

Academic Integrity in Higher Educational Institutions in Times of the Covid-19 Pandemic: World Experience and Ukrainian Realities

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Abstract: Distance learning and online evaluation created challenges for academic integrity because academic dishonesty has become widespread. The article deals with actual problems of observance of academic integrity in higher educational institutions in Ukraine generally and during the transition to online training.

Analysis of divergent world's rankings is demonstrated the close interrelation among the quality of educational system and total level of economic welfare and prosperity of the country, where academic integrity is a primary indicator of the quality of education. Today Ukraine has a lot of actual problems of observance of academic integrity in higher educational institutions generally and during the transition to online learning. Based on the world experience of observance of academic integrity, Ukraine needs profound transformational change. Results demonstrated that it is necessary to form a new policy-making of academic integrity and a new culture in universities in Ukraine, where the dedication of academic integrity should become fundamentally important for any open and democratic society. Higher educational institutions should bear primary responsibility for maintaining academic integrity in the academic society, perform their main assignments effectively, and each participant should be given a certain role, rights, obligations and responsibility.

Keywords: *academic integrity; higher educational institutions; tertiary education; academic dishonesty; policy-marking of academic integrity.*

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1. Introduction

Education system is a major of the primary indicators of social and economic development in a society. The global community has faced serious difficulties during the Covid-19 pandemic, which has impacted the education process worldwide (Duliba et al., 2022). Closing universities and performing social distancing as a part of governments' strategies to combat the pandemic (Rashid & Yadav, 2020), implementation of distance learning, transition to online learning has increased inequality, have aggravated the existing educational crisis and have led to the deterioration of quality and accessibility of education. Although almost all countries in the world suggested distance learning, however, the quality and scope of these actions varied considerably and had at best partially replaced in-person learning (World Bank et al., 2021).

According to the World Education Monitoring Report 2021-2022, on a distance learning survey conducted in 53 countries, 3 countries reported the full transition of higher education to virtual mode, 19 countries used online methods, and 28 countries used the combination of distance and full-time learning (UNESCO, 2021). In general, all over the world more than 464 million students are unable to access education, basically because of the absence of distance learning policies or high-tech equipment for such home-based learning (UNICEF, 2020).

This situation has led to the disruption of not only the goal of the 4, but all of the 17 goals of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development because education is important for achieving the success of each goal (United Nations, 2015).

Moreover, the transition to distance learning and online evaluation posed challenges for academic integrity, because academic dishonesty has become more widespread.

Of course, concern about the academic dishonesty of students during online learning is not something new and there are numerous works focused on this issue. For example, the results of the survey in one of the state-funded universities in 2006 have shown that cheating was more prevalent during online training courses than in traditional courses (Lanier, 2006).

A large number of universities globally reported cases of academic dishonesty after the transition to online learning during 2020-2021 (Basken, 2020).

The issues of observance of academic integrity during distance education have attracted the attention of scientists from all over the world,

including online assessment, as well as measures to combat fraud and academic dishonesty (Amzalag et al., 2021; Ayoub/Al-Salim & Aladwan, 2021; Eaton, 2020). Scientists also have sought to find out how best to encourage and ensure academic integrity at this time, what measures should be used for positive changes in teaching, learning and related academic integrity (Azulay et al., 2014; Erguvan, 2021).

The purpose of our article is to highlight actual problems of observance of academic integrity in higher educational institutions in Ukraine during the transition to online learning and to suggest the ways of their solution grounding on international experience.

2. Academic integrity in the world as an indicator of the quality of higher education

The modern system of higher education is one of the main factors of sustainable development and growth of the quality of human resources, the generator of new ideas, the guarantee of progressive socio-economic development of the society in the whole. The quality of higher education is a significant factor in the impact on the incomes and employment of the population, and thus on the economic development of society.

During the Covid-19 pandemic issues about the continuous functioning and adaptation of the educational process in conditions of quarantine has become critical.

Although educational levels vary between and within counties, there is the close interrelation among the quality of educational system and total level of economic welfare and prosperity of the country. In particular, education is one of the pillars of Prosperity index 2021, the index of the world's wealth and well-being. This education pillar measures coverage of a population's education, results and quality at all levels of the education system in the state (pre-primary, primary, secondary, and tertiary education). Singapore, South Korea, Denmark, Finland, Canada, Hong Kong, Netherlands, Switzerland, Australia, Norway, Japan, New Zealand, Ireland, Sweden, Iceland, United Kingdom, Taiwan, Belgium, Estonia, United States stand out as the top countries in this respect (Legatum Institute Foundation, 2021).

According to the Education Rankings by Country 2021, which is based on the three essential pillars of a well-developed public education system, opportunity to study in universities, ensuring high-quality education, the top countries are the United States, United Kingdom, Germany, Canada, France, Switzerland, Japan, Australia, Sweden, Netherlands, New Zealand,

Denmark, Norway, Italy, Finland, Austria, Spain, Belgium, South Korea, Ireland (World Population Review, 2021).

According to the new OECD review, the countries with the highest rates of tertiary education among the population of 25-34 year-olds are South Korea, Canada, Russia, Japan, Ireland, Luxembourg, Lithuania, United Kingdom, Australia, Switzerland, Netherlands, United States, Norway, France, Sweden, Belgium, Spain; among the population of 55-46 year-olds are Russia, Canada, Israel, Japan, United States, Finland, United Kingdom, Estonia, Australia, Switzerland, Norway, Luxembourg, Ireland, Sweden, Belgium, Netherlands, New Zealand (OECD, 2021).

It is also worth paying attention to the World University Rankings that provide the definitive list of the best universities, universities with the best reputation, assessing universities against the United Nation's Sustainable Development Goals. In particular, according to the Times Higher Education Rating 2021, which includes more than 1500 universities in 93 countries of the world, the best universities in 13 indicators measuring the effectiveness of the educational institution in four areas (education, research, knowledge transfer and international outlook) are located in the United Kingdom, US, Switzerland, Canada and China (Times Higher Education, 2021). As stated in another QS World University Rankings 2021 that used the other 13 indicators

(academic and employer reputation, faculty/student ratio, including international faculty/student ratio, citations per faculty), the best universities are scattered in the US, United Kingdom, Switzerland, Singapore (QS Top Universities, 2021).

Comparing these data, it may be observed that they are focused on the same developed countries, such as the US, the United Kingdom, Switzerland, Singapore, Canada, China, Denmark, Finland, Australia, Norway, Japan, Sweden, Netherlands, New Zealand, South Korea. Thus, we can conclude that the developed countries of the world ensure the best quality of education.

Education as a human right is important for providing the rule of law and legal culture (UNESCO & United Nations, 2019), promoting gender equality, creating and implementing full development of the human personality and freedom from poverty (Dhillon, 2011), increasing chances of a person to more and better opportunities for life and professional career. At the same time, academic integrity is the basis of quality education.

Nowadays academic integrity is a unique moral code of academic community that at the level of creation and spread knowledge should have

such behavior, which promotes "the teaching and acquisition of skills, new learning and values in fair and responsible ways" (Brown et al., 2020).

Promoting the culture of academic integrity is the main advantage of higher education institutions in the developed countries of the world. Such institutions explore and understand the nature of the internal and external causes that lead to academic dishonesty, which enables in the future to develop and implement an effective policy of ensuring academic integrity, significantly influence the attitude to academic integrity and knowledge about academic integrity, as well as decrease of the frequency of academic dishonesty (Whitley & Keith-Spiegel, 2001).

Students and teaching staff are encouraged to consider academic integrity in all their activities, emphasizing the fundamental role of universities in society in the creation of knowledge (Luck et al., 2021). For a higher educational institution, ensuring that students and employees act as an academic integral whole, strengthens the reputation of the educational institution, which depends on the quality of academic practice and knowledge of their graduates.

Today, widespread academic dishonesty can be a measure of future non-professional behavior in the workplace that has taken root in the world (Barbaranelli et al., 2018; Bashir & Bala, 2018).

Therefore, understanding and implementation of fundamental values of academic integrity in universities (honesty, trust, fairness, respect, responsibility, courage) has become the core values of all educational and research institutions (UNESCO, 2004).

Adherence to values of academic integrity provides the foundation for professional work by clearly emphasizing the value of knowledge, skills and abilities because the skills that a student receives will become an integral part of his success outside the university, in the community and the workplace.

To keep up their reputations, universities pay considerable attention to policy-making of academic integrity, which defines the purpose of such policy, the scope of application, principles of academic integrity, the role and responsibility of both students and teaching-staff, detection and consideration procedures of violations of academic integrity, bringing to academic liability, punishment for academic dishonesty. Of course, policy-making and implementation of academic integrity are complicated processes that need a considerable amount of time, endeavor, experience and other resources (Stoesz & Eaton, 2020). The policy and detection, as well as consideration procedures have a significant difference between universities. For example, an analysis of the policy-making of academic integrity in 24

state universities in the four provinces of western Canada has demonstrated that the policy mainly focused on punitive measures to eliminate academic integrity violations (Stoesz & Eaton, 2020).

Universities in most countries generally consider accusations of academic integrity violations. At the same time, although responsibility for combating deviations from proper research practices is still at the university, special government institutions have been established in Sweden and Denmark to consider inappropriate research practices of academic institutions or inappropriate behavior in research. The governments of these countries were convinced that some cases in accusations of violation of academic integrity in universities were considered unfair and opaque and could undermine the authority of scientists from these countries in the world. For example, in 2021 the National Board for Assessment of Research Misconduct (Sweden) examined 25 cases of research misconduct from the Swedish higher educational institutions (National Board for Assessment of Research Misconduct, 2021).

Today the transition to online learning has led to an increase in academic dishonesty, and becomes a global problem for developed and developing countries (Luck et al., 2021). The reasons for this increase vary significantly between continents, regions and countries, but the basis is that online learning provides a variety of technological capabilities that facilitate the non-ethical behavior of students (Amzalag et al., 2021). Observance of academic integrity also depends substantially on the public policy-making, determination of the system of social and cultural values. Our statement is confirmed in research of 2021 of scientists Yuehong (Helen) Zhang, Hanfeng Lin, Xinxin Zhang, Qing Ye that based on a survey of academic integrity on six continents and population data. The scientists concluded that the global awareness of academic integrity and publishing ethics around the world is imbalanced, especially in the developing countries where population density is at it's highest (Zhang et al., 2021).

3. Academic integrity in the higher educational institutions of Ukraine

The analysis of the world indices and ratings on the quality of Ukrainian tertiary education demonstrates the complexity and contradictory assessments. Based on data on certain positions of Ukraine in the world's rankings (for example, the share of the population with tertiary education (40th) (World Population Review, 2021) or Prosperity Index 2021 (pillar education) (40th) (Legatum Institute Foundation, 2021), Ukraine is among the top 50 countries with the best education system. This realization leads to the conclusion that the level of the Ukrainian higher education is high.

At the same time, Ukrainian higher educational institutions are far from the top-ranked universities of the global rankings. For example, the Times Higher Education Rating 2021 included only 9 higher education institutions, but the highest ranked university is situated on 501-600th place, the other 8 universities – from 800th to 1000th+ places (Times Higher Education, 2021). The QS World University Rankings 2021 mentions only 7 higher education institutions of Ukraine, but the highest-ranked university is on the 477th, the other are situated from 600th to 1001th+ (QS Top Universities, 2021).

This situation is caused by the fact that today the quality of higher education in Ukraine is far from other countries of the world. There are several problems in the tertiary education system that together with significant external and internal challenges, create risks and negatively affect development opportunities.

The opportunity of higher education for the majority of young people in Ukraine, like in most post-Soviet societies, has become part of an unwritten public agreement between the authorities and the population: access to higher education for children is seen as a kind of compensation for the poor socio-economic situation, where a large part of the population has been living for a long time. Higher education focuses on quantitative indicators and diplomas, not on quality and utility for society. A lot of students enter higher educational institutions only to obtain a diploma, because of the lack of prospects for employment, and in future don't use it, and unfortunately in most cases, work in completely different areas. Moreover, there are numerous students without personal motivation for learning. Given this fact, these students believe the end justifies the means for the goal of receiving a diploma, which is the basis for violations of academic integrity. In turn, the imperfect system of national education inevitably leads to outflow of the best human (personnel) resources for the border, which is slowing the development of technological and scientific advancement and increasing the economic potential of such a country (Teremetskyi et al., 2017).

It is worth starting with the fact that over the past six-seven years the theme of academic integrity in Ukraine has managed to pass the way from full novelty to certain recognition by the educational and scientific community. As stated in the OECD report "Reviews of Integrity in Education: Ukraine 2017" in 2015 about 76% of students from higher educational institutions of Ukraine were involved in unfair and deceptive collective practices on exams, 47% of students have used the cheat sheets, every second student have used information from the Internet during the

exam; 60% of students have printed ready-made works from the Internet and have presented the work as their own; 32% of students have bought ready-made works. More than 90% of students have made academic plagiarism in one form or another (OECD, 2017).

Factors that cause the violations of academic integrity in Ukraine are: weakness of corresponding ethical norms, and vice versa – "rich" traditions of negative practices; neglect of unethical behavior of employees; impunity for academic dishonesty; unbalanced educational programs and load; outdated content and methods of teaching and their time inconsistency (National Institute for Strategic Studies, 2017).

As it has been already mentioned, the reasons for the violation of academic integrity are the student attitudes towards learning. Some students are in "a mode of survival" and try to complete work in any way, others, on the contrary, want to relax and therefore, look for ways to someone do their work. Therefore, the factors that cause a violation of academic integrity should also be attributed to insufficient knowledge of the subject, strong motivation of the student to succeed in conditions of strong competitiveness, fear, failures, a decrease of the feeling of own effectiveness, line, etc (Amigud & Lancaster, 2019; Clinciu et al. 2021).

The approach to issues of academic dishonesty among students and teaching staff in Ukraine strongly depends on ethical principles and values in society and the state in the whole. Serious problems with ethics, valuable instructions, the culture of thinking and behavior that are manifested at all levels of public life, are grounds for increasing attention and awareness of the need for practical actions in the field of establishing academic integrity in the system of education of Ukraine.

Unfortunately, the experience of academic dishonesty that Ukrainian students often receive at universities is introductory training for further violations of laws.

Honesty cannot survive in an atmosphere, where dishonesty is not only tolerated, but also welcomed. The manifestations of academic dishonesty destroy the system of education, transforming the educational process into its imitation. Dishonesty in education affects the entire society and each individual, because it creates a system, when it is impossible to achieve success honestly, leads to "education of thinking, which tends to such behavior" (Fida et al., 2021). And, consequently, in the future, such a society and country cannot be successful in the long term. Even the best, intellectually independent students can be disoriented and suffered in a demoralized environment when they see that success in learning and research is easier to achieve through deception than honest work.

The dedication of academic integrity has fundamental importance to any open and democratic society. Therefore, Ukraine's universities should support and develop the values and ethical standards of the Bucharest Declaration on ethical values and Principles of higher Education in the European Region, which have a crucial contribution on cultural and political development of academic community of higher educational institution (students, faculty, staff) (UNESCO, 2004).

Since 2016, Ukraine has introduced a project Strengthening Academic Integrity in Ukraine Project (SAIUP) for promoting academic integrity by orientation and learning of students and teachers staff of Ukrainian universities of practical value and importance of academic integrity, improving the image of Ukrainian universities. However, only 60 universities from 455 higher educational institutions operating in Ukraine participate in the project (American Council for International Education, 2020; National Agency for Higher Education Quality Assurance, 2020).

With the adoption of the new version of the Law of Ukraine "On Education" since 2017 (Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine, 2017), academic integrity has become a mandatory component of the quality assurance system at the universities. Today every university has adopted normative documents regulating mechanisms of ensuring academic integrity and counteracting academic plagiarism. At the same time, each university has established various authorities responsible for implementing the policy of integrity at the university and making decisions on bringing offenders to academic liability.

However, we cannot say now that during these years the violations of academic integrity have disappeared and a new academic culture has been formed in universities, which has zero tolerance for academic dishonesty. Unfortunately, continuing observance of academic integrity and the level of modern student academic culture in Ukraine is rather low. Adoption of codes of observance of academic integrity in higher educational institutions and establishment of academic liability for academic dishonesty in practice doesn't mean its happening. Therefore, academic dishonesty is still a fundamental problem for the academic integrity of higher education institutions of Ukraine.

Along with this, academic dishonesty in Ukraine continues to be associated mainly with plagiarism, raising questions about the effectiveness of the system in ensuring academic integrity in general (National Agency for Higher Education Quality Assurance, 2020), ignores other components of academic dishonesty, such as cheating, misrepresentation, fabrication, falsification, manipulating electronic or research data, information or data,

copying someone else's answers or other work, sharing information or answers while doing homework, tests or exams, using any -what materials or equipment for the exam or test, etc. (Artyukhov & Liuta, 2017).

4. Strategy to promote academic integrity in higher educational institutions of Ukraine

In the previous section, it is proved that there is an obvious need to develop an effective system of ensuring academic integrity in higher educational institutions of Ukraine. At the same time, there is an important question: whether academic dishonesty is a problem of the behavior of students or institutional foundations of higher education.

The world experience of the implementation of academic integrity values in higher educational institutions demonstrates that the academic institution bears the primary responsibility for maintaining academic integrity, “whether online or face-to-face, by creating a culture that will not tolerate academic dishonesty” (Swartz & Cole, 2013).

We agree with the opinion of scientists Yuehong (Helen) Zhang, Hanfeng Lin, Xinxin Zhang and Qing Ye, that “strengthening education, raising awareness, establishing norms, highlighting duty and improving moral law” are necessary to create a good environment of academic integrity (Zhang et al., 2020).

This is not an easy path for Ukrainian higher educational institutions, but it is the right direction to the desired result. For Ukrainian higher education to perform its main assignments effectively, it needs to be renewed taking into account the international experience in education development in a broad socio-economic context. The capacity for academic integrity can be created in educational institutions based on the expansion of external orientations (OECD, 2017).

Today to form the academic culture it is crucial for each university, and to Ukraine in the whole. This process cannot be transferred or borrowed and requires constant renewal and replenishment, which is a critical factor in improving management, ensuring academic quality and introducing values of academic integrity. The university and its faculties should promote academic integrity and actively implement, strengthen and ensure the values of academic integrity and policy of the educational institution (UNESCO, 2004; Stiles & Gair, 2010; Amzalag et al., 2021).

Taking into account the situation in Ukraine, our country should choose its unique way, but it is not necessary to reject the experience of the countries of the world in the formation and implementation of academic integrity in the universities. Moreover, at present all developed and

developing countries of the world are looking for the ways to solve the problem of violations of academic integrity during online training. At the end of 2021, for instance, the Department of Education of the Council of Europe announced a competition of best practices of higher educational institutions concerning the promoting academic integrity at the times of the Covid-19 crisis in such areas as education, policy, procedures, communication, management (Council of Europe, 2021).

In addition, academic integrity is a common concept and covers different spheres of academic life in developed countries of the modern world, where each of the participants has a certain role, rights, obligations and responsibility. Teaching staff and scientists should be an example for students. The culture of ethical behavior and academic integrity of teaching staff is a necessary element of "developing an institutional vision and culture of academic integrity" (ICAI, 2021).

Online education will continue to play a major role in higher education. Scientists have demonstrated that students worldwide have insufficient knowledge of academic integrity and understanding what kinds of behavior are its violations (Amzalag et al., 2021).

Therefore, the best mechanisms for the implementation of academic integrity are the strengthening education of students about the academic integrity values, awareness of what is considered acceptable and unacceptable ethical behavior.

Information on high standards of student integrity policy should be provided to all students who enter tertiary education. In this aspect promoting academic integrity should start with the signing of the statement that informs all members of the institution about the academic integrity values and dishonesty (Whitley & Keith-Spiegel, 2001). Moreover, during the training, every student must be aware of the content of the code of academic conduct and adhere to its provisions. In addition, every university should provide ethics education programs that reduce violations of academic integrity not only because students are aware of them, but also because they understand codes of honor and organizational ethical values and beliefs (Popoola et al., 2017). Not only in online learning, but also face-to-face learning, performing any tasks must be finished by completing the declaration that will reflect their understanding of the university's policy of academic integrity, confirm the originality of its work without any assistance or use sources without proper confirmation (plagiarism). Of course, the awareness is not enough to establish academic integrity safeguards, which requires various strategies (Amigud & Lancaster, 2019).

The importance of the role played by teaching staff should be emphasized, who constantly must focus attention on academic behavior and provide the fundamental values of academic integrity. This is the critical provision because academic misconduct can be intentional when a student realizes the actions and unintentional when the student has a lack of knowledge or skills. Teachers staff should take measures to minimize academic dishonesty; change assignments used during online training to those that provide for the development of critical thinking and generalization; provide a reflective account of the learning through storytelling; use a group of banks questions on online exams that does not allow students to know the answers before or find them quickly on the Internet (Khan et al., 2021). The universities should respond to the academic misconduct of the students and investigate these cases.

The offenders among students of academic integrity in Ukraine are not held responsible, which creates a sense of irresponsibility, lack to respect for its values and leads to new cases. Universities should not only be able to develop an ethical code of the academic community, but also make these provisions effective and authoritative for all participants of the educational process because the existence of a well-defined policy is itself a lack of conditions (Popoola et al., 2017). Thus, the codes on academic behavior are a description of the university's ethical expectations, as well as a safeguard of the rights and obligations of students as members of the academic community. The main mission of the university in this context is to emphasize the obligation of each academic community to adhere to the codes of academic integrity and to comply with their provisions in a conscientious manner.

Therefore, academic honesty or dishonesty is closely connected with the quality of education (Ayoub/Al-Salim & Aladwan, 2021). Students should understand that a violation of academic integrity may lead to negative consequences in their future. For example, law graduates of the University of Melbourne in the USA should submit a statement on their behavior and compliance with students' academic integrity policy, if they want to have a law practice in the Supreme Court of Victoria (University of Melbourne, 2021).

6. Conclusion

Today Ukraine has a lot of actual problems of observance of academic integrity in higher educational institutions generally and during the transition to online learning. Analysis of divergent world's rankings has demonstrated the close interrelation among the quality of educational system

and total level of economic welfare and prosperity of the country, where academic integrity is a primary indicator of the quality of education.

Based on the world experience of observance of academic integrity, Ukraine needs profound transformational change. Results demonstrated that it is necessary to form a new policy-making of academic integrity and a new culture in universities in Ukraine, where the dedication of academic integrity should become fundamentally important for any open and democratic society. Higher educational institutions should bear primary responsibility for maintaining academic integrity in the academic society, perform their main assignments effectively, and each participant should be given a certain role, rights, obligations and responsibility.

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