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The pursuit of ethical practice in Distance Higher Education assessment in a Business Leadership School

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ABSTRACT

The pursuit for quality in the learning process in Distance Higher Education is ongoing and continually leading to better ways in which to facilitate learning. It is evident in current literature that high-quality learning outcomes can be achieved by giving students in higher education institutions greater control over their own learning and by engaging in reflective inquiry and enhanced critical thinking within a constructivist paradigm. In the era of open access and digital-based information and communication in which we live, a huge challenge facing higher education is the issue of unethical practices by students. Ensuring academic honesty is a major challenge for traditional classroom teaching, but it is even a more pressing problem for online course-work in which students submit for example, individual assignments and projects. How can unethical student practices be eliminated where the use of information technology is manifest for all learning and instruction?

Academically dishonest behaviour in Distance Higher Education (DHE) institutions is on the rise and manifests in various ways including inter-alia, plagiarism in which students use the work of others and which they fail to disclose through acceptable citation methods or even fail to acknowledge. Many find it expedient to cheat and may even stoop to bribery. There are also instances where students fabricate information and falsify what they present as the fruits of their own labours. Whether in assignments or portfolio work, or other such activities and

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assessments online, there are cases in which students either offer, or acquire assistance from other parties in their formal academic activities, falsify information, are guilty of misrepresentation and thus act out-of-line from an ethical and demonstrate that they are devoid of ethical practice. It is thus crucial to integrate academic ethics education in all core programmes so that students and also their lecturers', become conversant with what is expected as an absolute minimum when it comes to academic honesty. Lecturers should also be obligated to immediately report where

cases of dishonest activity are evident in student submissions and stern action should be meted out to guilty parties. A carefully crafted moral education approach and well-conceived course design are needed to construct a sound academic culture and promote integrity.

This article discusses what strategies can be utilised by institutions to minimize common unethical practices and suggests some of the reasons why students opt to be dishonest in the digital era. It also suggests what academics can do to mitigate unethical academic practices in online distance higher education.

Keywords: Ethics, online learning, asynchronous learning, distance higher education (DHE), academic integrity, adult learners

Introduction

As society needs are changing, universities have also transformed their offerings to meet the needs of students and guide them towards a productive life. Within this context, open and distance education has emerged and it is in a constant state of change due to the ever-growing use of communication technologies. Distance education in its many guises of web-based or online delivery has developed as a fundamental educational approach since the 1990s. The current decade is characterized by huge challenges relating to academic honesty and ethical practice. The current literature suggests that there is a great need to seek pedagogical approaches to DHE online teaching that improves the quality of student learning, stimulates the intellectual growth of faculty, and which augments general academic productivity (Bishop, 2003). The contextual factors in which

DHE takes place may encourage student academic dishonesty and this invariably involves policy, administration issues, mal-use of technology and of course poor care on the part of lecturers. Very often, student unethical actions are intuitive and unconscious, and thus ethics requires a strong visible presence. Unethical practice is one of the great global challenges plaguing businesses and the schools from which their leaders emanate. The business school mentioned in the title is significant since it is a business school which contributes immensely to the students' ongoing development as leaders. It educates and empowers the students to acquire knowledge and skills relevant to both regional and global business aspects. In addition, it also stimulates personal reflection and illumination which facilitates understanding of local communities

that may affect and be affected by their leadership.

Definitions applicable (Source: Merriam-Webster's Learner's Dictionary)

Honesty: "the quality of being fair and truthful: the quality of being honest"

Integrity: "firm adherence to a code of especially moral or artistic values"

Ethics: "rules of behaviour based on ideas about what is morally good and bad"

Business schools

Business schools play an important role in contributing to the body of knowledge concerning good practices and processes and also allow their students to build networks and platforms that connect them to others who can mentor them in positive ethical stances and innovative ideas. Business schools that offer DHE programmes must accommodate new ways of learning whether these be in online delivery or short courses. In whatever is offered they need to be taught how to deal with ethical dilemmas in business practices and processes. An important tone-setter is the issue of dealing effectively with the dilemma of academic dishonesty. All aspiring business leaders, whether a mid-level manager or top CEO, must be taught how to deal with ethical issues in a wide range of contexts. Business schools which do not stress ethical practice and which seemingly tolerate academic dishonesty will need to redefine themselves and follow the lead of the highly-accredited schools which have a competitive edge which is promoted by how they drive ethical practices in all endeavours. Business schools which drive ethics create greater value and play a bigger role in society and are thus more sustainable. When DHE providers enforce ethical practice in academic work, they are playing a big role in driving transformation to an ethical business society. Business schools are increasingly recognising the possibilities and advantages of web-based delivery of some if not all of their offerings. DHE is far more cost effective and has the ability to

impact considerably more students and thus society. However, where there are manifestations of academic dishonesty, this may even lead to endemic corruption (Crittenden, Hanna, & Peterson, 2009). Business schools which have a reputation for poor academic honesty promotion will weaken the perceived and actual value of their programmes and this will potentially threaten accreditation status and reduce organizational sustainability.

Distance Higher Education

The internet is certainly a highly technologically practicable platform via which unexploited student populations can be accessed, however, this also poses a number of ethical challenges and dilemmas for students. A review of current literature relating to ethics in student submissions to universities emphasizes the fact that very little research has been conducted in this area when it comes to DHE. Berge and Mrozowski (2001) state that the research that has been undertaken typically concentrates on issues such as the impact of individual technologies on e-learning rather than on the interface between multiple technologies in e-learning. Studies also tended to concentrate on the description of research, its cost-effectiveness, methodologies used to teach and support distance students, and the social context of learning. The DHE context is thus not vigorously interrogated at all. The attainment of ethical education is fundamentally important for DHE providers and the promotion of an academic culture exuding integrity is non-negotiable (Anitha and Harsha, 2013) and this is especially the case in the era of digital education where a myriad of opportunities exist for students to opt for 'an easy way out'. The use of technology in DHE IS self-evident but it has unfortunately also become a major reason for the high prevalence of dishonesty in student submissions (Butakov, Dyagilev and Tskhay, 2012).

Business schools need to enforce standards, especially ethics and academic honesty and when students behave badly, there must be

severe consequences, failing which business itself will not be perceived to be a serious academic and intellectual pursuit. Where there are big ethical breaches, students should be suspended and expelled. This is where universities should not lose their souls and “more schools should be willing to throw people out for bad behaviour. They wouldn’t have to throw too many people out before everyone learned the lesson...the problem starts with the university” (Bisoux, 2016).

Brimble and Stevenson-Clarke (2005) identified three major implications of academic dishonesty on the quality of education. Firstly, academic dishonesty threatens the equity and efficacy of instructional measurement. This means that students’ comparative abilities are not correctly evaluated; Secondly, students who cheat undoubtedly reduce their level of learning so they are ill-prepared for advanced study or application of knowledge. Thirdly, on a societal level, it is probable that students who lack academic integrity will not respect ethics in their future professional roles as business leaders. The credibility of degrees and university credits can also not be ensured where there are unethical practices in assessment. Business schools have a huge capacity to impact society in many different ways, and especially in providing ethical business leaders. They thus need to differentiate themselves in the online marketplace. The world is changing rapidly in many ways that are not conducive to ethics. For example, there are numerous online sites which guide students’ on how to be academically dishonest and not risk being found out (Howell, Sorenson and Tippets, 2009). A socio-technological phenomenon popularly referred to as “the online dis-inhibition effect”, could well be responsible for some other forms of unethical behaviour that digital technologies appear to be facilitating (Suller, 2005) and DHE providers need to be cognisant of this. The fundamental aspect to delivering excellent online education is to provide the same high standards and

commitment to DHE programmes as those offered in the traditional programmes.

If DHE institutions wish to maintain their accreditation they will be required to validate that they have processes in place that will moderate opportunities for students to submit work unethically. While it remains true that ethical or moral values must be inculcated in people from primary school years, so that it indeed becomes a part of the automatic behaviour of an individual, DHE providers need to re-emphasize such values in a higher education context (Watson, 2006). In the South African context, there are those students for example, who were previously disenfranchised and who now seek quality education. There are of course numerous other reasons for students seeking DHE. These include *inter alia* prior denial of opportunity to access quality education, social exclusion due to poverty, poor health, imprisonment or residing in sparsely settled areas, which were remote from a higher education institution (Peters, 1994). Passive learning is not the primary model for business management courses but where there are ‘block release’ sessions with students at the outset of a programme, these offer the DHE institution the opportunity to drive home the notion of academic honesty and ethical conduct in academia and of course set the tone for future studies. These sessions also provide ample opportunity for students to interact with their course lecturers and peers who work collaboratively with them and as such a learning community is forged. Where there is relatively open access to digital-based information and communication for students in higher education institutions, it is not an easy task to promote the notion of moral education and is often a daunting task to foster an academic culture which exudes integrity when academic dishonesty is increasing among students.

Safeguarding academic honesty is in any event a challenge in the traditional classroom context but it is far more pressing a problem for online course where technology use is self-evident to learning and teaching. It seems that the more

technology advances, the more innovative and creative students become in finding electronic avenues to act dishonestly. Literature refers to "Digital cheating is a term used to describe students who find a way to cheat using computer technology. One specific form of digital cheating is "e-cheating" which specifically relates to the use of the World Wide Web to assist with cheating" (Rogers, 2006).

Academic dishonesty is defined as the "intentional participation in deceptive practices regarding one's academic work or the work of another" (Webster, 2015). Academic dishonesty includes any endeavour to misrepresent one's performance in any academic exercise submitted for formal evaluation purposes. Stephens, Young and Calabrese, (2007) ascertained that there is a strong positive association between academic dishonesty practices and the susceptibility of students to rationalize or "neutralize" their responsibility. It is also generally defined and understood as any kind of unprincipled behaviour or action that transpires in relation to a formal academic exercise whether in traditional classes or online. It is indeed an important priority for all educational situations, but it is of major concern where courses are offered by distance education. In such settings, students work relatively independently and have far less monitoring of their actions by an academic. Recent literature supports the notion that there is inconsistency in cheating incidences across various disciplines of study (Sheard, Carbone, & Dick, 2002).

It cannot be acceptable that student success which is devoid of ethics should be accepted (Dixon, 2011). Shils (1981) maintains that the validity of the scientific endeavours by students and academics, is not only focussed on "originality" as perceived from its importance to the scientific tradition, but is also on "conformity" to a scientific ethic code and moral values which have created, upheld, and which are largely practiced by the scientific community. Where there is a shift away from sound academic

traditional values there can no longer be any trust or reliance on the "effectiveness, accuracy, or value of a scientific validity teaching, learning, research, or public service activities". DHE providers need to provide their students with a seamless experience. DHE providers are responsible for upholding scrupulous ethical principles, including respect for all persons, honesty in all endeavours, awareness and respect of cultural diversity, seeking to fulfil the missions of their institutions, the enhancement of both the personal and intellectual development of all persons, and the circumventing of abuses of power and arrogant seniority (Smith, 1996). It is staggering to read that student academic dishonesty and especially plagiarism has been reported in over two-thirds of college students in the United States who have admitted having engaged in cheating at least on one occasion during their studies (Berger & Berger, 1999).

In some European and Asian nations, academic dishonesty is viewed as being "socially acceptable and not ethically wrong" (Grimes, 2004). Given that assignments are fundamental to all academic DHE courses, and there are numerous opportunities to indulge in academic dishonesty such as plagiarism. This is understandable since there is limited monitoring by the lecturer, which is why it is important to try to take students to higher eves of consciousness ethically speaking. In societies where 'the end justifies the means' as a norm, it is difficult to inculcate values promoting academic honesty. There is essentially a very "strong association between beliefs about the frequency of peer academic misconduct and a student's own misconduct" (Hard, Conway, & Moran, 2006).

There is thus a dire need to review the unethical issues which plague DHE given the increasing use of e-learning. The creation of an integrated model for ethical education is required through which academic dishonesty can be eliminated while an academic culture and ethical practices in DHE can be engendered. Where institutions offer DHE the issue of quality assurance of

integrity is becoming more rigorous than ever before, and this is important since the academic culture of any university must essentially be regarded as one which embraces integrity and ethical practice in all areas. Where there is academic integrity all academics and students will invariably acquire knowledge ethically and fairly. They should be trusted to act responsibly and be accountable for their actions. Students need to thus also clearly comprehend the potential impacts on institutions and themselves of any academic dishonesty on their part. Forging an effective academic culture and system which is free of academic dishonesty is critical to institutional sustainability (Baillie and Jortberg, 2009).

The students who partake in DHE programmes for example MBAs at Business Schools, do so for a multiplicity of reasons. For many it is an issue of convenience due to life stage, flexibility, and the autonomous learning conditions which appeal to many who are employed and have family and other commitments. As future business leaders, they are taught that they cannot be only driven by the notion of profits and need to make a positive impact on their communities and become drivers of change. They thus seek education in *inter alia* decision-making skills, how to work effectively in culturally diverse environments, financial skills and how to act ethically. They should be infused in ethical practices during the course of their studies as well so as to set the tone for future practices beyond academia. It is thus important the DHE providers unpack the range of ethical issues that are emerging contiguously to web-based education and to its quality.

The nature and scope of the lack of academic integrity

Academic integrity is obligatory because dishonesty in academic work is first and foremost, morally wrong. There have been a very few instances in which academic integrity has been lacking in cases involving plagiarism, e.g., the failing to acknowledge the use work of other people, and also the submission of

assessment material that is not entirely a student's own work. It has also been ascertained that there has been misrepresentation of a section of group work as being exclusively a student's own individual work. Students could also be guilty of collusion, where they permit another student to gain advantage by copying their work. Unauthorized material has been sighted in assessment. There are many other areas in which academic dishonesty and a lack of integrity are evident and such are elucidated upon below.

Varieties and types of academic dishonesty in DHE

DHE providers must take full advantage of all the benefits of technology and use it to enhance the academic quality and integrity of all their offerings (Adkins, Kenkel and Lim, 2005) but they also need to recognise the negative impacts it may have on their reputations if left unchecked.

Rogers (2006) and Spaulding (2009) assert that there are many varieties and types of academic dishonesty in the online environment. These include *inter alia*, collusion, deception, plagiarism, technology manipulation, and misrepresentation. Academic dishonesty also includes cheating, fabrication of either data or sources or both, facilitating of academic dishonesty, and plagiarism. These will be briefly discussed below.

Plagiarism: Plagiarism is "a burning issue in the education, industry, and research community" (Spafford, 2011). Dietz-Uhler (2011) states that plagiarism comprise of students' copying material usually from the internet, articles, books, interviews, films and television shows. Copying is often done verbatim from any source and it is then submitted by students as their own work. There is no clear acknowledgement of the original source. Thus ideas, words, data and images, charts etc. are used fraudulently without mention of the source/s. The Internet makes it easy to take shortcuts in one's writing. In essence any published and unpublished material, whether in manuscript, printed or electronic form, is enclosed under the definition

of plagiarism. Plagiarism may be intentional or due to thoughtless behaviour, or even unintentional. Plagiarism is a disciplinary offence in almost all universities. It is not only limited to 'cutting and pasting' but also includes the paraphrasing the work others have undertaken by modifying a few words or even the structure of an argument that has been made on a particular theme. Students who use sources need to provide very specific citations to the original sources used and also quotation marks when phrases or sentences are copied directly and fail to do so in some instances passing off work as originating from their own intellectual input. Some students plead ignorance when confronted with the issue of plagiarism in their work, but ignorance is not an excuse since any failure to recognize sources amounts to plagiarism.

Where plagiarism is detected or suspected, using Turnitin for example, the faculty member for a course in which the plagiarism is suspected will usually request a re-submission by the student and may even reduce the student's marks on an assignment in which plagiarism is apparent. Where a research report is the subject of concern, the student will in all probability obtain a failing grade and punitive action may be meted out. Plagiarizing appears to be easier to students where an online course is concerned, and it may in certain cases be less detectable by lecturers, but it remains fraudulent activity and will most probably be detected by a discerning academic.

Researching for example, using the Internet is important as it allows the ideas of published authors to be passed on to students, but the latter should use these ideas honestly so that their knowledge can be assessed accurately (Rogers, 2006). Auto-plagiarism occurs when students submit work for assessment that they have previously submitted, even partially, to meet the requirements of another course or examination that has been conducted. Holden and Westfall, (2010) maintain that the nature of online courses which are primarily text-based,

may be a contributing factor when it comes to academic dishonesty and especially to plagiarism based on the notion that texts are focussed upon which in itself limits participation in learning. Dixon (2011) researched plagiarism in Liberal Arts students and his findings indicate that enlightening students about plagiarism and academic dishonesty helping students to focus on writing style significantly reduces plagiarism.

Cheating: Refers to the attempts by students to use prohibited material, including information, or study aids in their academic formative and summative assessment (FIT, 2010). This is more apparent where no clear guidelines have been offered to students. The students should not use any item, information or study aid without it having being authorized by their lecturer/s. In DHE students may discover ways to duplicate answers from another student with their permission by using technology (Dietz-Uhler, 2011). Cheating also refers to the dissemination or receipt of answers, data, or any other information by any means other than those permitted by lecturer/s to form part of an academic exercise. It is also considered to be cheating when an individual's identity is assumed or when one allows someone else to do their work relating to an academic exercise aimed at enhancing their grade (FIT, 2010).

Collusion: Any unauthorised collaboration between students, or their failure to attribute assistance received by others, is tantamount to collusion. In DHE there are cases of aiding and abetting appears in online tasks and cheating thus manifests from time to time (Stuber-McEwen, Wisel and Hoggatt, 2009). Collusion needs students know each other, and to plot ways in which to cheat. Where there are group assignments it is thus harder to stop collusion since there is greater social interaction. In some cases, students may threaten their fellow students or pay them to coerce them into unethical practices (Howell, Sorenson and Tippets, 2009).

Deception: This type of dishonesty is where a student acts without the involvement of another

party or authorization. For example, copying the work of another student without their permission is considered to be a deceptive practice (Dietz-Uhler and Hurn, 2011). Where a student receives help from any source during an assessment without the permission of the lecturer is also deceptive (Rowe, 2004). Students may also act unethically and pay a fee and use professional agencies in the production of their work and submit material which has been written for them, stating it is their own intellectual property.

Exchanging of information: It is not uncommon for students to utilise technology to share their answers and work with their peers. Assessments are scanned and emailed to others in an instant (Sileo and Sileo, 2010), even during exams. There have been cases where students have communicated with one another using wireless earpieces, cell phones and even iPods (Howell, Sorenson, & Tippets, 2009).

Fabrication: This occurs where students falsify or invent some or all information or data in their academic exercises. Piña (2010) explains the many challenges faced by DHE providers due to the frequency of diploma mills and other unethical conduct.

Failure to acknowledge assistance: Students fail to acknowledge any and all assistance which has contributed to the work they submit.

Inaccurate citation: Students do not always cite correctly, consistent with the standards of the management and leadership discipline. There are cases in which students cite sources they have never seen or they fail to acknowledge a secondary source that cites another source that they use.

Misrepresentation: Students buy papers or projects written by an individual or an online service (Sileo and Sileo, 2008). Others pay another person to take their course or to participate in a task during the course (Smith and Noviello, 2012).

Technology abuse: Students sometimes use technology as an excuse for not completing their tasks and assignments on time. Where there are technological glitches in systems or where new platforms are operationalised these are a fertile breeding ground for some students to act unethically by using the glitches as an excuse for not handing in their assignment. Rowe (2004), states that students have the capacity to crash an Internet connection intentionally or seek loopholes in a system, so as to be in a position to submit their work at a later time, often without the lecturer realising this at all. Students with considerable IT knowledge have been known to hack into systems and access all files submitted into an assignment area (Rowe, 2004).

Why unethical actions?

Gallant and Drinan (2006) maintain that the student academic dishonesty is an adaptive challenge that necessitates learning and the inculcation of desirable ethical attitudes, behaviours and values rather than a technical challenge that can be solved in a mundane manner. Academic dishonesty requires nurturing an awareness of the need to act ethically from primary school years onwards. Academic dishonesty practices are highly a complex system involving many inter-related factors. These factors may from time to time, have common characteristics and influence one another in irregular ways including the individual, social, cultural, and institutional contexts. Bailie and Jortberg (2009), refer to the factors as the "Fraud Triangle" which comprises opportunity, incentive or reward, and rationalization. Opportunity exists where there are poor unethical prevention and control systems and a lack of effective technology to detect the practice of academic dishonesty. Incentive or reward relates to a student's inherent desire and motivation to obtain high percentages for assessments so as to be competitive (Roberts and Hai-Jew, 2009; Vilchez and Thirunarayanan, 2011).

Rationalization relates to a student's individual reasons, predispositions, or even perceptions to

substantiate the academic dishonesty that has occurred or will occur. Interestingly, Chance, Norton, Gino and Arley, (2010), state that there is indeed no evidence to support the notion that students who act unethically and for example, cheat in assessments, are self-deceptive in other areas of their lives. LoSchiavo and Shatz (2011) found that students' perception of the lecturer presence is a feature in the frequency of and determination to engage in academic dishonesty. If students feel that the instructor is 'present' all the way through a course and responsive to their email communications, academic dishonesty is expected to be scarce.

There are students who are caught up in a phenomenon which is referred to as the "psychological distance" (Geerhart, 2001). This is a state in which there are perceived time and place hurdles for students which do not enable them to interact, correspond with or even socialize with others. There is thus very little opportunity for them to meet with or even interact with their lecturer and build up a relationship (Grijalva, Kerkvliet and Nowell, 2013). It has been ascertained by Lunt, as early as 1993 that the institutional ethos and the environment in which students find themselves have an important bearing on teaching and learning. Where students have the ability to explore the affective aspects in their learning experience, there is an invariable chance to grow and develop in a manner which is transformative. When online learners find that they are not in touch with their lecturer due to the latter's failure to offer feedback, or effective guidance relating to ethical practices in academic work, they may begin to feel insecure and even anxious and this is problematic as they may resort to desperate and even unethical measures to complete work (Lee, 2000). Thus, in some cases ethical problems arise at the level of a course where the policy of a DHE institution is not adhered to and enforced adequately by academic employees. Young (2010) says that students seek new ways to cheat when working online and that some professors fight unethical student practices

'tooth and nail', others simply tend to look the other way when this is evident. What he says is disturbing is the fact that students' moral values and ethical codes are changing rapidly for the worse. Students also do not always understand that what they are doing may be unethical (McCabe, Butterfield, & Trevino, 2012).

When students are enrolled and English is not their first language, the temptation to plagiarize is greater. Some students engage in dishonest practices as they have procrastinated due to poor study planning skills and thus run out of time to conduct their work honestly, or they are too busy with other things. Some argue that they have not been given enough time to complete an assignment, project or study for a test which is generally also untrue (McGee, 2013). The world has become increasingly competitive and there is thus greater pressure on students to achieve top grades and this makes unethical practice enticing to some (Faucher and Caves, 2009; Roberts and Hai-Jew, 2009). Many study via DHE as they are employed and may be sponsored to study and thus need to achieve excellent grades to satisfy their sponsor/s. Some fear that the loss of time and money will be a source of ridicule by others and others fear failure and its resulting stigma (Eshet et al., 2012). Chiesl (2009) identified pressure from parents to do well as a source of unethical practice in academic work. Chiesl, in his 2009 article, *Pragmatic Methods to reduce dishonesty in web-based courses*, refers to comprehensive cheating studies as far back as the 1960's prior to the advent of DHE and stresses that unethical practices continue to grow in prevalence even in the case of fulltime students on campuses. He accentuates the fact that it is far simpler for students to cheat in online classes. Foster (2008) states that academic dishonesty is a major issue in DHE and provides examples of students cheating by having others stand in for them when an exam is written.

Faculty members are also not fully engaged and not doing enough in many cases, to prevent academic misconduct and promote academic

honesty. Hauptman speaks of “a growing ethical deficit” in which faculty malfeasance includes a range of poor behaviors...they masquerade as something they are not; they dissimulate; they distort their credentials; they accept bribes; they steal; they plagiarize; they fabricate; and they fudge, cook, trim, republish, and destroy their data” (Hauptman, 2002). Sharma (2004) in a study in India identified certain problem areas in DHE which promoted unethical student practices. These included poor Student Support Services (Poor administration, admission processes, eligibility criteria, poor academic counselling, wrong medium of instruction); lack of effective collaboration (lack of Learner Support Centres and poor selection processes); lack of credibility (employability versus continuing education); duplication of efforts (poor material production, poor launching of programmes without needed care, poor course development); Ineffective provision of intersystem student credit transfers; lack of expertise (poor academic and administrative activities, lack of resources, lack of research, and not knowing who should be doing what in an institution). Dee and Jacob (2010) suggest that students are ignorant concerning academic dishonesty and do not understand academic dishonesty or downplay the value of ethical conduct.

There is a multiplicity of Individual factors which lead to academic dishonesty. It is often the case that there are instances of failure to meet academic integrity standards based on ignorance and lack of understanding rather than on blatant dishonesty. Contrived cheating has been found to much higher amongst members of an academic fraternity (Stannard and Bowers, 1970). McCabe, Treviño and Butterfield (2001) found that male students tend to cheat more than female students and that students with lower grades, irrespective of sex, cheat more than higher achievers. Where there are lower-achieving students who also identify more closely with the institution, they tend to engage in less academic dishonesty. Conversely,

students who are higher achievers but who have lower levels of academic self-efficacy, have a higher predisposition to engage in unethical practices and academic dishonesty (Finn and Frone, 2004). Students are also more likely to cheat when they perceive that their peers are unethical and never get caught whereas when institutions have codes of ethics in place, academic dishonesty is far less in evidence (McCabe, Treviño and Butterfield, 2002). When students have a motivation to learn and the requisite skills to complete academic work honestly, there are lower rates of academic dishonesty (Rettinger, Jordan and Peschiera, 2004). When students feel a closer integration with their DHE provider they are less likely to be academically dishonest.

Socio-cultural factors are also directly related to the incidence of academic dishonesty in online higher education environments. Students perceive the gap between them and the institution to be a chasm so that an act of academic dishonesty is acceptable. This is why it is critical to seek to reduce this gap as academic dishonesty will then be reduced (Rowe, 2004). Moore (2007) in his Theory of Transactional Distance in Online Courses states that transactional distance is “a psychological and communications gap, a space of potential misunderstanding between the inputs of instructor and those of the learner” created in part by the physical distance inherent to DHE online learning (Moore, 1991). He suggests that when students are far removed from the lecturer this leads to greater academic dishonesty. It thus appears that a greater online presence in DHE courses may lessen the frequencies of academic dishonesty. It is equally important to bolster higher achieving students in their sense of self-worth. In DHE there is a large transactional distance, for example in asynchronous, text-based, online learning environments, and this may be contributing to students’ feelings of remoteness and disengagement, and lack of self-worth which

may lead to reduced levels of student motivation and ultimately attrition.

When designing their e-learning experiences, lecturers need to consider two variables that affect transactional distance which are namely the structure of a course and the dialogue which exists between DHE provider and the student. Structure refers to the flexibility or rigidity inherent in a course and the instructional methods and strategies used. Dialogue refers to the interaction between the lecturers and students during the DHE online learning experience.

Institutional factors such as, for example, whether or not the DHE provider enforces institutional policies relating to ethics in academic work and drives the notion of an effective integrity system also affects the student's mind-set (Spaulding, 2009). The persistence of academic dishonesty can be ameliorated by dedicated efforts to teach ethical practice in research during the offering of a research module with further inculcation of ethical values in a compulsory ethics module and additional promotion of ethics in all other course offerings in a creatively crafted constructivist model. Lecturers must offer a range of assessments in which genuine ethical learning manifests.

In a study in the United States, the US Government Accountability Office (GOA) conducted a covert investigation and enrolled conjured up students in a number of DHE programmes to ascertain which policy areas were being dishonoured, as well as academic dishonesty (Hillman, 2011). Of the fifteen institutions investigated, only nine dealt with the issue of academic dishonesty in terms of the established policies. Unethical students were simply not dealt with adequately or at all and even plagiarism was not acknowledged. It is imperative that DHE continuously maintain a presence in the students' academic lives and seek to inculcate ethical academic practices. In this regard, online lecturers must improve student learning experiences by driving 'deep'

and not only 'surface' learning experiences. The students must be encouraged to engage in reflective practice while being provided with carefully crafted guidelines in how to avoid unethical practice and all its vices. Their learning must be enhanced by vigorous efforts to explain the ethical manner in which to conduct, for example, assignments and research projects. It is evident that human behaviour is by and large also learned through the influence, example and observing of other people's behaviour and what the consequences may be for them in similar settings (Bandura, 1986).

Dietz-Uhler and Hurn, (2011), ascertained that a number of aspects including peer influence and the fear of non-acceptability, perceived support from their peers, positive attitudes about dishonesty, and the apparent social norms around academic dishonesty, and even familial and occupation circumstances may induce students to be unethical in their academic endeavours. Such aspects make it harder to inculcate an ethical ethos in DHE (Gallant and Drinan, 2006). The attitudes of lecturers towards unethical practice by students are also important and the manner in which they tackle unethical issues must be consistent and sanctions should be meted out formally to offenders. Where these aspects are not in evidence, there is a perception created that unethical practice is only a 'low-risk' issue (Kelley & Bonner, 2005).

When students in an MBA or similar programme are empowered as to what academic dishonesty involves in a specific learning context, and are invigorated to study citation standards and methodologies and to apply these to their submissions, they will be real scholars. Student support from the lecturer will diminish the enticement to be dishonest since students can actually be fortified to acquire the needed knowledge, skills, and above all ethical professional attitudes that are expected of managers and leaders. Coalter, Lim and Wanori, (2007) assert that some academics do not consider academic dishonesty to be too serious, while Dryer (2010) states that some lecturers are

just too lazy or overburdened to police student work. While it is argued that high-quality learning outcomes are achievable via greater student control over their own learning, it is still important to drive home the notion of ethical practice by teaching the underpinning conceptual framework. If lecturers carefully create their courses, they can easily encourage a culture of ethical behaviour while making cheating and plagiarism repellent. This should be supported by mechanisms which making unethical practice virtually impossible to get away with. If there are greater requirements for accountability by students, these will give an opportunity to lecturers who design online courses to build in strategies that can deal with the disquiet resulting from most forms of academic dishonesty.

When engaged in developing online courses faculty should seek to transform instruction, by carefully contemplating both the opportunities and the limitations provided by the digital environment (Shea, Pelz, Fredericksen, and Pickett, 2002). Student learning must be maximized while nurturing a community of students who work individually and also in peer-groups.

Setting ethical standards for DHE

Bombaro and Mitchell (2012) ascertained that when students are given well thought out guidelines and valuable information concerning issues of academic integrity, academic dishonesty diminishes. The setting of ethical standards for academic work by students is important as it sets the tone for their work and coherently communicates what their behaviour and attitude should be to DHE. If students are to make the correct choice when faced with moral dilemmas such as for example, plagiarising or cheating, they should be able to turn to a code of ethics which can guide and even encourage them to act ethically as is the case for all educators (Campbell, 2001). Faculty need to develop methodologies and styles that engross students and make them mainly responsible for achieving the learning goals. Faculty should thus

seek to implement active learning methodologies and challenge students individually and in a group context, by using case-studies, problem-based learning, group projects and even simulations.

A carefully considered code of ethics would be adhered to by all DHE students if their sense of dignity, self-esteem and integrity are enthused by it and the way in which it is made available to them. The code should systematically improve student performance by educating and guiding them to achieve lawful and appropriate individual academic goals. It will assist them to make informed decisions and experience a sense of true accomplishment. The academic decisions they will make will be based on both morally and ethically acceptable stances regarding their academic work. It is not an easy task for lecturers in online environments to always effectively

determine or evaluate students' characters when assessing their work. This is why it becomes important to seek to comprehend what students are likely to do or not do which requires discernment. Where one can discern likely actions of a student or group of students, it is incumbent on the lecturer to design and implement well thought out assessments for a course that is offered. Where the lecturer has articulated the desired behaviours via a code of ethics and reminded students of the consequences (Gibson, Blackwell, Greenwood, Mobley and Blackwell, 2006) of their actions, and also their responsibilities as students, they will be hard pressed to be able to plead ignorance. Any code which students receive needs to clearly state student responsibilities and needs to be enforced.

Total integrity involves a steady adherence to a determined set of values. When for example, plagiarism is evident, the assessment in question should be re-written so as to educate and hold students accountable for their misdemeanours (Sileo and Sileo, 2008). If however, students have been taught about plagiarism, they should be given a fail grade

since unethical conduct is inexcusable. In an academic context, honesty with respect to the student's intellectual efforts is a non-negotiable requirement. Rungtusanatham, Ellram, Siferd, and Salik (2004), state that "question of how courses and degree programs should be designed for effective delivery via the Internet is a nontrivial concern and challenge". Academic integrity is anticipated in all formal coursework as well as in all University relationships and use of resources. When a student submits work for formal assessment, it is a given that the work must be the student's own. Consequently, all external assistance must be acknowledged. A student should in no way seek to misrepresent submitted work as academic integrity is inviolable. There are instances where students knowingly represent the work of others as their own or are guilty of any violation as explained earlier in this article. DHE institutions must impose harsh penalties for any misconduct in academic work submissions. It must however be made clear to students that using computers and the Internet in no way releases them from the normal requirements of ethical behaviour expected of students in any setting.

DHE Institutions which endeavour to promote and apply codes of ethics relating especially to academic work, have lower rates of academic dishonesty (Gibson, Blackwell, Greenwood, Mobley, & Blackwell, 2006). This clearly supports the notion that where institutional level strategies are applied, these can be highly effective. It is thus also essential to Integrate ethics education and the code of ethics into the core programme, so that all students understand the requirements. This could be further discussed during orientation days. Where there has been an effort to communicate the importance of academic honesty in online courses, it has been proven to lessen cases of misconduct. In institutions' which stress codes of ethics, students tend to report a greatly reduced amount of cheating than do students in institutions without these codes (Gibson, Blackwell, Greenwood, Mobley, & Blackwell,

2006). Where there is a strong highlighting on principles and codes of ethics in various characteristics in DHE such as those relating to issues highlighted earlier and also student-lecturer relationship, research ethics issues and instructional design, academic dishonesty is lessened.

Constructivism and academic dishonesty

Constructivism suggests that students construct their own understanding and knowledge of the world via their experiences and they reflect on the experiences. What is learned is appraised by reconciling it with past experiences and notions. Students thus actively engage in creating their own knowledge. Where there are teaching assessments and other processes that promote unethical practices students begin to accept these as the norm and thus the stage is set for unethical practices in one's work-life. Lecturers need to inspire their students and challenge them to constantly assess the ethicality of what they are doing and thus gain greater understanding of what is right and wrong. The quality and quantity of the students' exchanges with their peers and faculty in academic and activities is an important factor nurturing student engagement, and it is a powerful predictor of ultimate student success.

Students require knowledge and the tools to learn and reflect on what they do. Constructivism does not in any way dismiss a lively on-line role by the lecturers in DHE or the value of their expert knowledge. However, it does to an extent transform their role, so that they are able to guide and mentor their students to construct ethical knowledge rather than 'cut and paste' information and merely reproduce a succession of facts. Lecturers must make students accountable for their work and clearly show support for submissions which display efforts to work with integrity and in which responsible behaviour is evident. In DHE where student behaviour is not easily witnessed, establishing accountability must be creatively built into programme and course requirements. The use of various types of assessment, both individual

and group-work based must reflect the consequences of academic dishonesty. This is where problem-solving and inquiry-based learning activities with which lecturers can articulate and test their students' understanding and knowledge become critical. It is incumbent on the lecturer to transform the student from a passive recipient of knowledge and information to a vibrant and active participant in the learning process. This process also calls on the lecturer to teach the importance and methodology of ethical academic work. It is a good idea for the lecturer to guide students and to aid them arrive at their own understanding on various topics by means of formulating their own questions in an inquiry based approach. In DHE learning, it is especially important to permit multiple interpretations and expressions of learning, however what a student articulates should be based on only ethical research.

Activities in assignments should also create space for the student to reflect on his or her prior knowledge and learning experiences. Given that students learn about learning not only from themselves, but also from their peers, collaborative tasks are imperative. It is indispensable that DHE courses be developed to allow student-to-student collaboration and student-to-faculty interaction on especially the academic level. We need to bear in mind that DHE learners are in essence a "community of learners", "virtual learning communities" and / or "communities of inquiry". It is important to note that building and then sustaining a community of learners in online classes is indeed a difficult task. Courses must be thus designed so that students can contribute to the budding knowledge base of the group, while developing underlying social networks within their course (Scardamalia and Bereiter, 2006). In for example, a Business management course, such learning also teaches important managerial skills. Students that are accepted for programmes such as Postgraduate Diplomas, MBAs or MBLs, for example, already have formulated knowledge, ideas, and

understandings and it is from such prior knowledge that their new knowledge is created. One should not assume however, that ethical research practices have been taught adequately in the past. When teaching complex, managerial issues in for example, a PGD, MBA or MBL merely posting lecture notes is insufficient, when viewed with a best practice lens. Forums, chats, useful power-point presentations, lecturer emailing and asynchronous discussion boards must be utilized to expedite the desired learning goals and objectives. By actively engaging the students' participation in decision making and taking responsibility for their own learning in DHE, deeper learning is supported (Carmean and Haefner, 2002). The provision of study schools of limited scope, as practiced by the UNISA Graduate School of Business Leadership, also help students to come to grips with course material and solve real-world problems. Where group work is utilised in these study schools, students are able to present solutions to relevant case studies posed by lecturers as a team player, which is in itself an invaluable experience. Students are able to meet personally with business executives and managers from not only South Africa but from the whole of Africa. In such encounters, collaborative relationships are fostered with their peers.

Chickering and Gamson, (1987) proposed a number of organizing principles for online developers and instructors thirty years ago, that still apply today. These comprise the establishing of clear goals and expectations for students with recurrent opportunities for their active learning and relatively frequent and beneficial feedback to them. There should especially be flexibility and choice for students to fulfil course objectives. They also stressed lecturer guidance and support in all academic matters. DHE course presenters need to foster a culture of openness as this will help in the facilitation of an ethos of integrity and honesty which will promote academic honesty. When online students invest ethically in their own

success, they also invest in the success of the programme they are taking.

Further possible steps

Garrison (2003) speaks of three structural elements of a 'community of inquiry'. The first element is a cognitive presence which transpires when critical reflection and dialogue are stimulated. This is why courses need to promote reflective inquiry and self-directed learning initiatives. The second element is a social presence, which manifests once students feel a personal and emotional link with the subject matter, their collaborators in group work and their lecturer. The third element manifests once the lecturer creates and maintains the 'community of inquiry' by careful course design using for example, forums and chat rooms in which they orchestrate instruction (Shea, Fredericksen, Pickett, and Pelz, 2002). This notion is further supported by Garrison (2003) who stresses that there must be an appropriate balance and careful integration of the three elements in order for effective learning to result. Effort needs to be made to prevent unethical conduct and maintain ethical conduct in DHE. In this regard the use of automated detection tools or devices such as for example, banning or controlling the use of certain electronic devices, using cheat-resistant laptops, computer-adaptive testing and randomized testing, may all help to reduce academic dishonesty (Howell et al., 2009).

Various types of detection devices are used to stop academic dishonesty. These include *inter alia* Plagiarism Detection Services (PDS) to check submitted digital artefacts without any real effort by either the lecturer or the student (Butakov et al., 2012); Text originality check systems (TOCS) such as Turnitin, GenuineText, and Urkund which are fully automated (Appelgren et al., 2012). There is for example complete integration between Urkund and Sakai which is invaluable for DHE providers as existing learning platforms are easily accessible for plagiarism detection.

GenuineText allows a lecturer to set the status for each report to either approved, doubtful, or not approved status concerning plagiarism. Turnitin provides feedback to students on their use of source materials as it has a huge content comparison database. It also highlights original writing and proper citation (Turnitin, 2011). Once institutions adopt Turnitin Feedback Studio, the amount of unoriginal work decreases by 33%, and students are challenged to think more critically about what they are doing. Another good plagiarism checker is SafeAssign which is a popular prevention tool that detects matches between students' submitted assignments and existing works of others. Such works may be found on a number of databases including *inter alia* ProQuest. SafeAssign can also be used to guide students to identify how to attribute sources correctly rather than paraphrasing without citation of original sources. There are also numerous free Plagiarism detection tools on the internet worth investigating including, DupliChecker, CopyLeaks, PaperRater, Plagiarisma, PlagiarismChecker, Plagium, PlagScan, PlagTracker, Quetext and Viper.

In some DHE institutions in South Africa, students are required to put their submission through Turnitin prior to submission and the report which results needs to be included in the submission. If the percentage or type of commonality of their work with that of others is considered high, they are obliged to resubmit or may even fail outright. Electronic Assessment Management (EAM) which streamlines plagiarism detection and prevention is largely used by DHE providers (Ellis, 2012). When assignments and projects are submitted for evaluation Turnitin, Altavista, and/or Google search engines can thus be utilised for the submissions originality check and subsequent marking (Baggaley, 2012). These tools cannot detect whether or not someone other than the student composed a submission, they provide a competent system for detecting indicators and evidence of material that is plagiarized. DHE

providers could also block certain types of Web content which in no way supports academic.

Various DHE institutions offer plagiarism detection software as stated above, as a deterrent and as a tool to identify plagiarism. Badge and Scott (2009) investigated such detection systems and concluded that they are far from perfect and that very often innocent students are penalised while electronic experts escape detection. It is especially imperfect when students are stereotyped on culture and race, especially those from non-Western cultures who are at a disadvantage from the outset, without consideration of their possible prior deprived socio-economic status. In DHE, there are certain sites which tend to generate enormous volumes of web traffic that invariably congests the Internet for students and staff (Brey, 2006). By speaking to incidences of academic dishonesty in an open and direct fashion, the lecturer will be setting expected norms from the outset (Gibson, Blackwell, Greenwood, Mobley, & Blackwell, 2006), and if students are part of the conversation from the start of a course, they are far more likely to espouse the anticipated behaviours. Technology should be more effectively harnessed so as to provide greater opportunities for academic dishonesty to be isolated and punished. Numerous DHE providers are paying out fortunes and making use of computer-adaptive testing and randomized testing which is obtainable through textbook publishers as it is believed that this can remove the encumbrance of omission on the part of the lecturer (Howell, Sorenson and Tippets, 2009). It should be stressed that such arrangements are in no way full-proof either.

Fifty practical recommendations to mitigate academic dishonesty

A series of recommendations based on current best-practices in DHE and aimed at the reduction of academic dishonesty are worthy of consideration and briefly highlighted below for consideration:

1. Set the tone for ethical behaviour by explaining the expectations concerning academic honesty to students and further re-inforce and inculcate the desired behaviours via the learning module and additional information by emails and in venue based study school sessions.
2. Clarify in the mind of students what academic integrity and academic dishonesty include.
3. Consider the fact that students emanate from culturally and educationally diverse backgrounds and may thus have diverse ideas as to what academic honesty entails.
4. Set a short multiple choice assessment in which students can demonstrate that they have a full and comprehensive understanding what academic dishonesty entails.
5. Explain in detail the implications of, and penalties for academic dishonesty in submission of academic work.
6. Provide examples of academic dishonesty and explain why academic and professional dishonesty is immoral and illegal.
7. Utilize pedagogical keys which suggest strategies to prevent academic dishonesty through thoughtfully designed individual and group assignments and other activities.
8. Encourage learner engagement and seek ways to boost their self-awareness and self-efficacy
9. Create an online environment in which students experience a nurturing and just environment that helps them to grow as ethical, moral, and professional people.
10. Consider software that does not allow students to have more than one browser window open at any one time when conducting tests online since this has been proven to decrease academic dishonesty.
11. Obtain effective confirmation of a test-taker's identity.
12. Webcams, biometrics such as fingerprint scans, optic retinal, palm vein scanning, face recognition, or keystroke pattern analysis may be used in some cases so as to empower the lecturer to 'see' who is

- actually taking a test (Howell, Sorensen, & Tippets, 2009).
13. Carefully consider course content (depth of knowledge), delivery of course (i.e. student-faculty interactions), and desired learning (i.e. scope and speed of student learning).
 14. Crafting of assessments with the minimization of academic dishonesty in mind.
 15. Also make use of performance assessments rather than only objective tests to reduce the opportunities for academic dishonesty.
 16. Administration of arbitrary tests using social media tools such as text messages (Sileo & Sileo, 2008).
 17. Set questions which require application of knowledge and not a mere regurgitation of facts.
 18. Create a Forum Discussion Board assignment that requires students to exhibit critical thinking skills by responding to a series of relevant topics.
 19. Make extensive use of open book assessments with questions at higher levels of Bloom's Taxonomy, in which students need to answer questions requiring reasoning, analysis, evidence and sound argumentation.
 20. Use true or false, matching items and multiple choice questions for only low mark assessments.
 21. Use rote-memory questions only when evaluating the pace of a course and identifying students who have not mastered the content.
 22. Provide opportunities for students to reflect on their learning.
 23. Where possible allow peer assessment for students working in groups for assessments of moderate value.
 24. Group assignments should be created that require students to interact with all other group members on a regular basis.
 25. Hold groups responsible for defining the functional roles for group members, and establishing a mechanism for individual accountability.
 26. Advise group members that they may be required to describe how every group members' contribution supports the entire group assignment.
 27. Carefully align the type of assessment with the sought instructional objectives.
 28. Allow students to relate their personal experience or even current events when responding to questions.
 29. Avoid suspicion of academic dishonesty based on racial or any other stereotypes.
 30. Apply the academic standards equitably, transparently, and consider due process.
 31. Allow students some space to make reasonable mistakes from which they can learn.
 32. Take care not to infringe upon student privacy and their rights.
 33. Students who have concerns about academic dishonesty should be able to discuss these with their lecturer/s.
 34. Regularly compare student responses. Where answers are very similar investigate further.
 35. Record all communications with individual students that relate to academic dishonesty issues.
 36. Consider using assessments which require students to use distinctive information and reasoning are more appealing and tougher to manufacture.
 37. Use open-ended assessments which oblige students to work at higher levels of thinking promoting deep-learning, and understanding that not only one answer may be correct.
 38. Craft assessments which allow for 'scaffolded' learning by using questions which build on prior course work.
 39. Do not re-assess work that has already been assessed.

40. Revise assessments on a regular basis and change items assessed by at least two-thirds of the items for every course.
41. Only make assessments available on the day they are due, not before or after.
42. Where a student has a valid excuse for not having written an assessment, such as death in the family or illness that can be verified, provide a different version of an assessment.
43. Build a test item bank and set at least two tests per assessment period.
44. Time limits of assessment completion must be adhered to and cut-off times must be enforced.
45. Assign a password per group of students to assessments and send this out to the relevant group just before an assessment is released.
46. Use plagiarism detection tools and make these mandatory for students to use after which a report must be submitted along with the assessment in question.
47. Make use of assessments that are formative and which build the learning rather than only summative which are aimed primarily at assessing the learning.
48. Craft assignments that require students as individual or in groups, to apply essential course concepts to a relevant problem. This obliges them to seek out further relevant information beyond the prescribed books and articles and cite sources.
49. Don't allow students to feel alienated from the system. Let students know that they are respected.
50. Use students' first names in emails and online fora, as research suggests this may have a beneficial side effect of reducing academic dishonesty.

Conclusion

When it comes to existing DHE programmes there is a deficiency when it comes to effectively driving the notion that academic dishonesty is

not acceptable, and thus quality may be compromised. The ethical underpinning of academic integrity is essential in all education and especially in business education for current and future leaders and managers. Lecturers should not make the mistake of assuming that academic integrity issues are well understood by postgraduate students. The bottom line is that many are honestly unaware of what academic dishonesty entails. Given that students come from diverse cultural socio-economic and cultural backgrounds, it is critical to stress what academic honesty entails. It is imperative that an ethos of integrity and moral behaviour is exuded in the atmosphere in which DHE operates. Consequently, it is essential to have a common understanding between the lecturers and students as to the principled underpinnings of academic integrity. The creation of a sound ethical relationship between the institution, lecturer and student and how they operate is essential. Best practices and established standards that assure academic quality, and which comply with accrediting bodies' needs, must be vigorously pursued. Time management would be a good aspect to teach as students often plagiarise due to generally self-inflicted time constraints. Students need to be made to realize that academic misconduct can utterly jeopardise their academic careers and their futures. The literature suggests that business schools should seek to intensify academic honesty initiatives in DHE programmes and courses.

If students are to have truly worthwhile learning experiences and ultimately benefit society, they need to recognise the importance of academic honesty which is a fundamentally important aspect of business management and leadership education. Clear institutional policies and procedures are needed and should be clearly and simply explained to students if there is to be a quality transformation in DHE. It is critical that Business Schools and their faculty self-reflect and challenge their current teaching roles and what they impart to students. Carefully crafted

strategies are required to address academic dishonesty. Lecturers need to be *au fait* with all aspects relating to academic honesty as well as to the various processes and procedures to follow where breaches are uncovered. Whereas students are becoming more responsible for their own learning, lecturers also need to assume greater responsibility for how they guide students towards producing ethically sound assessments. This also means that the academic is required to maintain authority in the DHE environment, and strive to promote and safeguard professional ethics.

Faculty and administrators alike must be provided with guidelines and possible interventions for addressing academic dishonesty as it manifests. Effective faculty training will lead to better-quality student behaviour and this invariably enhances the academic milieu. Course construction and content must be cognisant of academic dishonesty likelihood. Good practices must be shared with fellow lecturers during programme planning and course development and institutional policies and procedures must be effectively utilized. Where required, ethics breaches must be penalized so that the accreditation of learning is not threatened. Ideally, academic writing, research and citation skills must be taught to students before they enter a postgraduate programme. The scholarly role of the approach taken to research activities, problem solving and the paradigm of constructivism must be stressed at every available opportunity. The assessment criteria of courses should value and reward the required work in all its phases and not only the results thereof. Lecturers must be explicit about what they expect from their students and develop student skills by providing them with opportunities for example, to practice research citation methods. Students should be guided to produce work that requires creativity, inquiry and problem solving in real world examples. Effective guidance by the lecturer and online discussion are imperative in the fight to mitigate academic

dishonesty. All the actions of a lecturer in this regard must be consistent and integrated and based on best practices. Cases of cheating must be meticulously managed according to the policies of DHEs.

The range of assessment types used in DHE must also be carefully considered by lecturers and they need to understand why and how students practice academic dishonesty. They then need to develop strategies to mitigate cheating and plagiarism. Students must be empowered to act ethically. It is not always advisable that some courses developed at the master's level which for example, require greater conceptual philosophical underpinning be should be team driven, but rather individual faculty-driven as it is often the case that students obtain conflicting guidance on what is important and how one should approach a philosophy. High levels of interaction should exist between students and their peers and also with their lecturer/s. The delivery of services to DHE students must be re-evaluated and fine-tuned so that all students have access to the same information and resources to guide them in for example research work.

It is the responsibility of the DHE provider to provide even-handed services to all students. In this regard, it is vital that students sign that they understand a code of ethics and its principles and expected standards of behaviour. It is the students' responsibility to understand that academic honesty embodies the principle that the work submitted by them for assessment is always original and authentic. A well-considered code of ethics must inspire students to act in an ethical manner at all times. Such a code would also provide the consistency among individual courses that can contribute to overall diminished academic dishonesty and enhanced programme quality. Collaboration among business lecturers from different institutions could produce strategies which are suitably custom-made to the needs of business students. The methods used to teach DHE programmes should make more effective use of online learning platforms'

which support ethical academic submissions by students. Where there is unchecked academic dishonesty in education this can manifest in dishonesty in the workplace. There is no doubt

that academic dishonesty by students undermines the veracity of the entire DHE institution, and where publicized does not bode well for sustainability.

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