Real-life examples of academic integrity issues in professional practice

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Introduction

Many teachers struggle to convince students that moral and ethical principles are not limited only to the academic world, but that they are tightly related also to the future professional life of all individuals. Many students see for example the referencing and citation practice just as an annoying obstacle they have to overcome on the way to finish their thesis (and get the degree). Some consider exam cheating as an optimization of learning process...

Hence, how to explain well the practical benefits of scholar rules? How to show students that breaking the rules (which in scholar world leads only to a zero mark or a warning) might have serious life-changing impact in reality? How to manifest the importance of building an individual personal integrity from early ages?

European Network for Academic Integrity (ENAI) is working on a set of ready-to-use real-life examples of academic integrity in professional practice. The common objective of all these examples is to show that academic integrity does not finish with the moment of obtaining degree. Academic integrity consists of rules and principles which are everlasting and should be a part of everyday life of any individual. The examples are based on real stories and (whenever it is possible) contain anchors to these real cases on which they are built to endorse the possible learning outcome of the example.

The aim of this contribution is to introduce this set, share methods of how this set was created, and provide inspiration on how it should be used in classroom.

Methodology

The above-mentioned set of real-life examples is a part of an output of an Erasmus+ funded project European Network for Academic Integrity (KA2 Strategic Partnerships project 2016-1-CZ01-KA203-023949) named "Toolkit for cross-sector cooperation in terms of academic integrity". Methodology for creating the set "Manual on how to get relevant real-life examples and include them into courses of academic integrity" is another part of the same output.Third part of the cross-sector cooperation deals with secondary schools and education of academic integrity in this level. Hence some of the real-life examples can be used also in the high-school environment.

Manual on how to get relevant real-life examples

This manual serves for anybody who intents to create his own examples and needs to collect data for them. It contains three tools for collecting data, ideas or inspiration for the real-life examples, focused on different stakeholders – students, professionals and professional organisations. In particular, following tools were created:

- Students:
  - ◊ A short questionnaire to identify students who might have a suitable experience from practice. The identified students will be interviewed later. This questionnaire can be sent to the students of the particular institution who have experience form a practical internship or a training. The provided answers help the author identify students who might have interesting experience and are willing to share. The author can meet them individually or organize a focus group.
  - ◊ A scenario for a focus group about academic integrity issues experience in their internship.

- Professionals:
  - ◊ A scenario for a (rather informal) small talk about the academic integrity issues from his/her professional experience. The form of an informal small talk was chosen rather than an official questionnaire as we presume that the easiest way for potential authors is to contact their friends or other rather personal contacts.

- Professional organisations and companies' representatives:
  - ◊ Questionnaire about academic integrity issues.

All these tools are general and transferable, may be used in any study or professional field, so anybody can benefit from them. Anyway, the tools are provided with a strong recommendation that any information obtained through them MUST be handled and kept as strictly anonymous and can be used only to create educational examples about the importance of (academic) integrity in practice. ENAI recommends any author to obtain an ethical approval from his institution before collecting any personal data.

However, experience of the ENAI authors of the real-life examples show that great source are publicly well known cases covered by media stories, which can be adapted.

An important part of the manual is also a PowerPoint template with instructions for the authors of the new examples.

Results

The real-life examples are case studies with a story containing an academic integrity issue and its consequences in professional life, accompanied with activities for target audience, and didactic notes. The examples are in a form of a presentation and a document with the text of the story. One of the most crucial part is so called "anchor" showing a real case(s) used as an inspiration for this examples. Some anchors reference to publicly known cases covered by trust-worth media, the ones that are based on confident stories are anonymized.

ENAI is going to deliver more than 30 examples - intended for different target audience (undergraduate students, graduate students, researchers, scholars,..), from different fields of expertise (business, computer science, finance,...), covering different forms of misconduct (contract cheating, exam cheating, hacking,...) and leading to different consequences (ruining professional carrier, financial losses,...).

The Manual, the template and the examples are available through ENAI web portal www.academicintegrity.eu/wp/all-materials under keyword "real-life". The template is available in PPTX and ODP format under Creative Commons License CC-BY-SA, most of the real-life examples are also in editable format, so anybody can adjust them for his own needs.

Within the conference presentation we will share also our experience using these examples within the education and also experience and best practices from the production of the examples.

Conclusion

The main goal of this activity is to spread the examples among the teachers and bring them to classes. We would like to ask everybody to comment on the materials at the ENAI web portal. ENAI would also welcome all new materials which are based on the template or created using the manual. Therefore if you create your own material and you are willing to share it and have it spread, please send it to us and we will publish it at the portal.

Keywords: academic integrity, professional integrity, real-life examples, case studies, education, European Network for Academic Integrity.