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Introduction of Academic Honesty as a Necessary Prerequisite and an Important Component of Quality Education for Future Economists

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³Candidate of pedagogical sciences, Assistant Professor of the Department of Foreign Philology, Ukrainian Studies and Social and Law Disciplines; Donetsk National University of Economics and Trade named after Mykhailo Tugan-Baranovsky, vul. Tramvaina, 16b, Kryvyi Rih, Ukraine, udovichenko@donnuet.edu.ua **Abstract**: The article deals with: academic honesty as an important component of higher education as a social institution; legislative changes aimed at promoting academic integrity in higher education institutions of Ukraine; the most successful European practices in combating and preventing academic misconduct, and with measures undertaken internationally by the Ukrainian academic community to address this important issue. Additionally, the overview of all-Ukrainian statistics on academic dishonesty of students and results of a survey on this problem of freshmen of economic specialties of Donetsk National University of Economics and Trade named after Mykhailo Tugan-Baranovsky are provided; the ways of introduction of academic honesty in the life of the university and development of academic culture are presented; interesting academic materials on the outlined problem for work in training future economists the course of «Academic Writing» are offered. The authors apply the following scientific methods: theoretical - analysis and synthesis, analogy and thought experiment; practical - analysis of scientific literature on the basis of which conclusions are grounded. The main scientific results are obtained through the use of a marketing research method, including a survey, analysis of the data obtained in order to find out the most acute causes of academic fraud, violations of academic culture and honesty of economic specialities students' integrity. The authors prove that in order to overcome academic dishonesty, it is necessary to address the human dignity of each student, in addition to the formation of appropriate competencies and skills.

Keywords: academic integrity; academic writing; academic culture.

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1. Introduction

The need to reform all educational units in Ukraine and higher education in particular results from the European integration processes and the need for national diplomas to meet the European standards.

Qualitative changes in the higher education system require developing new approaches to the organization of the educational process, creating new mechanisms for building communication in institutions of higher education and improving the teaching and learning quality level.

Academic honesty is an essential component of a higher education as a social institution. The notion of academic honesty includes such values as prevention of falsification, fraud and plagiarism; upholding academic standards; honesty and diligence in research and scientific publishing. In the process of study or research, students, teachers and young scientists should first and foremost be guided by the principles of real learning and honest work.

As defined in the Law of Ukraine 'On Education', academic honesty is an important component of the state education policy. The affirmation of honesty and ethical values in the educational process and scientific activity will contribute to the formation of a high academic culture, the bearers of which should be scientific-pedagogical and scientific workers and educators (Law of Ukraine 'On Higher Education', 2014).

Amendments to the Law of Ukraine 'On Higher Education' (2014), made on the basis of the Law 'On Education' (2017), have significantly increased the attention of higher education institutions to issues of academic honesty (Law of Ukraine 'On Education', 2017).

Legislative changes are aimed at asserting academic honesty in every academic student group, in every department, in every structural unit.

According to the document "Fundamental Values of Academic Integrity" developed by the International Center for Academic Honesty at the Rutland Institute of Ethics (Clemson University in South Carolina), academic honesty is the commitment of the academic community to six fundamental values: integrity, trust, justice, respect, responsibility and courage (The International Center for Academic Integrity, 2019).

The most successful European practices in combating and preventing academic misconduct are, for example, the introduction of academic honesty disciplines in Sweden, the establishment of the Office of Independent Adjudicator in the UK, the constant monitoring of cases of academic misconduct (AcademIQ, 2017).

2. Research background

2.1 Literature review

Academic fraud is considered to be one of the manifestations and sources of corruption within a country. It is sad to say that the education system of Ukraine is one of the leaders in terms of corruption – in terms of corruption perception our country ranks 12th out of 95 countries in the world, and in terms of human development we are in 88th place out of 189 countries (data for 2018). Studies show that our country has high levels of widespread academic fraud among students (*Yak poboroty koruptsiiu* ..., 2015).

One cannot fail to mention the glaring example of the violation of academic integrity and the rooting of the wrong attitude towards this phenomenon, which was covered by almost all the media last year. It is a loud story about the sale of cheat sheets at one of the leading universities in Ukraine (Ukrainska Pravda zhyttia, January 10, 2017).

With regard to statistics of academic dishonesty in Ukraine, only a few studies have been conducted to date. In particular, the results of a research conducted by V. Bakirov (conducted in 2014-2015 among more than 2000 respondents) showed that 90 % of Ukrainian students are plagiarized during their studies at the university; 78 % of students pass exams with some assistance and 23% believe that their higher education institutions have cases of obtaining grades for money (Bakirov, 2015). The main cause of academic fraud for most students is low motivation and learning conditions. Often these factors work together.

According to the results of the "Academic Honesty: State and Impact Factors" study, in some universities, 30-40 % of students are dissatisfied with the state of the material base, 10 to 50% of students are required to buy various consumables at their own expense. 20 to 30 % of students have problems with the organization of the educational process, do not understand the tasks received from the teachers, and do not understand the principles of the tasks grading. Quite often, teachers do not discuss the results of students' work with them. A large percentage of students (13 to 32 %) are distracted by work while studying. Work during study can have a positive impact, however, most students do not specialize and do not put into practice the knowledge acquired during the study. Such work only interferes with learning (AcademIQ, 2017)

Domestic scholars pay considerable attention to the important problem of academic honesty. Attention of the educational and scientific communities was attracted by the articles "Academic Honesty: A Mythical Concept or Effective Tool for Quality Assurance in Higher Education?" by Satsykn (Satsykn, 2017); "How to promote the values of academic integrity in Ukrainian universities?" Ye. Nikolaiev (Nikolaiev, 2018), "Academic culture as a necessary precondition for effective management of a modern university in terms of autonomy" T. Dobko (Dobko, 2008), as well as the monograph "Academic honesty as a basis for the sustainable development of the university" by a collective of authors, edited by Finikov and Artiukhov (2016).

The situation with the problem of academic honesty in Ukraine is gradually improving. Studying the experience of other countries, the awareness of the participants of the educational process of the causes of academic fraud, the development of an effective policy of ensuring academic integrity at the national and international level, the implementation of necessary laws and projects contribute to the adoption and support of each participant in the educational process of academic honesty, upbringing the good knowledge and personal growth.

Since 2016, the American Councils for International Education, with the assistance of the Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine and the support of the US Embassy in Ukraine, has implemented the Strengthening Academic Integrity in Ukraine Project (AcademIQ, March 10, 2017), which aims to use the common experience of the United States and Ukraine to develop and implement a four-year plan of activities, the aim of which is to orient and educate students, teachers and administrators of Ukrainian educational institutions of practical value and the importance of academic integrity, provide resources and plan actions for their close involvement in strengthening academic integrity in education (AcademIQ. Proekt spryiannia akademichnoi dobrochesnosti v Ukraini (SAIUP).). This project involved ten Ukrainian universities from different regions. Numerous conferences, communications with journalists were organized, information campaigns were conducted at universities to emphasize once again the importance of a fair and quality education, which cannot be achieved by falsification, fraud or corruption.

One of the effective instruments of academic honesty is the University's Code of Honour.

The Code of Honour is a document that sets out the general moral principles and rules of ethical conduct of persons working and studying at university. The purpose of the Code is to develop the corporate culture of the university community, to form a system of democratic relations between participants in the educational process. Today, more and more universities are joining the Project, adopting the Codes of Honour, hosting guest lectures, seminars, formal and informal discussions.

In October 2018, institutions of higher education received from the Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine Guidelines on Academic Honesty and an Extended Glossary of Terms and Concepts for Academic Honesty, developed within SAIUP.

An important example of the implementation of the principles of academic honesty in the national educational and scientific environment is the signing of the 2018 Memorandum of the Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine with Plagiat.pl, which will allow Ukrainian universities to use a modern system for detecting plagiarism, including works performed in different languages free of charge for 5 years (MON *zatsikavleno, shchob* ..., 2018).

Various trainings, courses, seminars, etc. are held for scientific and pedagogical workers and higher education graduates.

Of course, it is unrealistic to put into practice the principles of academic honesty in a few years. It is still a long way to the complete eradication of the academic fraud in Ukraine. But serious work in this direction is ongoing.

2.2 Methods

Since the entry into force of the new Law on Education in Ukraine (2017), academic honesty has become an integral part of the educational process, and its violation is a threat to every student. But what is known about the academic integrity to the students who entered the university, and what is their attitude to its rules like? We decided to carry out a survey of freshmen at the Donetsk National University of Economics and Trade named after Mykhailo Tugan-Baranovsky and obtained informative and important results for understanding the real situation.

At the beginning of the academic year we carried out a survey of the first-year students of economic profile of Donetsk National University of Economics and Trade named after Mykhailo Tugan-Baranovsky. Students were invited to answer the following questions:

1. Have you ever copied someone's work in your life?

2. How often?

3. What are the reasons for copying?

- 4. Do you allow someone else to copy your work?
- 5. Do you condemn people who copy others' work?
- 6. Do you have any friends who study abroad?

7. Do you know how copying is viewed abroad?

8. Have you ever had to take exams where you couldn't copy someone's work?

9. Is copying someone else's work a positive or a negative phenomenon?

10. Do you know what "academic integrity" is?

11. How can academic integrity be implemented?

When compiling the questionnaire, we focused on the surveys carried out within the project "Academic culture of Ukrainian students: the main factors of formation and development", conducted by V. N. Karazin Kharkiv National University in association with the International Foundation "Renaissance" and the Eastern Ukrainian Foundation for Social Researches (the head of the project N 49169 is academician V. S. Bakirov), as well as the study "Academic Honesty: Status and Impact Factors", conducted by the CEDOS Analytical Center in collaboration with Gfk Ukraine in the framework of the Academic Integrity Project in Ukraine (SAIUP), with the support of the US Embassy in Ukraine.

The survey was carried out in October-November 2019 in Kryvyi Rih, Dnipropetrovsk region. 276 first-year students (specialties of "Food Technologies", "Hotel and Catering Business", "Industrial Engineering", "Tourism", "Entrepreneurship, Commerce and Exchange Activities", "Management", "Marketing", "Accounting and Taxation", "Finance", "Economics", "International Economic Activity", and "Philology") of Donetsk National University of Economics and Trade named after Mykhailo Tugan-Baranovsky answered the question of the printed anonymous questionnaire.

The authors apply the following scientific methods: theoretical – analysis and synthesis, analogy and thought experiment; practical – analysis of scientific literature on the basis of which conclusions are grounded. The main scientific results are obtained through the use of a marketing research method, including a survey, analysis of the data obtained in order to find out the most acute causes of academic fraud, violations of academic culture and honesty of economic specialities students' integrity.

3. Results

3.1 Background for practice implementation

As mentioned above, the Code of Honour accepted by universities is an effective tool for maintaining academic honesty by academics, educators, and students. This document establishes not only the general moral principles and rules of ethical conduct of persons employed and educated in higher education, but also sanctions for violations of these norms and mechanisms for influencing those who engage in dishonest behaviour.

In 2017, the Code of Ethics and Dignity of Donetsk National University of Economics and Trade named after Mykhailo Tugan-Baranovsky (hereinafter DonNUET) was adopted. This Code was adopted taking into account moral and ethical principles as a model for the behaviour of university staff and higher education students, based on world experience in achieving a balance of relationships that promote learning, absorption of knowledge, prevent corruption, create an atmosphere of partnership. The text of the Code was formed on the basis of proposals from the community of DonNUET, student self-government bodies and the trade union organization and was approved by the Academic Council.

The purpose of the DonNUET Code of Ethics and Dignity is to establish the common moral principles and rules of ethical and decent conduct of persons working and studying at the University, who should guide them in their activities. The Code sets out the basic principles that underpin the University's daily existence:

- the principle of legality;
- principle of interaction;
- the principle of publicity;
- the principle of openness;
- the principle of goodwill;
- the principle of competence and professionalism;
- the principle of responsibility;
- the principle of safety and respect to life.

These principles are basic and inviolable.

The Code also defines the principles of ethical and dignified behaviour of the DonNUET associate and higher education student, emphasizing the policy of academic honesty.

An effective way of overcoming the problem is to acquire students' competencies in academic honesty and academic writing. To acquire the skills of writing and designing scientific texts, popularizing the culture of academic writing among students, the course "Academic Writing" ("Fundamentals of Academic Writing") is developed and implemented in the higher education institutions of Ukraine.

3.2 Analysis of the data obtained

276 participants - first-year students - took part in the survey carried out at DonNUET. The results demonstrate that the vast majority of

respondents (229 students) are familiar with the concept of "academic honesty". The vast minority, namely 47 students, admitted that they had never heard of the term; however, to the question "How can academic integrity be introduced?" almost a third (80 students) answered "I don't know". All others answered quite aptly and suggest the following ways to introduce academic honesty: to introduce the discipline "Academic Integrity" in the school – 113 students; start its upbringing in the family and school – 22 students; 19 freshmen advise to change the influence of the environment; 17 believe that it is worth starting with yourself; to teach subjects at school better is suggested by14 respondents; 11 students state that a monetary reward should be introduced for academic integrity.

The number of students who have resorted to dishonest learning practices is impressive. 276 surveyed students, i.e. 100%, admitted that they cheated during their studies. Everyone had to cheat, some of the students more often, some of them less often, and someone used to cheat occasionally. 160 freshmen (58% of respondents) often had to cheat; infrequently – 86 (31%); the answer "rarely but cheated" was received from 30 students (11%). The majority – 207 students (75% of respondents) pointed the reason for cheating - "did not study enough"; 19 (7%) did not have time to learn; the tasks for 22 (8%) students appeared to be difficult; self-doubt led to 11 (4%) students to cheating; 14 (5%) students blamed poor memory, anxiety; 3 (1%) students named laziness as the reason for cheating.

100% of students (276 affirmative answers) give their works to others for copying and the same number do not condemn the one who copies. Most students (240 out of 276, i.e. 87%) have friends who study abroad, but only 88 (32%) know about the attitude to cheating there.

At the same time, all freshmen had to pass exams where it was impossible to cheat (100% of respondents). Presumably, this is an external evaluation (external independent assessment), which graduates and entrants make after finishing high school, as the survey was carried out during the first semester of higher education.

Only a third of respondents (88 freshmen, 32%) have a negative attitude to cheating, 119 (43%) are neutral, and a fairly large number consider cheating a positive phenomenon – 69 (25%) students.

It can be concluded that it is important to conduct campaigns among students to improve their knowledge of academic honesty and to raise awareness of its importance, so that in the future they can transfer their school knowledge and healthy learning skills to institutes and universities. When discussing the results of the questionnaire, students expressed confidence that it is necessary to deepen the knowledge of citizens about academic integrity, that conducting trainings or lectures on academic honesty will be useful for today's youth.

The surveyed freshmen admitted that if they had the opportunity to choose subjects (both at school and university) that they are really interested in learning, they would copy less, because they would be interested in studying a particular discipline.

Unfortunately, students often treat cheating as a secondary phenomenon, do not consider it something negative. This indicates a misunderstanding that real assessment is an indicator of acquired knowledge.

However, it is gratifying that modern freshmen understand the importance of awareness of academic honesty. From the answers of the respondents it can be concluded that it is necessary to improve the situation in the modern education system so that students can be more confident and do not even think about copying to make their lives easier.

Students offer the following ways of introducing academic integrity: to introduce the discipline "Academic Honesty" at school – 41 %; 8 % offer to start it at family and while schooling; 7 % advise to change the influence of the environment; 6 % think they should start with themselves; to teach subjects at school better is offered by 5 %; 4 % suggest that a fee should be introduced for academic honesty. And almost a third of the respondents (29 %) said "I don't know".

Consequently, students often refer to copying as a minor phenomenon, do not consider it as something negative. This indicates a misunderstanding of the fact that a real assessment is an indicator of the acquired knowledge and acquired competences, and also it is necessary for the student to become aware of his or her own readiness to perform professional tasks during the practical activity. It is well-known that copying, copying text verbatim, paraphrasing it during the course of work, exams and tests leads to a false, unfair assessment of knowledge. In addition, academic honesty is one of the components of the value system. It certifies whether a person is honest in his studies and, as a result, able to work honestly in the future.

It shows whether there is something new, independent as a result of the research, whether it is a term paper, or a graduation qualification work of a student of the educational level of "bachelor" or "master". Thus, whether the future specialist will be able to carry out professional activity independently or not.

Undoubtedly, the situation in the national universities has nothing to do with the high quality of higher education. After all, academic integrity is a cornerstone of the educational process, contributes to the acquisition of the necessary skills for future professional activity and the formation of a personal value system. More broadly, the corruption of the education system and academic malpractice in general has a negative impact on the socioeconomic development of the country and the moral state of the society.

The basis for the formation of an honest academic environment should be the awareness of each participant in the educational process that everything must begin with themselves, all – both teachers and students – must adhere to the norms of academic honesty, cultivate a high academic culture, cultivate honesty, integrity and professionalism.

Therefore, ensuring and upholding academic honesty is an important and urgent task, a priority area of activity of the Ukrainian scientific and educational community.

In addition, academic honesty is a component of the value system. It shows whether a person studies honestly and, as a result, whether he/she will be able to work honestly in the future.

In conclusion, we emphasize that academic integrity, honest acquisition of quality education is the key to the success of our country, and young people are ready to take a step towards changes.

3.3 Implications for practice

In order to form an academic culture and scientific language skills that will enhance the quality of further educational and scientific activity, DonNUET has introduced the Academic Writing course since 2018.

The objective of the course is to promote adherence to the principles of academic honesty in the student environment; instill a sense of responsibility and mutual respect; teach how to work with scientific sources.

The main topics of the course are the basic principles of higher education, the principles of interaction between the participants of the educational process and academic honesty. In general, the course focuses on students' research work, scientific speech, the scientist's code of ethics, intellectual property issues, plagiarism and self-plagiarism.

In 2019, a textbook for the discipline "Academic Writing", prepared by DonNUET lecturers Dr. Svitlana Revutska and Dr. Viktoriia Zinchenko, was published for students and young scientists. The course material is divided into two sections with a proportionate number of topics. The first section is fully devoted to the academic honesty policy, in particular in the educational field: the main issues related to honesty / misconduct in Ukraine and Europe are discussed, the importance of ethical compliance in higher education institutions is clarified, the legal framework for promoting academic integrity and counteracting plagiarism is determined, the specificities of copyright and intellectual property rights are explained. The second section aims to provide knowledge of the organization, linguistic styling and academic texts editing.

3.4 Strategy of course implementation

The Academic Writing course provides close links to other disciplines, including Rhetoric, Art of Presentation, and the Scientific Ukrainian Language, but aims to teach students to formulate and express their thoughts, following the principles of academic integrity, hypotheses and conclusions, to make the academic text in accordance with the norms for the Ukrainian language.

Each topic of the textbook consists of a theoretical part, which covers key issues of the topic; a list of basic definitions, concepts and terms; a block of self-control questions that can be further assigned to self-testing; practical tasks for self-study classroom work (if necessary).

When teaching the topic "Academic Integrity", academic honesty is considered as a pledge of quality higher education, the basic features of academic culture are revealed, forms of academic dishonesty are examined.

Students are asked to familiarize themselves with the results of the project "Academic Culture of Ukrainian Students: Basic Factors of Formation and Development", implemented with the support of the International Renaissance Foundation by V. N. Karazin Kharkiv National University and the East Ukrainian Foundation for Social Research. and answer options for the survey (using the standard questionnaires available on the Survio platform site) of students. In questions it is recommended to show: motivation to study (choice of specialty, acquisition of professional knowledge), competitiveness of students, behaviour during the session, module control, level of assessment of knowledge by the students, etc. (*Proekt "Akademichna kultura ukrainskoho studentstva: osnovni chynnyky formuvannia ta rozyytku*").

It is also possible to invite students to familiarize themselves with the materials of the Academic Integrity Assistance Project in Ukraine (SAIUP), which aims to bring to the home educational community the value of academic integrity and the consequences of non-compliance with its principles (AcademIQ. Proekt spryiannia akademichnoi dobrochesnosti v Ukraini (SAIUP).

Undoubtedly, it will be useful to discuss in pairs the study of English scholars Helen Smith (Northumbrian University) and Jim Ridgeway (Durham University) "Why Students Cheat (in Their Words as well as those of others)" (Smith & Ridgway, 2019), where the results and interviews are presented regarding student malpractice in higher education. It is also worth suggesting the article "Ukrainian Education – Academic honesty" by Iryna Konstankevych preceded by an eloquent epigraph: "We begin by cheating on tests and ending with the adoption of absurd laws" (Konstankevych. 2017); Volodymyr Satsykn's article "Academic Honesty: A Mythical Concept or Effective Tool for Higher Education Quality Assurance" (Satsykn, 2017).

It will be interesting and useful to work with the materials of the roundtable "Academic Honesty in Higher Education: Mission Impossible?!", an analytical report submitted by Volodymyr Satsyk, founder of the website "Educational Trends" (Educational Policy, January 12, 2018). The conclusion of the round table is: "A decisive step in supporting academic honesty and counteracting academic misconduct is the formation of a nationwide system of quality assurance in higher education. Without ensuring the quality of higher education at the institutional and systemic levels, it is difficult to talk about effective activities in this area". It is hard to disagree with this, but it is worth reminding students that until each of the participants in the educational process starts with himself, the nationwide system of quality assurance of higher education will not work.

4. Limitations

The survey was conducted in order to find out the first-year students' opinion about the rate of prevalence of academic dishonesty, attitudes to this phenomenon and factors that can help prevent its impact on the level of education.

Method: personal interview by questionnaire.

Interview duration: about 15 minutes.

Sample: 276 first-year students of Donetsk National University of Economics and Trade named after Mykhailo Tugan-Baranovsky (12 groups). The maximum error is 4.9% -5.5% (depending on the group). The control status is 95%.

The students were interviewed directly in the building of the University.

The sample is representative to the first-year students of Ukrainian universities.

The results of our survey differing little from the all-Ukrainian ones, we can assume that they fairly accurately reflect the opinion on the state of affairs with academic honesty and ways to implement it for students of higher education institutions of Ukraine in the first year of study in 2019.

5. Conclusions

Academic fraud is primarily driven by moral, cultural, institutional and educational factors that are extremely important to be aware of. Studying and understanding the nature of their origin will make it possible to develop and implement an effective academic integrity policy, both at the national and local levels.

Academic honesty affects not only the quality of education. It directly depends on how the higher education system in the country educates young people, what values are formed during higher education and what is the "secret of success" in to society. What is more valuable: hard work that will give an opportunity to succeed both the individual and the entire country, or the fraud and questionable "agility" that pulls the country to the bottom if it becomes the norm of social relations.

Therefore, in order to overcome academic dishonesty, it is necessary to address the human dignity of each student, in addition to the formation of appropriate competencies and skills. Because the higher the level of mutual respect, honesty and trust in the university community, the easier it is for students to solve their main task – to study honestly and diligently without resorting to any forms of academic fraud in order to fulfil their professional responsibilities successfully and realize their own creative potential in the future. Gradually, more and more participants in the educational process are becoming aware that the positive changes in education and in the country need to be started with their own academic honesty and worthy attitude towards fulfilling their responsibilities.

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Declaration of competing interest

None.

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