Sources of (un)ethical behaviour of students

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Relevance of the Study

- Findings of an internal academic ethics research conducted in one of the main social science universities in Lithuania.

- The first attempt to investigate academic ethics at the university level in Lithuania.

- Findings are primarily relevant for mapping key challenges and fostering changes at the level of the University.

- Also, developing research and discussion in the country context as well as placing the case of Lithuania among other European countries as a further step of investigation.

Direction of the Research

- The aim of the research was to assess conditions of consolidation and implementation of principles of academic ethics in study process and research performance at the University.

- Research tasks: (1) analysis of internal regulations on academic ethics and statistical data related to breach of principles and procedures of academic ethics; (2) analysis of perceptions and practices of academic ethics and its principles in the community.

- Focus on principles of integrity and responsibility.

- Diagnosis of the *status quo* of institutional academic ethics.

- Background aim: to start an open discussion in the academy on how to promote and maintain academic ethics at the University.
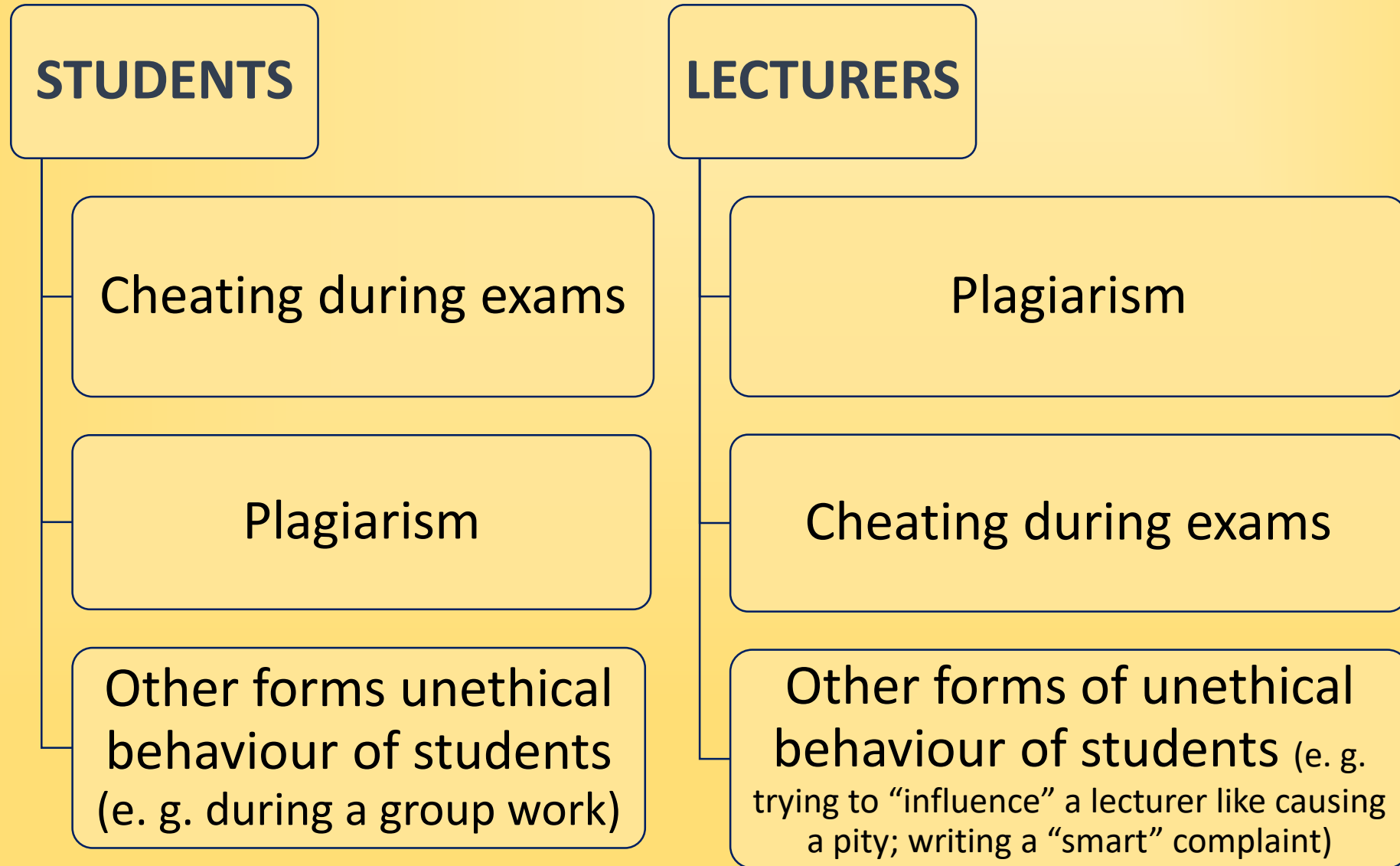
Research methods

- Research conducted during year 2016

- Qualitative approach

- Three groups of research participants involved: bachelor and master level students; doctoral students, and academic staff (lecturers / scientists).

- Students invited to focus group discussions

- Individual in-depth interviews conducted with doctoral students and academic staff

- Overall, 7 focus groups (3 with master level students; 4 with bachelor level students) and 21 interview (6 with doctoral students; 15 with academic personnel) were conducted

Total amount of transcripts: ~180000 words / ~330 standard pages of text

Focus of the Presentation

- Focus on study process.

- Two forms of unethical behavior of students – cheating in examination and plagiarism. They were upraised as the main forms of unethical behaviour experienced in the study process both by students and lecturers.

- The aim of the presentation is to reveal potential sources that "stimulate" students to involve into unethical behaviour or vice versa to refrain from it.

- Understanding these sources is substantial for shaping environment that discourages unethical behaviour of students and motivates the ethical one.

The Main Forms of Unethical Behaviour

STUDENTS

Cheating during exams

Plagiarism

Other forms unethical behaviour of students (e. g. during a group work)

LECTURERS

Plagiarism

Cheating during exams

Other forms of unethical behaviour of students (e. g. trying to "influence" a lecturer like causing a pity; writing a "smart" complaint)

Sources of (un)ethical behaviour as identified by students

Left box:

- Values and models of behaviour that have formed prior to entering into university
- Personal motivation (to acquire knowledge and skills) and self-esteem

- Awareness that there will be no opportunity to behave unethically (e. g. to cheat)
- Fear "to be caught" and to be sanctioned (experience outcomes)

- General atmosphere in a student group / group agreements to behave ethically

- Lecturer (e. g., his / her principle stance, consistency, prevention, control, etc.)

- Form of study of a study subject
- Form of exams / assignments / assessment

Right box:

- Values and models of behaviour that have formed prior to entering into university
- Knowledge and skills (or rather lack / absence of skills) of academic writing that formed (or not formed) in a secondary school
- Personal motivation (to acquire a diploma)
- External motivation (e. g. "because of parents")
- Irresponsibility of a student (e. g., inconsistent learning) that leads to poor preparedness and subsequently to need to look for alternatives

- Awareness that there will be an opportunity to behave unethically
- Awareness of a probability to avoid sanctioning (outcomes)

- General atmosphere in a student group (e. g. "everybody is cheating")

- Lecturer
- Different practices of lecturers in regard to prevention, monitoring and sanctioning
- Inconsistencies in requirements

- Lack of consistent university scale training in academic writing
- Inconsistent and insufficient application of sanctions (outcomes)

- Form and content of a study subject
- Form of exams / assignments / assessment

- General societal context (family, school, university, labour market)

Sources of (un)ethical behaviour as identified by lecturers

- Insufficient knowledge and skills of students needed to properly perform tasks, especially written assignments
- Skills that students have (or lack) when entering university
- Skills that student acquire (or do not) at university

- Inconsistency of practices of lecturers
- Irresponsibility of colleagues (lecturers) (e. g., ignoring possible problems related to academic writing, plagiarism, etc.)

- Insufficient support from upper management for taking action in cases of suspected issues

Sources of (un)ethical behaviour

Students	Lecturers	Study programs	University	External sources
• Values • Habits before university • Skills • Values, habits and skills (re)formed at university • Type of motivation • Influence of a group	• Ability to „motivate" students to value a subject • Consistency • Principle stance / consistency between stance and practice • Prevention • Control • Lack of awareness how to deal with these cases	• Study forms of subjects • Exam / assignment / assessment forms • Principle stance of a study program committee and support for the staff	• General level of quality of studies • Awareness raising • Principle stance (towards unethical behaviour) and acting in compliance with the stance • Support for ethics-oriented staff • Consistent university level provision of needed skills for students	• Labour market • Prestige of higher education • Higher education as a business enterprise • General values in society

Discussion

- Research as a basis to encourage a long term process
- Public presentation of research results to the community: at the University level as well as at the levels of Faculties, Institutes, Study Program Committees
- Development of plan of means to achieve changes
- Opening up a discussion inside the community

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Thank you for your attention!
Ačiū!