

PRACTICES OF ACADEMIC INTEGRITY IN TEACHER EDUCATION PROGRAM IN NEPAL

Tika Ram Pokhrel¹

¹*Mahidol University, Thailand*

Integrity is a value-based solution oriented holistic approach in resolving personal and professional problems. The main agenda of academic integrity is to develop the quality of scholarly work. Universities in Nepal have started to develop and implement policies on academic integrity to prevent misconducts. The main objective of the research was to explore the present scenario of academic integrity with reference to students' knowledge, practices, and problems in post/graduate teacher education programs in Nepal. To present solution strategies/mechanisms for developing academic integrity was an additional objective of the research.

To reflect the status of academic integrity, a college offering post/graduate study: Master, M Phil and PhD level in teacher education programs was selected. A quantitative-qualitative with quantitative focused sequential mixed methods research was applied. In the first phase, the survey was the research design. A team of nine members having five faculties and four students from the college was formed. The team developed and finalized the survey questionnaire through a week-long workshop. The questionnaires were distributed to each student in their respective classes and asked to bring the next day. There were around 350 students in the college and 162 students returned the questionnaires. These 162 students are the sample size of the study. Then, in the second phase, eight students of different groups were selected for an interview with a view to explore reasons for the existing practices and to suggest appropriate mechanism(s) for developing academic integrity in the college.

Based on the data, getting information about academic integrity is the major problem because

around half of the students' responded that they do not have access to information about academic integrity. About 60% of the students were familiar with mis/conducts: Plagiarism, collusion, fabrication, cheating and solicitation. Most of the students were familiar with the citation and reference convention but they responded that they are facing difficulties in paraphrasing and rephrasing. The level of their familiarity about academic integrity is information. Their responses helped us to state that they are struggling in skill level particularly they are having greater challenges in writing academic papers or assignments.

Students' contribution in-class group work and outclass group work vary. They seek their contributions when they are in-class activities. Some of the students who still wished to be named in activities without contributions was another major problem. Students start to learn about citation and reference at the eleventh hour and are not able to complete everything within the deadline is the one of main reasons for misconduct. Cheating in exams and copying answers from others are the two major academic misconducts. The main reasons for these misconducts are professional pressure, unknown consequences and obviously teaching learning system.

Students' expectation for academic integrity moves beyond formal teaching learning processes. They expect a strong support system and policy on academic integrity which moves beyond the existing rule compliance approach. The higher education institutions are suggested to develop a strong support system for leaning, updating, and upgrading the skills of students in academic integrity along with their regular academic programs.