

UNDERSTANDING ACADEMIC IMPOVERISHMENT AS IT RELATES TO ACADEMIC INTEGRITY AND QUALITY ASSURANCE IN HIGHER EDUCATION

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Abstract

The reasons students engage in academic misconduct have been classified broadly into two categories: personal and contextual (see Bowers, 1964; Bertram Gallant et al., 2015; Genereux & McLeod, 1995; McCabe, 1992; Perry et al., 1990; Tremayne & Curtis, 2020). Personal factors that can affect academic misconduct include, but are not limited to year of standing (e.g, freshman versus senior-year students); students' proficiency levels in the language of instruction; self-regulation and time-management skills; and stress levels. Contextual (also described by McCabe (1992) as "situational") factors include, but are not limited to: parental or familial pressure to perform academically; an excessively competitive learning environment; unclear instructional expectations; and peer perceptions.

The notion of "academic impoverishment" has been proposed as an important additional factor to consider, particularly in Ireland. In early 2022, the Higher Education Colleges Association (HECA) and the National Forum for the Enhancement of Teaching and Learning in Higher Education in Ireland offered a joint professional development session on the topic of academic impoverishment and its

connection to academic integrity (Eaton, 2022).

It was found the term "academic impoverishment" is not used widely outside of Ireland. A paper by Nagasawa & Wong (1999) from the United States and Hong Kong refers to "academic impoverishment" (p. 81, p. 83), without ever defining it or referring to other literature that defines it. From an Irish perspective, academic impoverishment has been a topic of scholarly inquiry for over five decades (see, for example, McClelland (1970). Connections between academic impoverishment and academic integrity have been made loosely for about a decade (see, Farrell, 2010). More recent references to the term can be found in the Dublin School of Business (2019) *Quality assurance handbook*, but again, the term is not defined. Overall, references to this term remain scant in the literature, though there is increasing interest in understanding what it is and why it might be important for academic integrity and quality assurance in higher education.

One possible definition of academic impoverishment has been proposed as, "Academic impoverishment is the poor academic preparation of a student that is not a result of the student's own study efforts.

Academic impoverishment happens when a student's educational experiences have not provided them with sufficient opportunity to gain the necessary academic skills and development as they ought to have had. Academic impoverishment happens when students have had low quality educational experiences that leave them ill-prepared for study or work abroad upon completion of their program." (Eaton, 2022).

In this presentation, I explore the concept of academic impoverishment in greater depth, considering implications for academic

integrity. In particular, considerations for international student mobility, pressures on Anglo/European higher education institutions to increase international student enrollment as mandated by governments and/or the institutions themselves. Considerations of academic impoverishment as a social justice issue will be considered. If such impoverishment is not the fault of the individual student, then one question that arises is: whose responsibility is it? The answer to this may not be simple, but merits consideration.

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