Investigating Academic Integrity in the Werklund School of Education: Process, Policy and Perceptions

Sarah Elaine Eaton, Cristina Fernández Conde, Stefan Rothschuh, Melanie Guglielmin, Benedict Kojo Otoo, Jenny Wilson, & Ian Burns

Abstract

Academic dishonesty continues to present a major problem in higher education (Altbach, 2015; Colella-Sandercock & Alahmadi, 2015; Leonard, Schwieder, Buhler, Beaubien Bennett & Royster, 2015). Using a qualitative research design, this one-year study investigated how instructors, teaching assistants (TA's) and administrators perceive and act upon cases of plagiarism or in the Werklund School of Education (WSE), University of Calgary.

Research Design

The WSE "Process for Reporting and Responding to Plagiarism" was used as a tool to engage participants in focus groups and interviews to facilitate dialogue on the topic of academic integrity. Seventeen participants including faculty members (n=13) and administrators (n=4) participated in the study. Data were collected during 4 focus groups and 7 individual interviews, resulting in 203 pages (51,940 words) in transcripts. Data analysis was conducted using NVivo.

Findings

Results showed a focus on plagiarism, with less emphasis on cheating or other issues related to academic integrity. Participants' definitions of plagiarism focused on ethical or moral approaches, as well as procedural approaches.

Additional themes that emerged from the study included:
(a) Formal and informal supports available to help faculty address plagiarism,
(b) cultural aspects related to plagiarism, and
(c) how instructional staff understand their role in building a culture of academic integrity in the WSE.
Results point to the need for further educational development for academic staff.

Fig. 1 Word cloud results of NVivo data analysis showing participants' definition of plagiarism.

Publications/Presentations

Eaton, S. E. (2017). Comparative Analysis of Institutional Policy Definitions of Plagiarism: A Pan-Canadian University Study. *Interchange: A Quarterly Review of Education, 48*(3), 271-281. doi:10.1007/s10780-017-9300-7

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Eaton, S. E., Rothschuh, S., Fernández Conde, C., Guglielmin, M., Otoo, B. K., Wilson, J., & Burns, I. (2018). *Understanding faculty perceptions and approaches to academic integrity in a Canadian school of education*. Paper presented at the 25th Annual International Center for Academic Integrity Conference, Richmond, VA.

UNIVERSITY OF CALGARY

Front row (L to R): S. Eaton, J. Wilson
Back row (L to R): M. Guglielmin, B. Otoo, I. Burns

C. Fernández Conde

S. Rothschuh