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CHEATING PROBLEM IN HIGH SCHOOL EXAMINATIONS IN VIETNAM

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ABSTRACT

Cheating in high school examination is a serious problem in some countries nowadays. A questionnaire was to collect data of students' attitudes towards cheating, ways of cheating and reasons for cheating. It has been revealed that many students in Vietnamese high school considered cheating acceptable. The research findings also indicated that there are many ways of cheating, students chose their own common methods to cheat. They blamed their dishonesty on many reasons belonged to personal, family and school factors. Those findings suggest that it is necessary to find out some solutions to prevent students from academic cheating.

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INTRODUCTION

Nowadays, cheating in high school examinations is hardly a new problem; however, it always receives a lot of interest and preoccupation from educators, parents and students. Many studies have shown the surprisingly enormous number of the high school students who cheated in examinations. For instance, the basic dataset was compiled based upon surveys that were conducted between Fall 2002 and Spring 2015, by Dr. Donald McCabe and the International Center for Academic Integrity. McCabe's surveys of over 70,000 high school students at over 24 high schools in the United States demonstrated that 64% of students admitted to cheating on a test, 58% admitted to plagiarism and 95% said they participated in some form of cheating, whether it was on a test, plagiarism or copying homework. Some attention has also been given to the ways that students cheat in examinations. Besides, many studies have been carried out to find out the reasons for cheating and the solution to reduce academic dishonesty in high school examinations such as "Managing Academic Dishonesty" and "Managing for academic integrity in higher education: Insights from behavioral ethics" In the present paper, we point cheating in Vietnamese high schools in terms of students' attitudes towards cheating, ways of cheating reasons for cheating and propose some recommendation to reduce academic dishonesty.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

To collect the data, a questionnaire consisting of nine questions related to cheating in Vietnamese high school examinations was developed. The purpose of the first five questions was to examine students' attitudes towards cheating while the next two questions attempted to identify which ways of cheating are the most common in high schools. The final two questions, which focused on the third part of the research, asked the respondents the reasons for their dishonesty in examination. The pilot proved that English questionnaires create some difficulties for some Vietnamese high school students to complete; therefore, a bilingual version of English Vietnamese was designed to give them options to answer the questionnaires in Vietnamese or both languages.

The respondents of the research are one hundred and fifty high school students in Hanoi, Vietnam. All of the students were selected on voluntary basis, from a variety of grades, sexes and levels of school performance. The survey was conducted in March, 2019 by distributing fifty questionnaires to the students of Le Quy Don high school and Kim Lien high school in Hanoi, Vietnam randomly during the break time. They were asked to complete the questionnaires in Vietnamese or both Vietnamese and English. After thirty minutes, all the handouts were collected.

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RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Students' attitudes towards cheating

The popularity of cheating in high schools: Question 1 “Is cheating in school examinations popular in your school?” was designed to asked students if academic cheating was popular in their school and question 2 “Have you ever cheat in examinations?” was to examine whether she or he had cheated or not. Following the collection of data, it was found that 100% of the one hundred and fifty Vietnamese high school students surveyed indicated that cheating is popular in their school and all of them admitted to test dishonesty. Those alarming results reveal that cheating in examinations is a serious problem in Vietnam.

Frequency of cheating: It is clear from Question 3 “How often do you cheat in examinations?” that many of the students get involved in dishonest activities at different frequencies. Among the four frequencies, *sometimes* was the highest at 50% and at 38% was *always*. Those results reveal that cheating among high school students were becoming more and more popular. It is also alarming to note that the number of students always cheat in examinations was not small. This number was up to 38 %, where almost 100 % students confessed that they had ever cheated in examinations. It would seem that academic dishonesty was rampant at high schools and many Vietnamese students took every opportunity to take part in cheating.

Cheated subjects: As Question 4 “What are your cheated subjects?” illustrates, 42% of the Vietnamese high school students cited “unimportant subjects”; and 38% of them cited “all subjects” as the subjects they cheated most. According to the report “Education in Vietnam”, high school graduates who want to go to universities or colleges have to take part in a University Entrance Examination and there are fixed groups of subjects that they can choose.

Students opinion about cheating: Question 5 “What is your attitude toward cheating?” provides the great proportion of Vietnamese students who accepted or tended to accept dishonesty when being asked about their opinion about academic cheating. 45% of the respondents reported that they inclined to accept dishonest activities and the 35% considered cheating completely acceptable. A significant percentage of the students surveyed in both high schools thought that cheating was unacceptable. It can be generalized that nowadays, many students consider cheating as a common trend that become a part of their school life.

Ways of cheating

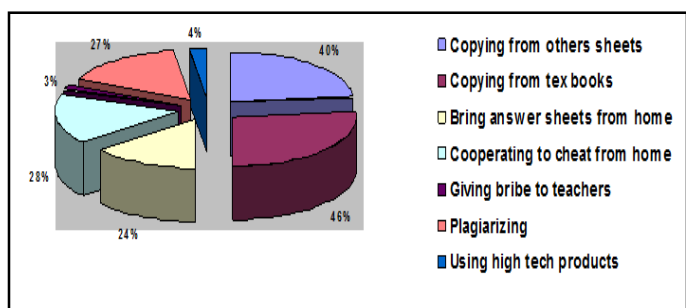


Chart 1. Ways of cheating

As can be seen in Chart 1 (Question 6 “There are many ways to cheat in school examinations. Put a tick (√) on the ways

which are popular in your school.” that all of the methods of cheating proposed in the questionnaire was found to be present at both schools. The most commonly reported methods were copying from others' sheets (40%) and Copying from text books or note books (46%). Twenty seven percent out of one hundred and fifty students surveyed indicated that Plagiarism was the most popular way of cheating and the close second was using high-tech products to cheat, as confirmed by 4% of students. In addition, the development of high technology products also created new ways of dishonesty. For example, according to Chester, G. (2001), cell phone use among high school students was becoming more and more ubiquitous, because cell phones became common, popular and inexpensive. Chester, G. also indicated that those students use cell phones to contact their parents and to cheat in examinations by taking pictures of tests to pass along to students in later classes or accessing photos of textbook pages or notes when taking tests [5]. It would seem that with the support from high technology, the methods of cheating of students were more sophisticated and professional.

Reasons for cheating

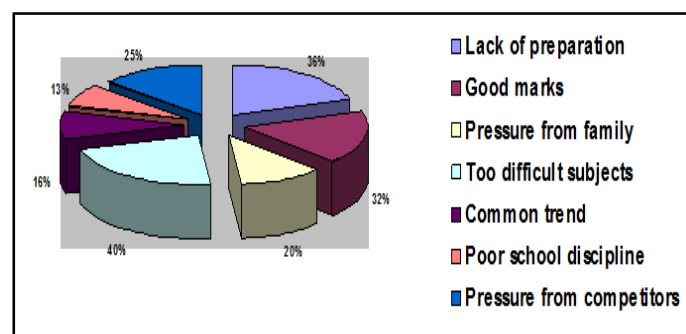


Chart 2. Reasons for cheating

Chart 2 in Question 8 “In your opinion, what the reasons for cheating in school examinations?” provides the most common reasons for academic dishonesty among high school students. As can be seen, personal factors consisting Lack of preparation and Good marks were reported as two important causes of cheating in both schools. Thirty six Vietnamese students did not review their lessons before the examinations and they even wanted to get good marks without studying. Those students then became cheaters to solve their personal problems. Family factor was cited as the major use of cheating; whereas the factors related to school such as too difficult subjects, common trend, poor school discipline, and pressure from competitors were important common reasons for cheating. One of the contributed causes of those results is that students seem to be dependent on their parents. Some parents usually forced their children to perform better than other classmates [4]. Therefore, students under pressure of parents have to cheat in order to not make parents disappointed.

Some recommendation to reduce cheating: Cheating is unfair not only to the students who take the examination by their own abilities and efforts but also to dishonest students themselves. Instead of learning how to be a good person in school, they learn how to become a cheater who finds it hard to look forward to a bright future. Therefore, cheating in examinations can not be ignored and tolerated. Preventing cheating in schools is the responsibility of educators, students and parents. By lessening pressure on children and encouraging them to study hard to get good marks, parents can

prevent their children from dishonesty. There are also some possible ways for teachers to reduce cheating such as allowing nothing on the desks, analyzing arrangement of seats, developing different versions of the test to prevent students copy from others' sheets or from books and other materials. For high-tech cheating, enforcing no cell phones or iPods can be an effective solution. Besides, creating strict punishments when students engage in dishonest activities and not leaving the class room during the test are also the ways that teacher can do to lessen academic cheating. Students also have to be responsible for preventing themselves of cheating by reviewing lessons before the examinations, creating suitable learning method to study effectively and determining to overcome exterior pressure. Only when students, parents and educators share the responsibility and determination will high school students be prevented from cheating in high school examination.

Conclusion

From the findings above, it can be clearly seen that cheating in high school examinations is still a serious global problem in Vietnam. It has become more and more popular in high schools and assumed a lot of different forms. Many students at high schools considered cheating as the common trend that can be accepted. To make the matter worse, those students created many ways to cheat. Moreover, there were many reasons for cheating that can not be solved in a short time.

However, with the determination of educators, family and students, academic dishonesty is expected to be stopped in the future. Hopefully, high schools will be the fresh and equal environment in which every student can gain both knowledge and moral lessons without being affected by academic cheating.

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