buil, Hernandez-Ortega & Sese, 2013). Compare this to passive learning pedagogies (e.g., lectures) where the instructor delivers knowledge to the students while they passively receive it (King, 1993; Prince, 2004).

Given the potential power of active learning pedagogies to enhance learning and reduce cheating, I elaborate on a few examples. All of these examples can be described as occurring in a *flipped classroom* in which the activities and assessments normally completed outside of the classroom are completed inside the classroom, with the instructional team serving as guides or coaches (Lage, Platt, & Treglia, 2000). Problem-based learning is one popular model of flipped classroom pedagogy. Unlike in traditional lecture classrooms, where the teacher is the central figure who deposits knowledge into the students' heads (otherwise known as Freire's "banking model" of education), problem-based learning centers on the learners as they solve problems (often in groups) that are scaffolded to, in the end, deliver the same content as that traditionally delivered through lecturing. Problem-based learning can enhance learning and reduce cheating because it aligns learning objectives, activities, and assessments (Biggs, 1999); increases relevance for the learner (Kember et al., 2008); and facilitates the development of meta-cognition and student learning motivations (Prince, 2004).

Research has demonstrated that peer instruction is also likely to reduce cheating, because in such a classroom, students are more likely to be engaged in deep, rather than surface, learning

(Crouch & Mazur, 2001; Mazur, 2009; van Vliet, Winnips & Brouwer, 2015). Peer instruction facilitates the Socratic teaching method in large classrooms to engage all students, rather than a few select individuals. In peer instruction, questions are asked of all students at once and the students respond all at once (using technology or even colored cards held up by the students). If there is dispersion in answers, the instructor asks the students to discuss the question with their peers, after which they will individually respond to the question again. The idea, of course, is that students will have more deeply engaged with the concept being questioned as a result of their peer-to-peer instruction. A variety of tools can be used to facilitate peer instruction, but devices known as *clickers* are the most popular, and argued by some (e.g., Blasco-Arcas et al., 2013; Heaslip, Donovan, & Cullen, 2014; Tlhoale, Hofman, Naidoo, & Wiips, 2013) to be the most effective, tools. According to Blasco-Arcas et al. (2013), “by fostering student communication with their peers and teachers and promoting social and collaborative exchanges among them, clickers help students develop communication abilities and a collaborative spirit,” as well as enable students to “feel their active role in the learning process and perceive their contribution to building new knowledge” (p. 108). At the same time, clickers are not a panacea; unless paired with excellently designed instruction and questions (Newbury, 2016), they will not enhance meta-cognition (Brady, Seli, & Rosenthal, 2013) and they can lead to cheating (with students *clicking in* for other students, for example). Instructors who use clickers need to make it clear that clicking in for others is cheating and any incidents of such cheating will be acted upon.

Finally, the flipped classroom pedagogy known as team-based learning (TBL) strongly supports all of the elements of a mastery-oriented environment. This is the method I have used for the last 3 years of teaching. Essential to TBL is developing sound learning objectives, determining assessments for measuring achievement of the learning objectives, and designing activities to help students develop the requisite skills and knowledge needed to achieve the

learning objectives (Sibley & Robinson, 2016). The core activities of TBL are individual and team testing (to ensure sufficient knowledge) and application activities (to practice applying knowledge). Another feature of TBL is allowing students to decide what percentage of their grade comes from individual versus team performance, thereby providing students “choice and control in the process” (Lang, 2013, p. 104). The reader will recognize that the design and structures of TBL are those that will enhance intrinsic motivation, develop meta-cognition, and support deep approaches to learning, all of which should reduce cheating. The explicit alignment of learning objectives to assessments and activities enhances students’ learning motivations. The individual and team testing enhance students’ meta-cognition, and the application activities deepen their approach to learning. Overall, TBL, and arguably problem-based learning, encourages a mastery orientation by enhancing students’ “feeling of competence during action” (Abeysekera & Dawson, 2015, p. 4).

Active and engaged learning pedagogies may not only foster learning-oriented environments, but also serve to improve instruction and students’ perceptions of instruction.

Improving Instruction

Improving instruction is a critical component to the teaching and learning approach because when students perceive instruction to be poor, they are more likely to justify and adopt cheating as an acceptable strategy to accomplish their assigned work (Ashworth, Bannister, & Thorne, 1997; Day et al., 2011; Murdock, Miller, & Goetzinger, 2007; Murdock, Miller, & Kohlhardt, 2004; Pulvers & Diekhoff, 1999-). Second, perceived poor instruction also decreases student motivation to learn (Kember et al., 2008) and decreased motivation can lead to cheating because students doubt their honest efforts will lead to desired outcomes (Ambrose et al., 2010). Students perceive instruction to be poor when learning objectives and activities are misaligned and when the instructor expresses

disinterest in the content, is disorganized, unresponsive to inquiries, or unclear in expectations (Abrantes, Seabra & Lages, 2007; Ambrose et al., 2010; Murdock et al., 2007; Pulvers & Diekhoff, 1999).

Thus, the first thing an instructor can do to improve the perception of good, competent instruction is to simply demonstrate passion and enthusiasm for the content being taught (Ambrose et al., 2010; Ramsden, 1992). Although instructors do not have to be entertainers, they should be positive about teaching, engaged with the material and the students, and sound excited to be teaching the material. Second, an instructor must fulfill the basic organizational duties of a teacher such as proctoring exams, arriving to class on time, grading assessments in a timely and thorough manner, being available during posted times, and clearly explicating expected integrity standards, learning objectives, and assessment instructions (Braxton, 2011; Day et al., 2011; Murdock, Beauchamp, & Hinton, 2008; Pulvers & Diekhoff, 1999). In other words, the instructor must model the very behaviors and attitudes that are expected of the students.

Third, as mentioned earlier, instructors should ensure that learning objectives are aligned with instructional strategies and assessments (Ambrose et al., 2010; Biggs, 1999). In a study of actual cheating on homework, Palazzo et al (2010) found that students who cheated on homework were significantly less likely to reach the learning objectives for the course. Using assessments that are easy to cheat on or only promote surface learning provide false assessments of student abilities and cause a misalignment between learning objectives, assessments and instructional strategies (Ambrose et al., 2010; Biggs, 1999). Even in cases where there is alignment, this alignment should be made explicitly clear to students so that students can easily see how the expectations for completing an assignment will help the class meet the learning objectives (Ambrose et al., 2010; Bertram Gallant, 2008; Biggs, 1999; Day et al., 2011; Ramsden, 1992). For example, many syllabi list learning

objectives in one section, assessments in another, and assessment instructions in yet another location, effectively requiring students to intuit the linkages between them. Instead, instructors could explicitly illustrate how these course aspects are connected by presenting them together in the same section of the syllabus (perhaps in a table) or by listing the learning objectives achieved with the completion of each assessment.

Finally, if educators want students to complete the assessments with integrity, it is not only critical that they clearly explicate how students should complete the assessments (e.g., through individual vs. group work) but why those methods are important. Students must not feel that integrity rules are arbitrary or artificial. Rather, they should easily be able to see that the instructor has clearly thought through the methods that are necessary for achieving the learning objectives.

Leveraging the Teachable Moment

Finally, I introduce a fifth strategy within the teaching and learning approach. When I wrote *Academic Integrity in the Twenty-First Century* (Bertram Gallant, 2008), I had little practical experience in the field. Now, after 10 years of practice and over 5,300 managed cases of suspected cheating, I understand that, despite a teaching and learning approach to academic integrity, cheating will still occur because human beings are known to make bad decisions, even within the best environments (Bazerman & Tenbrunsel, 2011). Thus, the teaching and learning approach must include the strategy of leveraging the cheating moment as a teachable moment. The effective implementation of this strategy requires that instructors reframe their perception that responding to cheating is policing their students rather than educating them. When instructors adopt a policing mindset, it elicits resentment, stress, negative emotions, and adversarial relationships between them and their students (see, for example, Keith-Spiegel, Tabachnick, Whitley, & Washburn, 1998). And

it should be obvious that such a mindset would make a teaching and learning approach to academic integrity virtually impossible.

Instead, the fifth strategy of the teaching and learning approach encourages instructors to see cheating as creating teachable moments because the experience can be transformed into new knowledge (Kolb, 1984). Thus, responding to cheating is educating, not policing. Of course, simply responding to cheating within the classroom may not create such a transformative experience. Rather, facilitated activities must be purposefully structured to allow the student to go through a process of reflecting, thinking, and acting based on their experience (Kolb & Kolb, 2005; Mezirow, 1990). It is through this cycle of learning that experiences are transformed, through reflection, into new ideas for action, which can then be implemented to create new experiences (Kolb & Kolb, 2005).

Without such facilitated activities to transform the cheating experience into knowledge, it is unlikely that students will be able to develop deeper approaches to learning, enhance their intrinsic motivation, or improve their meta-cognitive skills. Students who are caught cheating need assistance to make sense of their experience in a helpful way that will guide their future decision making and actions, otherwise they may simply learn not to get caught or misjudge the causes of their cheating as poor time management (rather than poor meta-cognition). It is not necessary, and may even be inappropriate, for individual instructors to leverage the teachable moment that can come from cheating. Rather, I suggest that institutions have a common seminar or course designed to leverage that learning experience in a common way for all students. At my institution, for example, the majority of students are enrolled in a comprehensive Academic Integrity Seminar in which they are engaged in activities and assessments that guide them through the experiential learning cycle to reach the learning objectives of developing ethical decision making skills, enhancing meta-cognition, and increasing student understanding of academic and professional integrity standards.

Conclusion

Palazzo's team (2010) of physics researchers and teachers offer illustrative proof of the power of seeing academic integrity as a teaching and learning issue. The teacher-researchers had evidence of rampant cheating on student homework. Instead of focusing on fixing the students, the teacher-researchers focused on fixing the teaching and learning environment by altering instruction to create a learning-oriented environment, personalizing instruction and implementing peer instruction. As a result of these efforts, there was a significant reduction in cheating and an increase student mastery of the course material.

The balance between enhancing teaching and learning and reducing cheating is challenging. The teaching and learning approach does not discount all dominant approaches to reducing cheating, like proctoring exams or developing in students their personal and professional integrity, but it does not solely rely on these approaches either. And, some strategies within the teaching and learning approach, like using clickers for peer instruction, could possibly create new forms of cheating. But, at the heart of it, the teaching and learning approach is a positive way forward because it employs strategies that are known to enhance learning, while at the same time reduce cheating. As long as instructors focus on asking "what can I do to ensure learning?" rather than "what can I do to reduce cheating?", they will discover new and invigorating approaches to creating classrooms in which cheating is the exception and academic integrity is the norm.

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Additional Resources

1. The Academic Integrity Standards Project <http://aisp.apfei.edu.au/>
This web site hosts research and materials developed as a result of the Academic Integrity Standards Project in Australia, a project that examined how universities educate and inform students about academic integrity. This web site is useful for institutions (located anywhere in the world) that are beginning to examine how they might create institutional supports for a teaching and learning approach to academic integrity.
2. The International Center for Academic Integrity www.academicintegrity.org
Any institution interested in treating academic integrity as a teaching and learning issue should join the International Center for Academic Integrity (ICAI). ICAI is the leading organization for academic integrity and helps institutions around the world take a teaching and learning approach to academic integrity. Their annual conference is a particularly good opportunity for students, staff and faculty to learn more about the strategies that can help make cheating the exception and integrity the norm.
3. The Team Based Learning Collaborative <http://www.teambasedlearning.org/>
This web site offers faculty members the materials needed to transition from leading passive to active learning environments using team-based learning (TBL). It describes TBL, offers research on the effectiveness of TBL, and numerous teaching resources. This is the only site someone needs to get started with team-based learning.

