

Cheating in Examinations: A Study of Academic Dishonesty in a Malaysian College

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ABSTRACT

Recent empirical studies indicate that cheating by post-secondary students is prevalent in many countries. This study attempts to explore academic dishonesty among students at Terengganu Advanced Technical Institute University College (TATiUC) in Malaysia. Cheating techniques, preventive measures and the support required by lecturers to handle cheating incidents were examined. Six former students who were confirmed cheaters and two lecturers and administrators at TATiUC participated in the study. Data were collected by using narrative responses and interviews. The results showed that creative and innovative techniques were used to cheat successfully. It was also found that participants believed that even if preventive measures were taken, it was not possible to stop academic cheating entirely although it could be deterred to a certain extent. Furthermore, it was discovered that there were variations in the implementation of examination rules and regulations by lecturers. Finally, the study revealed that support in terms of training and courses was needed to deal with academic dishonesty.

Keywords: *academic dishonesty, cheating, examinations*

ISSN 1823-7797

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Introduction

Cheating by students in higher education institutions is a growing concern for educators and employers because of its impact on the quality of education and the reliability of assessment. Graves (2008) has indicated that students who cheat on tests are more likely to engage in dishonest activities in the workplace than those who do not. Furthermore, such activities may harm not only their colleagues, particularly those in high-risk professions such as engineers, doctors, nurses and so on, but also the organization in which they work. In addition, employers nowadays demand competent graduates who are ethical in order “to cope with the pressures and complexities of working in a rapidly changing, competitive environment” (Zahran, 1997, p. 124).

Research shows that academic dishonesty or cheating is not restricted to a certain country or geographical area but is a universal phenomenon in educational institutions. Recent empirical studies indicate that cheating by post-secondary students is prevalent in many countries, including Poland, Germany, Spain, Portugal, the Middle East, Nigeria and Taiwan (Hughes, Butler, Kritsonis & Herrington, 2007; Teixeira & Rocha, 2008; McCabe, Feghali & Abdallah, 2008; Olasehinde-Williams, Abdullahi & Owolabi, 2003; Lin & Wen, 2007). Nevertheless, cheating behaviors, even though varying in their seriousness, purpose and social dimension (Athanasou & Olasehinde, 2001) still need to receive attention from educators and administrators in understanding because cheating undermines not only learning (Boulville, 2008) but also the validity and reliability of assessment.

Recently, much has been said about cheating in examinations, including tests and quizzes, by students in Malaysian post-secondary institutions. For example, according to a report on the issue whether to ban hand phones in tertiary education institutions (“Tech Gadget Ban”, 2007), between 2000 and 2003, 23 students were caught cheating in examinations at a Malaysian public higher education institution (“UPM Drive”, 2003) and an allegation was made to The *Malay Mail* reporter concerning impropriety surrounding the Certificate in Legal Practice (“Desperate Call”, 2001). Thus, cheating in examinations in higher education institutions should be investigated in order to help educators and administrators understand academic dishonesty.

The purpose of this study is to investigate cheating at a Malaysian tertiary institution. It has the following objectives: to investigate the techniques used by students to cheat in examinations, to examine the

measures taken by lecturers and administrators to prevent students cheating and to examine the support given to lecturers in dealing with cheating.

Literature Review

Several studies have found that cheating is widespread in many countries. For example, Lord and Chiodo (1995) have found in their survey of undergraduate students in Western Pennsylvania that 83% of the respondents had cheated in the past or during the current academic year, 80% had admitted to using crib notes or written science terms on their shoes, wrists or other parts of their body to get by minor quizzes and over three quarters admitted cheating on major exams and projects.

Research has also suggested that institutional contexts such as honor codes have significant effects on student cheating behavior (McCabe et al., 2001). According to Konheim-Kalkstein, Stellmark and Shilkey (2008), an honor code is more effective in deterring cheating behavior as shown in their comparative study of honor code and non-honor code classrooms at a non-honor code university. On the other hand, Vandehey, Diekhoff and LaBeff's (2007) research findings indicate that even if students are aware of the institution's honor code this does not reduce cheating.

Meanwhile, individual factors such as age, gender, GPA and participation in extracurricular activities, although less influential than contextual factors, still "have some effect on cheating propensity" (Teixeira & Rocha, 2008, p. 16). Smyth and Davis (2003), for example, found that the majority of male students in two-year colleges admitted that they were more likely to cheat than were the female students. However, Athanasou and Olasehinde (2001) concluded that although differences between males and females were evident, the effect of these differences was quite low.

McCabe et al. (1999) have identified other factors that can influence cheating such as a perceived need to get high grades, parental pressures, a desire to excel, laziness, a lack of responsibility, a lack of character, poor self-image, and a lack of personal integrity. Kerkvliet and Sigmund (1999) also found that instructors or lecturers were influential since students believed that their lecturers or instructors were concerned about them and were involved actively in the learning process, and therefore these students tended to cheat less. Their study of classroom settings indicated that more test proctors, use of non-multiple choice exams, and

use of multiple versions of an exam help to reduce students' tendency to cheat in examination.

A number of studies have examined public perceptions of academic dishonesty. It has been found that school administrators and academicians perceive that cheating in examinations or academic dishonesty is a serious offense (Leonard & LeBrasseur, 2008). Coalter et al. (2007, p. 11) found that academic misdemeanor in a mid-size state university in the United States is "an important issue that needs to be addressed". However, Zauwiyah, Maimun and Junaini (2008) discovered that business students in a Malaysian university perceived that some level of academic dishonesty is acceptable in some academic settings. Prenshaw et al. (2001) found that students who are more likely to view cheating as common at their institution are those who are younger, who have chosen rather lenient teaching staff, who see themselves as good students, and who do not take seriously the university's reputation for excellence.

In general, a survey of the literature indicates that lecturers and administrators regard cheating as a serious offense although not all students concur with this view. Cheating is certainly widespread and a variety of factors have been identified as contributing to its extent and prevalence. Some studies also suggest testing practices that are likely to reduce cheating.

Methods

The methodology employed in this study is qualitative in nature. In gathering data for the study, purposive sampling was used. Two groups of subjects were selected: six former Terengganu Advanced Technical Institute-University College (TATiUC) students and two lecturers.

The first group of three male and three female subjects were former TATiUC students who had recently graduated. They were chosen based on the first author's observation of their past cheating behaviors and also for their confession to cheating at the institution. Their participation was voluntary. The subjects were approached over the telephone to ask if they would be interested in joining the study. After receiving their consent, six questionnaires to gauge their narrative responses were distributed by e-mail and given personally in a thumb-drive as they had requested. The two lecturers were TATiUC's Dean of Student Affairs and Alumni (HEPA), Adnan bin Husin, and the Head of Academic Affairs (HEA), Farid bin Razali (both names are pseudonyms). Narrative

responses were used to gauge students' cheating techniques and an interview to obtain lecturers' perceptions of student cheating.

Findings

The results of the study showed that four cheating techniques were used by all the student respondents. First, the most frequent technique reported was using prohibited materials such as cheat-sheets as five out of six respondents described how they smuggled cheat-sheets into the examination hall. Among the objects used to import the forbidden materials were permissible items such as calculator, stationery, personal belongings, articles of clothing and dictionaries. According to Student M2:

During exam I will open it [notes] either during I go to toilet or just put it under my answer sheets. I also make small notes, fold it very small and hide in my tie. In the exam just get the notes from the tie. When lecturer comes I will bite the tie. For sure he will not check the tie because my saliva is on the tie heheh... Another technique is to carve notes at the back of calculator with pin.

Student M1 reported:

Make a small notes and put into pencil box, calculator, wallet, hand phone etc. sometimes in my pocket and take it out when going to toilet. For certain case put notes under the question paper. When lecturer not looking, I look at the notes.

Sometimes, if peeking at the prohibited materials was not possible, the students would figure out an alternative to smuggle the forbidden information into the exam hall by excusing themselves to go the restroom to find answers at a storage place where the materials were hidden. Student F3 and Student M2 both described going to the bathroom to look at notes:

Going to toilet to look at notes. (Student F3)

During exam I will open it either during I go to toilet or just put it under my answer sheets. (Student M2)

All these smuggling tactics were premeditated and well-executed to avoid the surveillance of lecturers and invigilators. Possible distractions such as biting a tie and putting cheat sheets under an answer booklet

were also used to reduce and possibly eliminate the suspicion of cheating among lecturers and invigilators. The student respondents also manipulated the permitted items so that illegal materials were imported into the examination room. They also used a variety of creative and innovative ways to smuggle cheat-sheets or prohibited information into class tests. The findings were found to be consistent with the Dean of HEPA's and the Head of HEA's observations on the cheating techniques used by students:

They bring notes in exam hall such as paper sheet, bring small notes or here at TATIUC student called them 'toyol', write on the body, arms. For math and science exams, one of the cheating techniques is desk notes. Before the exam, they write the necessary formulas as many as possible on the desk. (Dean of HEPA)

First, they bring small notes in the exam, in pencil case, socks, and in long sleeve shirt. You will notice because students who never wear long sleeve shirt to class will wear long sleeve for the exams. That's the trick, you know.. Then you will notice they keep looking at the sleeves during the exam. Some write on eraser then pass to member next to them, write notes at the back of calculator for one exam. Then for the next exam, erase it, and write new ones. If they get caught, it will be easy to erase the evidence also. They also get extra copy of answer booklet from previous exam then bring in the booklet that was written with pre- prepared answer. (Head of HEA)

In addition, even though spontaneous cheating may take place, the decision to cheat was made before the examination took place as explained by Student F2 and Student M1:

I'll prepare some short note while I feel the subject is very difficult. (Student F2)

For certain subjects especially the difficult one or easy to cheat one. Also when the lecturer is lenient when invigilating the exams. (Student M1)

The least used technique according to the student respondents was the manipulation of unwitting victims, suggesting that collaboration was preferred and that students willingly participated in cheating in class examinations. This method refers to the technique whereby cheaters

copied answers from unwilling accomplices (Shon, 2006). The unwilling participants are the victims of theft as their answers were obtained without permission. In Student F1's recollection of her past cheating, she described how she was willing to cheat in one incident but was a victim in the next:

Yes I have been caught because give chances to my best friend to borrow my answer paper. But I'm so angry with her because my answer paper also she past to her boyfriend without my permission. My fault also....give chances to her.

None of the other subjects, however, including the Dean of HEPA and Head of HEA mentioned this particular method.

Nevertheless, other techniques were acknowledged by the student respondents. The responses of Students F1, F2 and M1 indicated that they had used semiotic methods which involved utilizing signs and gestures as mechanisms to cheat. Student F2 "use sign to tell my answer" and Student M1 confessed to "using signal for answer with my friend". It was noted by Student F1 that she had employed this method because she was afraid to smuggle cheat sheet in in-class examinations while M1 indicated that a willing accomplice was required to transmit information through signaling. Students M1 and M3 used tactical deployment techniques such as positioning themselves in proximity to other students who had studied for the examination or who were good students. Consider the following:

*Sometimes, I sit close to good student so I can ask him answer.
(Student M1)*

I also discuss with friends to arrange seating. I and not very good student will sit next to good student. So we can look at his answer when lecturer not looking. (Student M3)

In his recollection of this cheating technique, Student M1 confessed to placing himself next to a good student so that he was able to request answers to the examination question. Student M2 reported that seating arrangements were decided within his social circle before the examination so that answers could be shared.

The technique of distracting the instructor was also used. With this method, students took the opportunity to cheat when another student distracted the lecturer by asking questions or requesting extra answer sheets:

Another technique, I and friends already arrange one student will ask lecturer questions so when lecturer busy we can share answers. At the last minute when we want to submit test papers in front on the table, one student will ask lecturer when lecturer busy we look at other students test on the table and copy. Sometimes lecturer cannot do anything because many of us around the table. (Student M3)

It is also easy to cheat when another student ask question to lecturer or request extra answer papers, at this time I ask my friend the answer. (Student M1)

This technique requires cheaters use friends and classmates in order to successfully carry out the plan. Willing accomplices are pivotal as a participant or participants will distract the invigilators while cheaters request answers from others or look at prohibited materials.

The students and lecturers in the present study revealed that several techniques were frequently used by other students including using prohibited materials or information. The following are examples of the informants' descriptions of smuggling techniques employed by others:

Same like me because we always help each other and shares answer. My friend also looks at textbook put nearby. When lecturer not looking he finds the answer from the textbook. ... Most are same like me. But I also heard student ask a friend to get test copy from other class who has earlier test. So he can prepare answer and score in that tests. (Student M1)

Put small notes inside the pen so his/her bring so many pen in exam.... Funny technique some student write down the notes on the calf. After that he traverse they leg to see the notes. banyak bulu kaki orang tak nampak dia meniru hihihih. (After that he pulled up his pants to see the notes on his calf. There's lots of hair on the calf, people couldn't see that he's cheating) (Student M3)

Student M1 said that sharing answers among friends was considered as helping a friend in need and was common. He also reflected that textbooks were sometimes brought into the examination room and that when there was an opportunity, his friend would look at the prohibited material for answers.

These findings on the common use of smuggling were consistent with the description of the method by Head of HEA in the excerpt below:

Students also leave notes outside the room and toilet, during the exam they will go out to read them. ...he hide notes under his thighs or sit under the notes la... and keep looking down when answering questions. So I come closer and ask him to stand, he refuse at first. Saying he's busy writing but I insist.. so you know what happen?.. He "kepit" (hold) the notes in between his thighs and stand up. But I insist that he open (spread) his legs. The notes fell down. ... Some bring hand phones in the exam. They hide in pockets even though not allowed. The rigidity of this rule again depends on the invigilator. If invigilator lenient, they will allow students to bring, so they write notes on hand phones before the exam. Write answers on the skin – arms, diagram, formula for engineering subjects then covered with long sleeve. Or write notes at the back of the subject registration slip because students need to show the slip to sit for the exam (Head of HEA).

As indicated by the Head of HEA in the excerpt above, student cheaters used the opportunity to temporarily leave the examination room to look at prepared notes outside. He also pointed out that even though students were aware that certain items such as hand phones were prohibited in the examination hall, they would still attempt to bring them in as certain invigilators would allow them. The cheaters also attempted to exchange prohibited information in the examination hall by purposely dropping answer scripts on the floor and talking with mouth half-closed.

Other techniques used by students at TATiUC were reported by the respondents. It was reported that the semiotic method was used to communicate answers to accomplices as stated in the following narrative excerpts:

Asking friend, using sign such as eyes or finger etc: 1 finger = a, 2 finger = b, 3 finger = c and 4 finger = d. ... They..., using signs. (Student F3)

Same like me (using signal for answer with my friend) because we always help each other and shares answer. (Student M1)

A sign can include everything which may be used as an indication of a signified answer. It could be a natural gesture such as yawning, coughing

or throat clearing or a pre-determined sign such as using number of fingers to indicate certain answers as described by Student F3 above. Since signals were pre-determined, it seems that Student F3 made use of the signs to obtain answers for multiple-choice questions. Student M1 hinted at the need for collaborators in order to employ this technique.

The Head of HEA pointed out that the tactical deployment technique was used by students:

A student will show answers to friends next to her or him by holding the paper sideways like this ... as if he or she just flipped the paper to check answers on this other side of the exam sheet. (Head of HEA)

An approach used by some students at TATiUC was to sit strategically which enabled an accomplice to cheating behavior such as flipping examination papers to deceive the invigilators. Another technique was for students to distract invigilators as the Head of HEA remarked in the following excerpt:

Also they already “pakat2”. or discuss la before exam to make the invigilator busy by asking extra papers or ask questions... then the others will copy others answers or cheat.

The respondents were also asked about measures to prevent cheating during their study at TATiUC. It was found that several strategies were employed. One was proctoring. Student M1 reported “they (lecturers)...walking around during examinations”. M3 mentioned “2-3 invigilators must be cared for exam” and F2 described how proctoring was carried out as “some (lecturers) make rounds but still we all can cheat”.

Another two students mentioned lecturers prohibiting irrelevant materials in the examination hall such as tissues, paper and even dictionaries. In addition, two out of six students stated that checking permissible items was conducted before students were allowed to enter the examination hall. Some lecturers required some space in seating arrangements, warned the students orally before examinations commenced, escorted students to the restroom, provided study guides or clues to the examination questions, conducted open book tests or implemented dress codes to prevent hiding materials in pockets.

When asked whether such preventive measures were able to prevent cheating, most students answered that they did not work. Students M1, M3 and F2 claimed that students could always outsmart the instructors through the various techniques employed:

I don't think so because we use different methods of cheating depends on situation. And it is very difficult to lecturers to monitor all students. (Student M1)

The student will find its various technique to cheating in exam. (Student M3)

I think, not success at all because sometimes student is very clever to use some technique to hide from lecturer's see them. (Student F3)

However, Student M3 mentioned that proctoring had a better chance of succeeding when there were several invigilators. Student F2 indicated:

No. Most of student thinking that cheating in examination like as a habit. They will do it always to get a high score mark in their exam, to solve their problem of cannot give the best answer in exam.

This is also confirmed by the Dean of HEPA who claimed that:

No. Because cheating still happensBecause some students who cheat say, "We have to cheat in order to get ahead in life. Besides, everyone is doing it. It's no big deal!" Hold on... let me find the cheating report. (Looking for the report) Ok. Jumpa.. (Ok, found it). In 2007 we have 14 cases. ... In 2008 we have 18 cases. The reported cases seem to increase.

The ineffectiveness of the measures implemented was attributed to the lecturers' practice of favoritism in executing the rules and regulations in the examination hall as Student F1 expressed her dissatisfaction on how certain cheating incidents were not reported as in: "No because certain of they not take action when their favorites student cheating in examination. So students will cheat". Student F2 also stated a similar reason as "some of lecture will give chance to her/his student to cheating". Finally, another reason was the difficulty of understanding the medium of instruction, English. Student F3 rationalized cheating as a method used by low proficiency students to cope with understanding the lecture and exam questions.

Not really. It is difficult to prevent because the lecture is in English so difficult for students to understand. May be around 20-30% TATiUC student cheat in exam. Even now still many students bring toyol especially if students from Terengganu. Because

many Terengganu students cannot communicate and understand English very well. So that's why they cheat.

The lecturers were asked to describe preventive measures Apart from those mentioned previously, it was found that seven other strategies were practiced. The first strategy used was informing and reminding students of the rules and regulations of the examinations:

TATiUC has rules and policies for cheating in exams. These exam rules and policies were published to students so that they know what happens if they cheat in exam. It is hoped that cheating can be prevented. Students were given the rules and policies during registration week. Also we post the notice for rules and regulations not only on notice boards but also at every exam hall so that they aware of these policies. (Dean of HEPA)

Inform rules and regulations as we put notice everywhere with the consequences if students caught cheating so they should be aware and not to cheat. Student Book which contains the rules and regulations about the cheating is also distributed to all students during registration week. (Looking for student handbook and hand it to the interviewer) So they should know of the punishments that will be given if they are found guilty of cheating in exams. However, only cases with evidence and/or witness will be prosecuted. (Head of HEA)

It was found that a wide range of tactics were used to ensure that students received the information pertaining to the rules and regulations of the examinations and the institution's policy on cheating such as putting up notices at strategic places including the venues where the examination took place, distributing student handbook as well as circulating in student bulletins and pamphlets. Cizek (1999) claimed that the student handbook was the primary mechanism utilized to disseminate information pertaining to the examinations and cheating policies but were poorly represented at the examination location. Another strategy used was forming a Disciplinary Committee composed of administrators and lecturers of TATIUC as stated by Dean of HEPA in the following:

Not only that, we also have disciplinary committee consist of Rector, prosecutor from HEPA that is myself. So if any student caught cheating, they will go on trial and the cheaters will be punished depending on the severity of the casesla.

Among the functions of this committee was the prosecution of student cheaters. In addition, the Head of HEA stated two conditions for accused cheaters to be penalized by the Disciplinary Committee, i.e. those being cheaters caught with evidence or incidents witnessed by invigilator/s. He also stated that accused cheaters without any of the aforementioned conditions would be released with warnings as “only cases with evidence and/or witness will be prosecuted. If not the students will be off with warning”. Hence, only reported cheating cases are sentenced by the Disciplinary Committee. Another strategy was to announce cheaters who were found guilty and their punishments via notices on campus:

Before this, we don't publish the cases. Now we do since I've become the dean. We publish how many students were caught cheating from certain exams and the punishment given. But we don't published their names only their programs. So their privacy are still protected. (Dean of HEPA)

I think HEPA and management had started to announce those who were found guilty to public this sem so that it would be a lesson learned for the others. However, it is not within HEA's power to announce the cheaters. (Head of HEA)

This was a new strategy implemented by TATiUC to prevent cheating. Even though the results of the cheating trials were made public, the names of student cheaters were not disclosed to protect their confidentiality. In addition, students were warned before and during the examinations:

For example before exam starts, I announce the rules to the students about cheating policy in the exams. Just to remind the students. (Dean of HEPA)

If I suspect students cheat but I don't have any evidence, I will make “ghepok” announcement (false announcement) saying that I have found certain students cheat so I warn them to put away their notes or stop cheating. Because if I see the incident one more time, I will make a report. It's as if I'm giving them another chance to stop before I catch them. Another way is “wat ghepok” jugok (threatening act). I'll take their matrix card and write their names on a piece of paper as if I'm writing their names to report. Usually the students apologize and stop cheating. This act is a warningla to these cheaters. (Head of HEA)

The Dean of HEPA gave an oral warning about cheating and personally issued warnings.

Psychological approaches were used by the Dean of HEPA:

I also use psychological approach. By bringing them to feel proud of themselves and a sense of accomplishments regardless of their test result. Also create or improve students' self-confidence so they don't have to cheat in exam to have good grades but proud that they have worked hard to prepare for the exams.

He recognized his role as an instructor to inculcate values which would discourage cheating and promote academic integrity. His efforts include encouraging feeling proud of own accomplishments, working hard regardless of their results as well as self-confidence. Another strategy was reporting cheating incidents to the Academic Affairs Department (HEA).

They will report to HEA if any incident happens. Some of the lecturer respond by giving warnings, after that if student repeat the cheating report to HEA. Some lecturer report directly HEA without warning. If cheating is too obvious the lecturers have to report immediately. Some cases can still be tolerated such as talking because maybe they need to borrow pencil or pen. But sometime they take advantage. (Dean of HEPA)

There are also who are quite rigid but only those who are rigid will report. The lenient lecturers just give warning because they don't want to deal procedures. (Head of HEA)

The Head of HEA indicated that cheating incidents were reported by lecturers who were considered rigid compared to the lenient ones who preferred warnings. He also realized many cheating occurrences were unreported. According to Cizek (1999), most cheating incidents were unnoticed and unreported. The Dean of HEPA stated that the decision to file a report depends on the severity of the cheating. Some reported directly to HEA without prior warning, while some warned the students before a report was filed. Finally, guidelines were given to lecturers about preventive measures during examinations. These guidelines were disseminated through briefing to the invigilators about examination rules and regulations:

Yes, the guidelines are provided and to prevent the cheating, those students get caught will be expelled from college or will

get a zero. But no discussion. Only guidelines to follow, so we just follow the rules. (Dean of HEPA)

We gave briefing to invigilators especially with new lecturers. But, we don't make it compulsory for senior lecturers to attend this briefing. Because we assume they know the rules already. In terms of discussion with lecturers dealing specifically with cheating we don't have. But in the briefing, we have question and answer session regarding invigilating the exams. Any questions and discussion can be forwarded at this session. (Head of HEA)

The Dean of HEPA also stated the consequences of cheating that were outlined in the examination rules and regulations such as expulsion or receiving a failing grade. Whereas, the Head of HEPA explained that attending the briefing was not obligatory for all lecturers who were going to invigilate the examinations except for the new ones. Due to their past invigilating experience, he assumed that senior lecturers were familiar with the rules and regulations of the examinations. Hence, he treated their attendance at the briefing with leniency. Both interviewees revealed that specific discussion in dealing with cheating prevention measures was not available to the lecturers at that point. Nevertheless, questions and discussion about invigilating examinations could be forwarded during this question and answer session.

In conclusion, a variety of strategies were implemented by the instructors or the institution as a whole as described by the student respondents. The two lecturers further added seven more measures that were implemented at TATiUC.

The interviewees were in disagreement on the support given to lecturers at TATiUC. The Dean of HEPA claimed that only one kind of support was given to lecturers; briefing on examination rules and regulation:

So far what we have is only briefing on rules and regulations of being invigilators before the exams. But no courses or no counseling is given to lecturers. ... Yes in a way. Because it will improve the process of supervising exams. Good for new lecturers or invigilators so that they know the rules and what should be taken in dealing with cheating. But it's not enough. Lecturers should be given more support.

He further explained that the briefing had benefited new lecturers as information about dealing with cheating was disseminated and he believed that it improved proctoring. Nevertheless, he stated that support was not sufficient to assist lecturers in general. On the other hand, the Head of HEA repeatedly stated that support was not extended to lecturers in dealing with cheating as he remarked, "So far no support is given. Not in terms of attending courses or counseling or anything. Because no support is given. Yes. Of course (Support should be given to lecturers)". However, both were in agreement that some form of support was required to assist lecturers in handling cheating cases.

Turning to support given to academic staff to deal with cheating, the Dean of HEPA referred to attending courses:

They should be given support such as courses on student behavior, how to handle cheating cases, how to motivate students to be successful learners. Counseling not necessary. ... So hmmm... maybe a course on how to use the advanced features in calculator could be conducted to non-engineering lecturers so that they detect formula or notes in calculator. Normally occur with engineering students like at TATiUC.

Examples of the courses suggested by the Dean of HEPA include students' behavior, how to motivate students, how to handle cheating, and how to use advanced calculators for non-engineering lecturers. Nevertheless, he believed providing counseling to lecturers in dealing with cheating cases was unnecessary. The Dean of HEPA also suggested the second type of support, attending workshops on techniques to recognize and detect cheaters. He considered participating in workshop was a better approach than attending courses. In fact, he believed that the skills or information about recognizing and detecting cheaters obtained through workshop activities and discussions were essential in deterring cheating:

Hmm.. (pause) maybe workshop is better because in workshop we can do activities and share our opinions and discuss on technique that we can use to detect cheaters. Because it is important to recognize and detect cheaters.

The third type support proposed by Dean of HEPA was the use of technological devices as preventive measures:

Support can also be given in terms of the use of technological measures for inspection e.g. CCTV. Because at the moment we

only have 2 invigilators so technological measures are better. To give good evidence. So by using this, lecturers who report do not have to attach evidence that was caught with the students. We can view the recordings of CCTV to prove cheating. This definitely will help disciplinary committee to make decisions about cheating cases... May be can have some devise that can detect formula on calculator or hand phone. Because if invigilator from technical background they can detect the formula but those are not from engineering background they don't know how.

Two technological devices; CCTV and formula detector devices were suggested by the Dean of HEPA. He implied that two invigilators were insufficient to monitor potential cheaters in the examination room and deter cheating at large. Therefore, he claimed that the first type of device can be used to investigate reported cheating occurrences and examine recorded cheating incidents for evidence so that cheaters could be prosecuted. He also hinted that formula detector devices should be provided to non-engineering invigilators who may not be familiar with sophisticated gadgets such as scientific calculators and high-tech hand phones to enable them to detect hidden formula. Finally, he suggested the imposition of more severe punishments:

Maybe we can impose severer punishment. So far we give zero marks to student who cheat. So my suggestion give a break one semester for these cheaters so they can think about what they did and the effects. Also to set example to other students of the effects if they cheat.

The Dean of HEPA implied that current punishment was inadequate to deter cheating. For that reason, he suggested more severe punishment should be imposed such as temporary suspension (one semester). He further added that cheaters penalized by this harsher punishment would be examples of the consequences of cheating.

On the other hand, the Head of HEA suggested three possible supports that could be extended to lecturers. The first was to increase awareness of the responsibilities as educators among the lecturers. Two of the responsibilities mentioned were to instill good moral values and invigilate examinations.

Awareness – Remind lecturers of their responsibility to instill good moral values. Because there are some lecturers who come

to work just for the money and not thinking of the social responsibility they have as educators. Some even think invigilating is not part of their job. You knowla... in IPTA invigilators are clerks, technician, part-timers not like here at TATiUC. The lecturers are responsible to invigilate exams too. That's why if they think about the responsibility as educator, they will not be lenient. Because of that (leniency) also, the statistic for students caught cheating should be higher but because of these lecturers many cases are not reported.

He blamed the lecturers' leniency for many unreported cheating incidents. This was attributed to lack of social responsibility among lecturers. Some lecturers were lenient while proctoring examinations and allowed students to cheat. The second type of support recommended was to inform lecturers of the procedures involve in reporting cheating incidents:

Lecturers should also be informed on the steps or the procedures involve when they report cheating. It is not that difficult. Many lecturers see it as problematic. But no really actually. That's why many don't want to report cheating cases.

He highlighted that some lecturers were in the dark about the procedures involved in reporting cheating. He commented that many assumed the procedures were more difficult than they actually were. Hence, he believed, many cheating cases went unreported. Finally, the third support suggested was to disseminate information of the numerous cheating techniques used by students to all lecturers as he said:

Hmmm... One more support I think can be given is to inform lecturers on the techniques used by students to cheat in exams so easier for them to detect potential cheater for next exams. And hopefully when more lecturers can detect cheating, more lecturers will report cheating to HEA.

The reason mentioned for this kind of support was to enable lecturers to recognize and detect the various patterns of cheating behaviors among TATiUC students. Furthermore, as a result of having this knowledge lecturers would possibly report more incidents to Academic Affairs.

To sum up, seven types of support were highlighted by the Dean of HEPA and the Head of HEA. The Dean of HEPA perceived that courses, workshops, technological devices and punishments might assist

lecturers in handling cheating and the Head of HEA believed that awareness and knowledge of procedures and cheating techniques could help lecturers more.

Discussion and Conclusion

All six student respondents who provided narrative responses were reported as average students with Cumulative Grade Point Averages ranging between 2.43 to 2.64. All of the respondents obtained C average for their religious course taken when they were students at TATiUC. According to Cizek (1999), students who profess adherence toward a religious belief may seem to be predicted to engage in less cheating than those who do not. Hence, this may explain their acceptance of cheating as a common practice among students at higher education institutions. In fact, only one student thought cheating was unfair. All of the student respondents had cheated in examinations at some point in their studies. However, their recollection of past cheating behavior indicated variations in cheating patterns as two reported cheating in quizzes and tests only, one reported cheating in final examinations only, two reported cheating for difficult subjects and one reported cheating in all forms of examination assessment. In addition, five out of six student respondents claimed that cheating was common among tertiary students. Apart from that, lecturers were also represented by two participating lecturers cum administrators, the Dean of HEPA and the Head of HEA. Both possessed ten or more years of teaching experience at the academic institution that was under study. Furthermore, their administrative positions which directly involved them in the decision making process pertaining to the rules and regulations of academic dishonesty at TATiUC qualified them as participants for the study. Both were in agreement that cheating is unfair to students who study hard for the examinations and believed students' academic dishonesty would affect their ethical behavior in future employment.

The findings from the self-reported narratives indicated that five cheating techniques were employed by all six student respondents: smuggling illicit materials and information into the examination hall, manipulation of unwitting victim, the semiotic method, the tactical deployment technique and distracting the instructor. However, the most common technique was smuggling prohibited items into the examination hall and the least used was manipulating an unwitting victim. It was also found that four techniques were employed by other students: smuggling

illicit materials or information into the examination hall, the semiotic method, tactical deployment and distracting the instructor.

In addition, it was found that both lecturers perceived cheating to be unfair to those who had studied hard for the examinations. On a similar note, Leonard and LeBrasseur's (2008) study indicated that business and economics professors at Ontario universities believed that cheating was a serious offence. On the other hand, Coalter, Lim and Wanorie (2007) reported that the majority of the full time faculty at an American public university did not perceive that academic dishonesty was a problem at the institution.

It was found that several strategies were employed to prevent cheating in examinations. The ten strategies reported by student respondents were: giving warnings, proctoring, prohibiting irrelevant materials into in-class examination, checking permissible items to prevent smuggling forbidden materials into the examination hall, requiring some space in seating arrangements, ensuring that the identity of the examination candidate is the same as the one registered for the course, escorting students to the restroom, providing study guides or clues to the examination questions, conducting an open book test and implementing dress codes. Among the seven measures reported by the lecturers were: informing and reminding students of the rules and regulations of the examinations, forming a disciplinary committee to handle cheating cases, announcing cheaters who have been found guilty and their punishments, using psychological approach, reporting cheating incidents and providing guidelines to lecturers pertaining to the preventive measures. The latest preventive measure was the announcement of convicted cheaters. Hence, they appeared to have taken appropriate measures to reduce cheating occurrences. Coalter, Lim and Wanorie (2007, p. 11) in their study discovered similar results at a mid-size state university in the USA.

However, analysis of the measures taken by lecturers and the institution shows that there were variations to the implementation of the examination rules and regulations among the lecturers. The variations were attributed to lecturers' favoritism, leniency and reluctance to deal with cheating. Furthermore, it was found that these variations also influenced lecturers' decision to report cheating incidents. These findings are congruent with a study conducted by McCabe (1993) on 800 faculty at 16 higher education institutions across the United States which showed that the faculty were reluctant to report cheating and chose to handle suspected cases on their own rather than comply with institutional policies and procedures (McCabe et al., 2001). Kerkvliet and Sigmund's (1999)

study revealed that cheating was partially under the control of the faculty. Thus, the success and control of measures implemented were partially in the hands of the lecturers invigilating the examinations. Moreover, the variations in the lecturers' practices in carrying out the preventive measures may have resulted from the training given to them (Marcoux, 2006).

Another revelation was that the majority of the participants were in agreement that the preventive measures implemented were not very successful in preventing cheating. Among the reasons were that various techniques were employed to outsmart the lecturers, belief that cheating is common among tertiary students, variations in the implementation of the rules and regulations and a strategy to cope with the difficulty of understanding the medium of instruction. Nevertheless, McCabe et al.'s (1999) research findings suggested that academic dishonesty can be affectively managed by implementing numerous strategies to curb cheating including communicating clearly lecturers' expectation of upholding academic integrity, establishing policies about appropriate behaviors in examinations and encourage students to comply to these policies (McCabe et al., 2001).

The study also explored lecturers' perceptions of the support given in handling cheating cases. The findings disclosed that the Dean of HEPA and the Head of HEA disagreed about the support given. The Dean of HEPA's interviews indicated that only one kind of support was given to lecturers which was briefing on examination rules and regulations. He perceived that the support was crucial in assisting new lecturers in proctoring the examination. On the other hand, the Head of HEA claimed that no support was extended to lecturers in managing academic dishonesty. However, both agreed that more support should be extended to lecturers

The Dean of HEPA suggested attending courses, participating in workshops, utilizing technological devices and the imposition of severe punishments. The Head of HEA suggested increasing awareness of educator's social responsibility, informing lecturers of the procedures involved in reporting cheating and disseminating information about the numerous cheating techniques used.

The findings of the study indicate several implications for handling cheating in examinations at higher education institutions. First of all, the study showed that numerous techniques are used to outsmart their lecturers and invigilators. They revealed that these activities were planned before the examinations and strategically employed to avoid being

detected. Some of the cheaters also disclosed that they even thought of distracter mechanisms to avoid being caught by the invigilators. Therefore, by acquiring knowledge of the cheating techniques used by student cheaters, lecturers and invigilators will be able to recognize cheating behavior. Hence, investigating the cheating techniques used by different groups of tertiary students will equip lecturers with the knowledge to detect cheating.

Secondly, the study indicated that numerous strategies were implemented to deter cheating. Nevertheless, the study revealed that the strategies were not very successful to prevent this academic misconduct among the students. The study also showed that there were variations in the implementation of the strategies among lecturers. Therefore, the strategies should be reviewed and probably implemented differently to ensure the effectiveness of the measures taken. In fact, the implementation of strategies that promote academic integrity may require a cultural change (Leonard & LeBrasseur, 2008). Thus, both lecturers and administration should play active roles in curbing academic dishonesty among tertiary students because lecturers' perception that it is the responsibility of the administration entirely to impose the academic policies, procedures and enforcement are not sufficient.

Thirdly, it is also shown that support was very much needed by lecturers in handling academic violations. Support is needed to assist lecturers in detecting cheating, fostering academic integrity among students and addressing student cheating in general. Marcoux (2006) and Davis (1993) offer a number of recommendations. These include holding dialogues within and among various departments of the academic institution so that lecturers obtain a clear picture of what constitutes academic cheating, providing an arena for disseminating the updated information about cheating (written and verbal) to both lecturers and students such as electronic means, initial meeting with a class and meetings and handling cheating by reporting the incidents, discussing the incident with the alleged cheater, developing skills for addressing cheating behavior with students, providing training and courses in academic integrity issues, discussing ethical issues with students after cheating incidents to develop students' moral judgment and hold them accountable for their decisions and behavior, making sure students know the criteria for evaluating their performance, developing a climate and group norms that support honesty, learning to recognize signs of stress in students, ensuring equal access to study materials and making students feel as though they can succeed without having to resort to dishonesty.

To conclude, first of all, the findings revealed that there were only five categories of cheating techniques employed by student respondents and four by other students as well as those detected by lecturers. This is probably due to the limited sample in the study. Hence, it is recommended that future studies include more subjects in order to obtain more information pertaining to the cheating techniques used among students in Malaysian higher education institutions. Secondly, the study perhaps should employ more types of instrumentation such as surveys in order to gauge the various techniques used by students. Thirdly, the study was only based on the perceptions of students and lecturers. They may not have provided their actual and honest opinions in the narrative responses and during interviews. To obtain a better and clearer picture, probably more in-depth national studies should be conducted at various tertiary institutions in Malaysia. Finally, the present study may not be generalizable as the participants were former students of TATiUC who may not represent all groups of students. In the case of the similar feature of participants, it would be interesting to have variations in student cheaters' CGPA to discover if there are differences in cheating behavior and techniques based on achievement factor.

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