GRADUATE STUDENTS' REFLECTIONS AS PARTNERS OF ACADEMIC INTEGRITY ADVOCACY DURING COVID-19

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Introduction

The pandemic outbreak in 2020 started a profound disruption of the teaching and learning in higher education worldwide, creating reactions that will still be unfolding until the system reaches balance (Blankenberger & Williams, 2020). Part of this disruption involved addressing the new challenges posed by contract cheating companies (Comas-Forgas et al., 2021; Janke et al., 2021) and building a new understanding of the impact of e-proctoring software on students (Eaton & Turner, 2020). At this juncture, students faced an unimagined learning scenario and had to overcome diverse barriers to advance their studies (Stoesz, 2020). However, students did not always position themselves in the background; many became partners in addressing these academic integrity issues.

Problem Statement

Although experts have identified that academic integrity should be addressed by different stakeholders of educational communities (Eaton, 2020; TEQSA, 2017), many academic integrity field experts still believe that deepening understanding of students' perspectives on academic integrity needs to be further explored (Kolb et al., 2015; Szabo et al., 2018). Therefore, we argue that students' voices have been less visible in the academic integrity literature and propose addressing this gap through this inquiry. Keeping in mind that academic integrity is a teaching and learning imperative (Bertram Gallant, 2008), we also contend that these explorations should consider a perspective that recognizes Students as Partners (Bovill & Felten, 2016; Felten, 2013; Mercer-Mapstone & Marie, 2019). We argue that analyzing students' experiences expressing advocacy to address current academic integrity issues through a teaching and learning lens is an urgent need. Moreover, we believe these expressions are especially relevant in disruptive contexts such as the one posed by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Purpose

The purpose of this study is aligned with the following research question: how our experiences as graduate student partners of academic integrity advocacy were during

COVID-19? We build this study drawing from Colpitts et al. (2020) to address the students' experience gap. This paper also seeks to document and analyze individual and shared experiences, including diverse students' representation roles within and outside an educational institution.

Conceptual Framework

Considering the students' engagement this inquiry embodies, we frame this work in one of Felten's (2013) principles of good practice in the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SoTL) called *conducted in partnership with students*. Following this principle, the involvement of students in SoTL ranges from ensuring they are not harmed in research as participants to students' partnerships with faculty members. From Felten's (2013) perspective, the second end of the continuum has the potential to develop a sense of shared responsibility and sustain the inquiry's authenticity.

This notion of students participating in SoTL research has evolved and is now recognized as *Students as Partners* (SaP). Building from previous work in the field, Mercer-Mapstone and Marie (2019) define SaP as a way of thinking and practicing that re-draws the traditional relationship between faculty and students into collaborators. In SaP, students become more empowered, engaged, and responsible for their learning process.

We also situate this inquiry in the integrated model for academic integrity through a SoTL lens (Kenny & Eaton, 2022). Therefore, we recognize that student advocacy work is embedded in the critical elements for changing teaching and learning cultures: high impact professional learning opportunities, local-level leadership and micro-cultures, scholarship, research & inquiry, and spaces, pedagogies & technologies. Moreover, these key elements of change interact with formal and informal spaces. Following this model, significant conversations, networks, relationships and communities belong to the informal processes; policies, programs, resources, and committees make up the formal processes. Moreover, these actions are embedded at diverse organizational levels, such as the individual (micro), departmental (meso), institutional (macro), and beyond (mega) (Simmons, 2016).

Methods

Following Colpitts et al. (2020), we use action research supported by narrative inquiry to highlight students' voices in this qualitative study. We use a qualitative approach because it provides an opportunity for analyzing practice in context (Bovill & Felten, 2016) and embrace a view on action research that acknowledges our mental world, as individuals, and the social world, encompassing our interactions with others (McNiff, 2016). In this study, we (two graduate students) reflect on our engagements with diverse organizations inside and outside a higher education community. The narrative inquiry component is inspired by Freeman's (2012) work, which places the writing of the personal past as a dialectical relationship of past, present, and future, and as constructions deriving from the narrative imagination. Furthermore, Freeman (2012) highlights that autobiography requires discerning the sources that compel the self, recognizing that such a project is beyond a mere representation of one's life. Moreover, this notion of autobiography emphasizes intersubjectivity in the realm of narrative inquiry.

This study involves two participant-researchers, graduate students from a Western Canadian university, and the faculty member who guided their academic integrity advocacy work during the pandemic. Data collection procedures include a questionnaire developed by the faculty member. The data collection process also engages participant-researchers in a reflective process about individual experiences; these narratives are later supplemented with reflections from the faculty member guide to create a liminal space that facilitates reframing traditional faculty and students' roles (Jensen & Bennet, 2016).

Implications and conclusions

This study provides academic integrity stakeholders with a perspective on an experience that involved graduate students and a faculty member guide in an inclusive and equitable partnership to carry out academic integrity advocacy work during the pandemic. This experience, where graduate students a) experienced a process of expanding their identities to become academic integrity documenters, content creators, collaborators and promoters, b) engaged in reflective practices on best approaches to convey prevention messages that could be meaningful to their peers, and c) adapted to new resources and platforms supports a shift of the notion of SaP from theory to practice, provides situated narratives that shed light on the emerging practice, and helps build theory on these kinds of partnerships (Bovill & Felten, 2016). Moreover, it expands understanding of the integrated academic integrity model through a SoTL lens (Kenny & Eaton, 2022), adding from a student advocate perspective.

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