

Chapter XV

Market Forces in Higher Education: Cheating and the Student-Centred Learning Paradigm

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ABSTRACT

This chapter discusses the globalisation of education and the challenges and opportunities arising from technologies that can impact cheating behaviours in higher education students. The chapter, commencing by contextualising cheating, discusses the endemic nature of cheating and presents various reasons for and factors that may encourage students to engage in cheating. To illustrate the potential for favourable outcomes when the particular needs of a student cohort are recognised, the chapter then considers a case study that proactively changed assessment strategies in postgraduate education to forestall cheating. The positive outcomes are then used to support a proposition to offer students more than one learning pathway as a means of recognising that student populations have become increasingly diverse with a corresponding need for diversity in teaching paradigms.

INTRODUCTION

The current environment of higher education in Australia is a complex mix of competing ideologies and constraints placing pressures on academics and supporting infrastructures. As successive governments have responded to economic ratio-

nalism and reduced funding to higher education, universities have been forced to compete with one another both within state and country boundaries and also internationally (Milliken & Colohan, 2004), changing the landscape of higher education. In essence, universities have been propelled into the uncomfortable position of responding to the

market and becoming “enterprise universities” (Marginson & Considine, 2000). Two important factors have contributed to this changed landscape. The first is international students that have made education Australia’s third largest service export, earning \$5.8 billion (Business Review Weekly, November 16-22, 2006, p.19). The second is technologies that have developed to facilitate online education and assessments for both teaching within institutions and for distance learning.

The impact of these two variables has meant that where student cohorts were once homogenous and captive to domestic constraints and expectations, cohorts have become multicultural, dispersed and subject to a plethora of constraints and expectations. While this new demographic has had many consequences, the impact of relevance here is the epidemic in cheating behaviors. The reasons for cheating, the means available (opportunity) to cheat and the frequency of cheating, has spread like a virus across the global education market (Hutton, 2006; Kennedy, 2004). Cheating appears to be endemic across many cultures and pedagogies (Magnus, Polterovich, Danilov, & Satvateev, 2002) with business students being credited as the most likely to engage in cheating behaviors (Chapman & Lupton, 2004; Karassavidou & Glaveli, 2006; McCabe & Trevino, 1995; Phillips & Horton, 2000). McCabe, Butterfield and Trevino (2006) have also extended research findings to the postgraduate environment with consistent results. This chapter will examine a case study from a postgraduate unit within a business faculty to illustrate the strategies employed to combat cheating behaviors as part of subject design. The implications of strategies employed are then considered from a competitive markets viewpoint, to consider whether there is justification for the composition of student cohorts to be explicitly targeted and catered for by course design. How this perspective fits with a student-centred learning paradigm will also be considered.

BACKGROUND: GLOBAL CHEATING BEHAVIOUR

The contribution of technologies to education processes has been immense, with students and faculty each learning to adapt to an environment of continuous change and opportunities. Technologies have enabled greater access, richness and multimodality to suit individual learning styles, with students being empowered in ways that were previously not possible. However, this freedom has met with challenges as the diffusion of best practice pedagogies clashes with culturally grounded values, attitudes toward honesty and pressures to succeed as access to education becomes more open. Chapman and Lupton (2004) point out that:

while it is difficult for an instructor to manage academic dishonesty when the student and faculty are from the same country, the task becomes exponentially difficult when students and faculty have significantly different cultural backgrounds. Education, just like business, is now a global product. (Chapman & Lupton, 2004, pp. 426-7)

With business studies being the most popular course of study for international students, not only are students traveling to acquire an education but business schools are under increasing pressure from accrediting agencies to give their students and faculty international opportunities. With many partnership programs negotiated between U.S., UK, European and Australian institutions in emerging economies, faculty are indeed becoming more familiar with cultural diversity in student cohorts.

Chapman and Lupton (2004) have pointed out that there have been many studies in the U.S. which have addressed the subject of cheating, while in Asian countries research evidence about cheating behavior is more problematic. However, they site

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