

illuminating Integrity: Exploring College Teachers' Approaches to Address Academic Dishonesty in Online Learning

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ABSTRACT

Academic dishonesty presents a significant challenge in online learning environments, necessitating teachers' implementation of effective approaches. This research investigated the approaches employed by college teachers to address academic dishonesty in online learning using a qualitative descriptive design. The participants were five college teachers who underwent individual interviews to gather the necessary data. Thematic analysis was employed to analyze the collected data. The findings revealed several key themes, including manual and automated plagiarism detection, establishing clear expectations, teacher-student communication, using authentic assessments, and disciplinary actions. These findings hold implications for policy and education practice by highlighting the significance of implementing effective approaches to combat academic dishonesty in online learning environments.

Keywords: *academic dishonesty, academic integrity, approach, online learning environment*

INTRODUCTION

The COVID-19 pandemic has led to a rapid shift towards online learning as a response to the need for remote education (UNESCO, 2020). Like many other educational institutions, Partido State University (ParSU) has implemented online learning to ensure the continuity of education during these challenging times. However, along with the transition to online education comes the concern of academic dishonesty, as students have greater access to digital resources and potential avenues for cheating (Bautista, 2021; Bryzgoria, 2022; Chiang et al., 2022; Sabrina et al., 2022).

The transition to online learning has necessitated adapting traditional methods of preventing cheating, such as face-to-face assessments. In the online environment, students have increased access to digital resources and opportunities for unauthorized collaboration, making it imperative for educators to develop innovative approaches (Sabrina et al., 2022; Surahman & Wang, 2022). These approaches are specifically designed to mitigate academic dishonesty and uphold the integrity of online classes.

Teachers employ a range of approaches to address academic dishonesty. The literature highlights the effectiveness of implementing disciplinary actions, such as grade deductions, to discourage students from engaging in dishonest behaviors (De Lambert et al., 2005; Kitahara & Westfall, 2007). The imposition of school policies that clearly outline expectations and consequences for academic dishonesty plays a crucial role in promoting integrity and shaping student behavior (Bryzgoria, 2022; Davies & Al sharefeen, 2022; Sabrina et al., 2022). Additionally, authentic assessments, which require critical thinking and real-world application, discourage cheating and foster deeper learning (Sotiriadou et al., 2020). Establishing a supportive classroom that promotes open communication, collaboration, and a growth mindset nurtures a culture of integrity and ethical conduct (Whitley & Keith-Spiegel, 2002). Furthermore, the integration of AI tools, such as plagiarism detection software, aids in the detection and prevention of academic dishonesty (Lukashenko et al., 2007).

In the case of ParSU, it is the first time the school has implemented online classes in response to the challenges of the present circumstances. With this significant shift in the educational landscape, it becomes paramount to gain a comprehensive understanding of the diverse approaches employed by teachers to maintain and uphold academic integrity among their students. By gaining insights into these innovative approaches, the institution can proactively address potential concerns and obstacles associated with online learning. Findings will contribute to understanding online academic integrity, inform guidelines, and support college teachers in combating academic dishonesty.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This study employed a qualitative descriptive design based on the work of Lambert and Lambert (2012). This design was deemed suitable due to its alignment with the research objective of exploring the approaches employed by college teachers to address academic dishonesty in the context of online learning.

Participants

The participants of this study are five teachers from the College of Education at Partido State University, Camarines Sur, Philippines, who had experience with synchronous and asynchronous classes. The participants' profiles are shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Participants' Profile

Participants	Gender	Average Class Size	Subjects Taught	Types of Assessments
Teacher 1	Female	21	Microbiology, Analytical Chemistry, Building and Enhancing New Literacies Across Curriculum, Teaching Approaches and Strategies in Values Education, Science, Technology and Society	Summative Tests, Lesson Planning, Online Teaching Demonstrations, Recitation, Performance Tasks
Teacher 2	Female	40	Purposive Communication, Teaching and Assessment of Macro Skills, Technology for Teaching and Learning 1, The Contemporary World, Practice Teaching, Technology for Teaching and Learning 2, Participation and Teaching Assistantship	Online Quiz, Summative Tests, Demo Teaching, Essay, Online Discussions, Peer Collaborations, Performance Tasks
Teacher 3	Female	40	Contemporary World, Purposive Sampling	Individual Activity, Online Quiz, Recitation
Teacher 4	Female	30	Chemistry, PCK1, Research	Recitation, Online Quiz, Essay, Research Work, Performance Tasks
Teacher 5	Male	20	Technology for Teaching and Learning 2, Empowerment Technologies for STEM	Online Quiz, Recitation, Essay, Presentations, Projects, Performance Tasks

Research Instruments

This study used an interview guide with four open-ended questions to collect participants' data. Merriam and Tisdell (2016) emphasize that asking fewer broad questions facilitates active listening and exploration of participant responses, leading to potentially valuable contributions. The guide thoroughly explored the

participants' approaches to addressing academic dishonesty in online learning. The researchers used an audio recorder during interviews to ensure accurate data collection. Table 2 presents the interview questions and sample responses from the participants.

Table 2. Interview Questions and Sample Responses

Interview Questions	Sample Responses
<p>1. What do you do before, during, and after online classes?</p>	<p>Teacher Participant 1: "Before online class, I usually prepared the materials for my class. I also did some friendly and informal consultations with my students."</p> <p>Teacher Participant 2: "Before conducting an online class or even with face-to-face classes, I ensure that my students understand my syllabus very well. Also included in the syllabus are the classroom policies that emphasize the originality or observance of the original works and a provision on anti-plagiarism. Within the duration of the semester I ensure that the submitted outputs of my students are original and it really resembles their learning from my subject by checking properly the cited references whether these are reliable, valid and come from reliable resources or references and I also take note that my students do not copy from each other by checking properly or really looking into their outputs and then if ever I notice that there are students who have similar or the same outputs, I give them warning at first. But if they committed again to copying the other students' outputs, then I can give them a failing grade or I reprimand them and give them disciplinary actions like reporting it to the proper authorities like the program director and the dean for proper action. After the conduct of the course in my subject, I also ensure that the outputs generated by my students really manifest their learning from my subject not just copied from the internet or from anywhere else."</p>
<p>2. Tell us something about your students' behavior in the online learning environment.</p>	<p>Teacher Participant 4: "There were instances that some of my students copied contents from the internet. I deduct points and talk to the student."</p> <p>Teacher Participant 5: "Submitting plagiarized contents. I think that is the most pervasive incident that teachers may observe. They usually submit plagiarized content. Secondly, aside from submitting plagiarized content even in recitation, there are some instances that they tend to read their answers instead of explaining them spontaneously to the class. In addition, the use of A.I. tools such as Bard, and ChatGPT in answering questions."</p>
<p>3. How do you handle your students' behavior?</p>	<p>Teacher Participant 1: "Well, I do believe that this is not new to you already. Some would plagiarize or copy others' work. That's the thing I already encountered already. It is an extreme incident that I observe in my students' performance. However, most students are still very good while others for me are mediocre. In that case, I usually do is to do the direct that is to call the attention of the students to prevent it from happening again in the future. I give non-objective assessment tasks. One example is a 1-minute video reflection."</p> <p>Teacher Participant 3: "I always have what we call PM or personal messages. I maximize messenger because I believe it's more personalized during consultation and I use plagiarism checker powered by Turnitin."</p>

<p>3. How do you handle your students' behavior?</p>	<p>Teacher Participant 4: "You have to set some rules that they have to follow at the beginning of the classes."</p> <p>Teacher Participant 5: "Once I detect it using Grammarly and Plagiarism Checker X, I return the output and put notes at the bottom stating that I found out that the work is not hers/his and it has plagiarized content."</p>
<p>4. Tell us something about your students' performance in general.</p>	<p>Teacher Participant 1: "Honestly, I am actually very considerate and understanding. Due to humanitarian reasons, I always consider my students' work even if they submit mediocre output and plagiarized work. I give them grades though I know they submitted it for compliance with the subject."</p> <p>Teacher Participant 2: "My students' performance in general, I do not base my assessment on paper and pencil tests. Mostly, paper and pencil tests will be on one side of assessing the student's performance, so I consider their actual performances depending on the subject's focus. If it's about communication, I do not ask them to just answer quizzes or exams. I provide activities that really require their performance in the skills that I want to observe from them."</p>

Data Gathering Procedure and Ethics

The study commenced by obtaining approval from the college dean. Then, informed consent was secured from all participants, underscoring their voluntary participation and safeguarding their rights. Face-to-face interviews were conducted, employing a crafted interview guide with targeted questions. These questions served as a foundation for the interviews, enabling the researchers to delve into the teachers' approaches to combating academic dishonesty. The interviews were recorded to ensure accurate documentation and transcribed for thorough data analysis. Throughout the data-gathering process, strict adherence to minimum health protocols was observed, prioritizing the well-being and safety of the researchers and the participants involved.

Data Analysis

This study utilized the thematic analysis process outlined by Braun and Clarke (2006), which consists of a six-step approach. The steps included becoming familiar with the data, generating initial codes, searching for themes, reviewing themes, defining themes, and finally, writing up the findings. To ensure reliability and validity, the study adopted procedures recommended by Creswell and Creswell (2018), including cross-checking by experts and presenting results to the study participants.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The study identified five themes related to teachers' approaches to addressing academic dishonesty in online learning environments. These include manual and automated plagiarism detection, establishing clear expectations, teacher-student communication, using authentic assessments, and disciplinary actions.

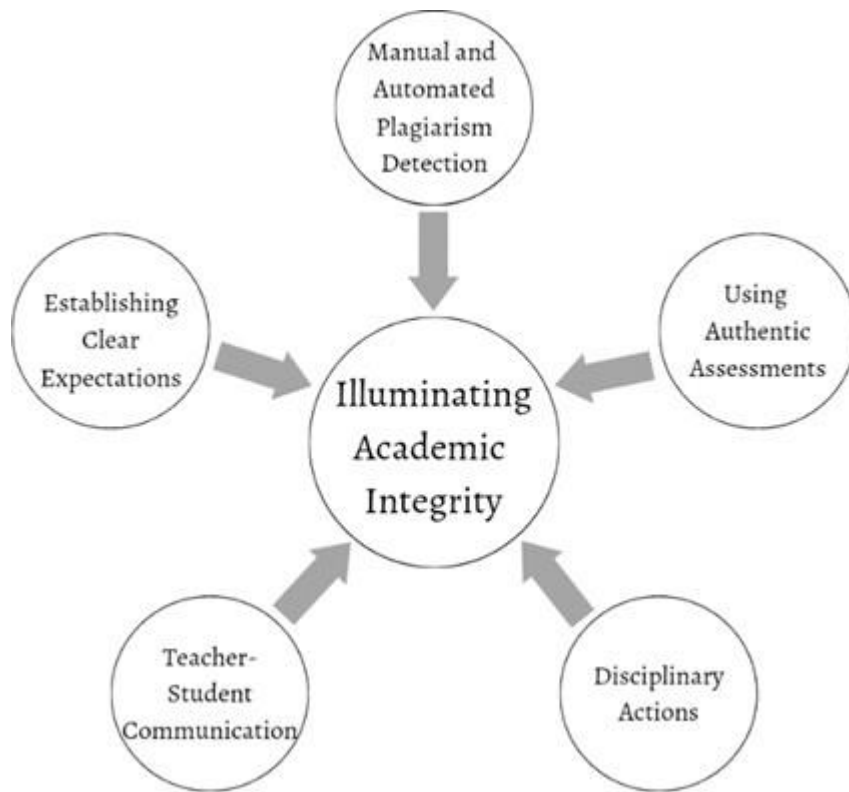


Figure 1. Teachers’ Approaches to Address Academic Dishonesty in Online Learning

Theme 1. Manual and Automated Plagiarism Detection

The teachers employ manual and automated plagiarism detection methods to combat academic dishonesty. Teacher Participant 2 said, “I ensure that the submitted outputs of my students are original and it resembles their learning from my subject by checking properly the cited references whether these are reliable, valid and come from reliable resources or references.” Teacher Participant 2 does a manual detection by checking the cited references or resources and ensuring the submitted outputs of the students were original works. While Teacher Participant 5 stated, “Once I detect it using Grammarly and Plagiarism Checker X, I return the output and put notes at the bottom stating that I found out that the work is not hers/his and it has plagiarized content.” And Teacher Participant 3 revealed, “I use a plagiarism checker powered by Turnitin.” Both Teacher Participants 5 and 3 used automated detectors.

Automated plagiarism detection tools, such as Turnitin, Plagiarism Checker X, Eve2, Copy Catch Gold, Word Check, Glatt, etc., have been widely adopted in educational settings (Lukashenko et al., 2007; Surahman & Wang, 2022). These tools use advanced algorithms to identify potential instances of plagiarism. Combining manual and automated detection methods can provide a more robust approach to combating academic dishonesty in the online learning environment. By utilizing both methods, teachers can effectively address academic dishonesty, promote integrity, and maintain the credibility of the educational experience.

Theme 2. Establishing Clear Expectations

The teachers in this study demonstrate the importance of effective communication and setting clear expectations regarding academic integrity in the online learning environment. By outlining policies, discussing the consequences of dishonest behavior, and emphasizing the significance of ethical conduct, the teachers aim to establish a culture of integrity among their students. Teacher Participant 2 said, “I ensure that my students understand my syllabus very well. Also included in the syllabus are the classroom policies that emphasize the originality or observance of the original works and a provision on anti-plagiarism.”

Including the regulation regarding plagiarism in class orientation makes the students aware of the repercussion of copying the works of others. Teacher Participant 4 has the same thought about setting the rules at the beginning of the classes. The teacher said, “You must set some rules they must follow at the beginning of the classes.”

Effective communication and clear expectations regarding academic integrity are crucial in combating academic dishonesty in online learning (Bryzgornia, 2022; Davies & Al sharefeen, 2022; Sabrina et al., 2022). Teachers can proactively address plagiarism and other forms of misconduct by outlining policies, discussing consequences, and emphasizing ethical conduct. Including regulations in class orientations or syllabi helps to make students aware of the seriousness of academic integrity, setting the stage for a culture of honesty and originality.

Theme 3. Teacher-Student Communication

The participants in this study demonstrate the importance of open dialogue, clarifying doubts, and creating a supportive environment for students to address academic dishonesty in online learning. Teacher Participant 1 said, “In that case, I usually do the direct, that is, to call the students’ attention to prevent academic dishonesty from happening again in the future.” This direct communication is a proactive approach to raising students’ awareness of the consequences of dishonest behavior. While Teacher Participant 3 said, “I always have what we call PM or personal messages. I maximize messenger because I believe it’s more personalized during consultation.” This personalized approach facilitates a deeper understanding of academic integrity and may reduce instances of dishonesty.

Direct communication and personalized consultations promote academic integrity (De Lambert et al., 2005; Whitley & Keith-Spiegel, 2002). These practices foster a culture of honesty, improve the learning experience, and maintain the integrity of the online learning environment.

Theme 4. Using Authentic Assessments

Teachers in the study employ authentic assessment strategies as a proactive approach to address academic dishonesty. Authentic assessment involves designing assessments that mirror real-world tasks and require students to apply their knowledge and skills meaningfully. Teacher Participant 1 said, “I give non-objective assessment tasks. One example is a 1-minute video reflection.” Teacher Participant 2 added, “I do not base my assessment on paper and pencil tests. Mostly, paper and pencil tests will be on one side of assessing the student’s performance, so I consider their actual performances depending on the subject’s focus. If it’s about communication, I do not ask them to just answer quizzes or exams. I provide activities that really require their performance in the skills that I want to observe from them.” Teacher Participant 2 emphasizes the importance of assessing students’ performances in relevant skills rather than relying solely on paper and pencil tests.

By implementing authentic assessments, teachers aim to create an environment where students are motivated to demonstrate their understanding and abilities authentically, reducing the temptation and opportunities for academic dishonesty (Sabrina et al., 2022; Sotiriadou et al. 2020; Surahman & Wang, 2022). These assessment methods frequently incorporate open-ended questions, projects, presentations, performance tasks, portfolios, and real-world simulations, enabling students to demonstrate their critical thinking, problem-solving, and creativity. By shifting the emphasis from mere memorization to the application and synthesis of knowledge, teachers can discourage academic dishonesty and foster an environment of academic integrity and authentic learning.

Theme 5. Disciplinary Actions

The teachers in the study utilize disciplinary actions to address academic dishonesty among students. These

actions include giving a failing grade, providing an incomplete remark, deducting points, or reporting the misconduct to the proper authorities. Teacher Participant 2 said, ‘If they committed to copying the other students’ outputs, then I can give them a failing grade.’ While Teacher Participant 4 said, ‘I deduct points.’ Through these, the two teachers communicate that there are consequences for not adhering to academic honesty standards. Also, Teacher Participant 2 added, ‘I reprimand them and give them disciplinary actions like reporting it to the proper authorities like the program director and the college dean for proper action.’ This highlights the recognition that academic dishonesty is a serious offense that may require intervention beyond the immediate classroom level. However, teachers still demonstrate humanitarian considerations toward students, despite instances of academic misconduct. Teacher Participant 1 said, ‘Due to humanitarian reasons, I always consider my students’ work even if they submitted a mediocre output and a plagiarized work. I give them grades though I know they just submitted it for compliance with the subject.’

Studies have demonstrated that implementing consequences, such as failing grades or point deductions, can act as deterrents and reinforce the significance of ethical behavior (Bryzgornia, 2022; De Lambert et al., 2005; Kitahara & Westfall, 2007). Also, reporting cases of academic dishonesty to the appropriate authorities is crucial for addressing the misconduct and upholding the integrity of the educational institution (Nadelson, 2007; Whitley & Keith-Spiegel, 2002). However, it is essential to note that teachers should balance applying appropriate disciplinary measures and considering individual circumstances to foster a fair and supportive learning environment.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In conclusion, this study provides valuable insights into the approaches implemented by college teachers to address academic dishonesty in the online learning environment. The identified themes highlight the multifaceted approaches teachers employ to mitigate dishonest behavior. Teachers can proactively identify and discourage plagiarism and other academic misconduct by utilizing plagiarism detection tools and establishing transparent guidelines. Open communication channels and clear expectations foster an environment that promotes academic integrity, while authentic assessments encourage genuine student engagement and discourage cheating. Additionally, implementing disciplinary actions ensures accountability and serves as a deterrent against academic dishonesty. These findings provide valuable guidance to college teachers in combating academic dishonesty in the online learning environment. By implementing the identified approaches, educators can establish a culture of integrity and enhance the educational experience for students. These approaches are particularly relevant in the current class setups, where remote learning has become widespread. Adapting these approaches to the online setting enables teachers to ensure academic integrity and promote a meaningful learning environment for all students. Future research can investigate the effectiveness of these approaches in diverse educational contexts, including other colleges and campuses within the study locale. It would provide valuable insights into the adaptability and transferability of the identified approaches, allowing for a comprehensive understanding of their efficacy in different settings. Furthermore, examining the long-term impact of addressing academic dishonesty in online learning spaces would contribute to our understanding of how these interventions influence student behavior and academic integrity over time. Additionally, further exploration of innovative technological solutions and evaluation of their efficacy can enhance approaches to combat academic dishonesty.

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