

# THE NATURE, CAUSES, AND PRACTICES OF ACADEMIC DISHONESTY IN E-LEARNING SYSTEM: THE CASE OF UNIVERSITAS TERBUKA

**Daniel Pasaribu<sup>1</sup>**

<sup>1</sup>*Universitas Terbuka (INDONESIA)*

## **Abstract**

In recent times, e-learning has become an integral part of the educational process in universities, and it is used in all forms of education particularly since the outbreak of the pandemic covid-19. The aim of the study was to investigate the nature, causes, and practices of academic dishonesty in the e-learning system at Universitas Terbuka from the teacher's and learners' perceptions and observations of student academic performance in the e-learning portal. The study was basically a survey that employed both qualitative and quantitative approaches and observation of student academic performance in e-learning to gather data. The subjects were 3 teachers and 100 students who were selected randomly from three study programs namely government science, business administration, and taxation. The result found that academic dishonesty specifically related to plagiarism in discussion and assignments are prevalent. The practices were caused by a lack of academic writing understanding, less reading motivation, and preferring shortcut ways. In addition, to curb the challenges faced in the learning process, teachers took strategy to student awareness by giving them a strict academic writing rule and an opportunity to correct their answers.

Keywords: academic dishonesty, e-learning, academic performance, study programs

## **1 INTRODUCTION**

The system of higher education continuously changes, therefore, there is a requirement for the creation of new methods of training (Kalmykova, Pustyl'nik, & Razinkina, 2017). One of the world's leading trends aimed at solving the contradictions between the developing information culture and the traditional way of human education is the transition to lifelong learning, which forms the basis of the information society. Nowadays e-learning is becoming an essential part of higher education and it's applied in all forms of learning. It is not just about technological changes, the whole system of the educational process, formed over the centuries, is changing.

In the information era, the features of the personality formation conditions are determined not only by the intensive growth of the information volume but to a significant extent by the factors of a dynamic communicative environment, that transform forms of perception, thinking, and human behavior (Shipunova, Berezovskaya, Gashkova, 2017, p.58). Academic achievement is often used as an indicator of school quality because it is easily measurable using standardized tests, while other outcomes may be more complex and less tangible (SIDA, 2000). This means the quality of education can be determined by proper assessment of academic achievement measurements such as tests/ exams and assignments. Scholars of education underscore the

students' assessment strategies as a core part of insuring quality. Student assessment should be regarded as a complex, multidimensional activity that requires alignment, balance, and rigor to assure quality outcomes (Joughin, & Macdonald, 2004).

To ensure rigorous assessment, academic cheating must be minimized. If there are unethical practices, like cheating in the process of administering such kinds of tools, the quality of education will be questioned as well. Academic cheating can occur at either the institutional or individual level. In institutional cheating, a higher education institution might attempt to inflate scores, perhaps to ensure that its students do well. This might happen in transnational programs where the awarding body is an external service provider. In such a case, it is in the interest of the local service provider to inflate scores to maintain market share. However, the negative impact on quality will be significant if the awarding body or the accrediting body does not have a rigorous quality assurance system to limit such practices.

Since the pandemic of *covid-19*, the use of e-learning systems has shifted the way students learn and teachers teach from conventional to information technology based. This change motivates the school to find out the proper way of student academic assessment related to the current method of learning and teaching. There have been many studies related to student academic dishonesty in conventional universities discussed in academic writing, yet since the use of information of technology appeared as the solution during and post-pandemic of covid 19 it is important to investigate academic dishonesty among students in the e-learning system used at Universitas Terbuka

### **The concept of Academic Dishonesty/ Plagiarism**

Academic institutions are places where citizens are prepared for diverse needs of life and societal issues. We value academic integrity very highly and do not permit any forms of dishonesty or deception that unfairly, improperly, or illegally enhance a grade on an individual assignment or a course grade. We are aware, however, that new forms of cheating, plagiarism, and other forms of dishonesty may arise and therefore, we expect every student to interpret the requirement of academic honesty and integrity broadly and in good faith.

Plagiarism occurs when a person represents someone else's words, ideas, phrases, sentences, or data as one's own work (Higbee & Thomas, 2002). When submitting work that includes someone else's words, ideas, syntax, data, or organizational patterns, the source of that information must

be acknowledged through complete, accurate, and specific references. All word-for-word statements must be acknowledged through quotation marks, unless academic dishonesty comes as a practice in the academic environment.

### **Types of Academic Dishonesty**

Academic dishonesty may be categorized as exam cheating and plagiarism based on the nature of the acts. In cheating exams, Etter et.al (2006) state that we can have a list of activities including copying from others, having or using notes, formulas, or other information in a programmable calculator or another electronic device without explicit teacher review and permission, having or using a communication device such as a cell phone, pager, or electronic translator to send or obtain unauthorized information, taking an exam for another student, or permitting someone else to take a test for someone else and asking another to give you improper assistance, including offering money or other benefits.

Secondly, under plagiarism, practices like, giving or getting improper assistance on an assignment meant to be individual work, including in any assignment turned in for credit any materials not based on your own research and writing; this includes using the services of a commercial term paper company, using the services of another student and copying part or all of another person's paper and submitting it as your own for an assignment (Mitchell, 2008; Brimble & Stevenson, 2005).). In addition, acting as a provider of paper(s) for a student or students, submitting substantial portions of the same academic work for credit in more than one course without consulting both teachers (self-plagiarism), failing to properly acknowledge paraphrased materials via textual attribution, footnotes, endnotes and/or bibliography and citing non-existent sources (articles, books, etc.) are seriously considered as acts of plagiarism.

## **2 METHODOLOGY**

The main objective of the study was to investigate the nature, causes, and types of academic dishonesty among students in the e-learning system at Universitas Terbuka. The subjects of the study were 100 students and 3 instructors from government science, business administration, and taxation study programs. The data was collected by employing two instruments namely, a questionnaire and an interview. The questionnaire is employed to 100 students and an interview was conducted with 3 instructors. The interview was designed to investigate the major reason for

cheating, teachers' reactions, and further suggestions to curb the challenge. The questionnaire aims to collect data from students about their perception of the prevalence, types, causes, and practices of academic dishonesty in the university. In addition, the observation of students' academic performance in an e-learning system is undertaken to find out the type and nature of academic dishonesty among students.

### **3 FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION**

The learning process at Universitas Terbuka is through a web-based tutorial (WBT). The learning process through web-based tutorial lasted for 8 sessions which include discussion, assignments on sessions 3, 5, and 7, and participation. Teachers and students interact intensively on this web-based tutorial called e-learning. Every question in the discussion and assignment provides clear instructions to forbid students from committing any plagiarism and cheating act of answering questions and the consequences of their disobedience.

Based on the teacher's experiences, observation, and student questionnaire, it is found that plagiarism and copy-paste are the most prevalent act happening in e-learning. In the discussion, a student can read and respond to the answer of other students but could not see the score of the answer given by the teacher. In the discussion, a student copied another answer from another student without any permission. However, in the context of the nature of academic dishonesty, it is found that another student responded to the person who copy the answer by giving the response to the reply box.

*"I am sorry to respond to your answer. Your answer is the same as the answer of student x. Please give your personal answer or use your own language"*

The results disclosed the reasons students committed copy-paste and plagiarism are:

1. Their lack of academic writing understanding. They do not know if they cited an article or writing from any sources such as journals or books that they must write the citation. Universitas Terbuka is an open university in Indonesia that accept all background of student without strictly being limited to age. As it has no university entrance examination like any other conventional university and is an open university, students are encouraged to be independent students. This automatically increases the number of students studying at Universitas Terbuka with the flexibility and opportunities it offer to society.

2. They ignore the academic writing rules. The student knows that the instruction is clear regarding plagiarism, copy-paste, and the consequences they get if committed the rules. However, they ignore it because they want to finish submitting the assignment and answer the question in the discussion without taking time to read, paraphrase, and do analysis.

3. In the discussion, copy-paste practices are frequently practiced as it is the easy way of answering the question without reading the source of references such as books or journals. It does not need much time and hard effort to do as the answers of all students are displayed in the discussion box. Students who want to copy may choose which answer they want.

4. Time scarcity is one of the factors that cause students from committing plagiarism and copy-paste. Most of the students who take their degree at these three study programs are purely a student, yet they work in any company or institution and study at Universitas Terbuka. This situation encourages them to be able to manage their time. Those who fail to manage their time for the study indicated committed academic dishonesty.

In tackling academic dishonesty, teachers always use the strategy to avoid the student from committing the rules. All teachers agree that reminders, sanctions, and opportunities are important components to curb the challenges teachers face in the e-learning system. The teacher explained to students that they must write the reference of the source if they cite the source from journals or books and give an example of how to cite. Teachers also warn students in the discussion and assignment box not to copy-paste the answers and convey what kind of sanction they would receive if they committed the rules. Therefore, teachers in the context of academic dishonesty give two chances to revise the answers and assignments of students.

Of the types, causes, nature, and teacher's strategies to curb the challenge of academic dishonesty in the e-learning system, it found it important to find out the strategy of academic dishonesty in the e-learning system. Despite being opened system it does not mean that students must ignore the important element of academic writing rules as a scholar. The study suggested university add such an important handbook of academic writing rules and guidelines for students in the e-learning system starting from semester one so that they are accustomed to writing an academic product correctly. This strategy also helps them in the process of finishing their final project before graduation.

#### 4 CONCLUSION

Academic dishonesty in conventional universities related to the nature, types, causes, and practices have been widely elaborated in academic writing. In a conventional university, students and teachers are *faces to face* method in the learning process and practices of cheating in an examination are prevalent. In Universitas Terbuka which used the e-learning system, the types of academic dishonesty tend to relate to plagiarism and copy-paste. The open system and no physical contact with the teachers led students to the academic writing rules ignorance. Despite their ignorance, it is found that the student responded to a student who practices copy-paste in answering the question in the discussion. In curbing the challenges of academic writing in an e-learning system, teachers have done some important points such as explaining academic writing correctly, reminders, sanctions, and opportunities to revise the answer. Moreover, this strategy is not enough to curb the challenges, the study suggested another solution like adding another column in the e-learning system regarding academic writing rules and guidelines starting from semester one. This is important for improving student ability in academic writing and helping students to finish their academic project before graduation.

#### REFERENCES

- Etter, S., Cramer, J. J., & Finn, S. (2006). Origins of academic dishonesty: Ethical orientations and personality factors associated with attitudes about cheating with information technology. *Journal of Research on Technology in Education*, 39(2), 133–155.
- Higbee, J.L. & Thomas, P.V. (2002). Student and faculty perceptions of behaviors that constitute cheating. *NASPA Journal*: 40(1), 39-52.
- Joughin, G., & Macdonald, R. (2004). *A model of assessment in higher education institutions*. The Higher Education Academy. Retrieved from [http://www.llas.ac.uk/resourcedownloads/2968/Joughin\\_and\\_Macdonald\\_model\\_assessment.pdf](http://www.llas.ac.uk/resourcedownloads/2968/Joughin_and_Macdonald_model_assessment.pdf)
- Kalmykova, S.V., Pustynnik, P.N., & Razinkina, E.M. (2017). Role Scient metric Research's Results in Management of Forming the Educational Trajectories in the Electronic Educational Environment. 19th International Conference on Interactive Collaborative Learning, ICL. *Advances in Intelligent Systems and Computing*, vol 545, 21 - 23 September 2016, Belfast; United Kingdom, 427–432.
- Mitchell, T. & Carroll, J. (2008). Academic and research misconduct in the Ph.D: Issues for students and supervisors. *Nurse Education Today*: 28, 218-226.
- Shipunova, O.D., Berezovskaya, I.P., Mureyko, L.M., Evseev, V.V. & Evseeva L.I. (2018).

Personal intellectual potential in the e-culture conditions, *J. ESPACIOS*, 39(40), 1015.

Simonette, M., Queiroz, V., & Spina, E. (2019). Human Factors in e-Learning. Proceedings of the Future Technologies Conference (FTC) 2018. *Advances in Intelligent Systems and Computing*, 881, 1140-1144. [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-02683-7\\_83](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-02683-7_83)

SIDA. (2000). *Teacher Education, teachers' conditions, and motivation*. Stockholm: Department for Democracy and Social Development, Education Division.

