

Example of academic honesty case study

[Profession](#), [Student](#)



Academic integrity, commonly known as academic honesty, refers to commitment even in the face of struggle to the five vital virtues of trust, honesty, respect, responsibility, and fairness. It is from these values that behavioral principles flow. These principles of behavior enable academic communities in translation of ideals into actions.

Ethical theories enable us to contemplate issues and make rational decisions about the proper action to take. They assist us to be moral agents with a conscience by pointing out one's duties in such occasions. These theories also guide the choices we make in particular cases. Examples of these ethical theories are the big three theories of Utilitarianism, Kantianism and virtue ethics.

In this case, an intelligent Grade 13 high school student faces a situation, which requires careful assessment to make a rational decision. The student always tops his class and this time around, for his final exam, he must submit an essay. He is also in line for a major scholarship opportunity to one of the best universities. Failure to pass this essay automatically disqualifies him for the scholarship even though no one else qualifies for it but him. The boy's mother, a single mother, is very sick and being the eldest child, it is his responsibility to take care of his younger siblings.

These circumstances make it difficult for him to put efficient effort in preparation of his essay. He thinks of purchasing an essay from one of the commercial services that write essays for students. After all, his fellow students use it, as well. As an added advantage, the cost sounds quite fair given that the essay guarantees him success. The chances of being caught are also very little or even none at all. He decides to seek the counsel of a

few friends; most of whom think there is nothing wrong with buying the essay.

Utilitarianism theory involves consideration of the actions to perform and thinking about the aftermath. The action to take is that from which we derive the greatest amount of pleasure and which causes the least amount of suffering to the largest number of people. There are various types of Utilitarianism. One of them is Act Utilitarianism. It advises that the actions to take are those that cause the most amount of happiness to the largest population of people. Another type is Rule Utilitarianism. It involves adhering to the rules adopted by one's society assuming that this leads to the production of the most good for the majority. People's actions are, therefore, right if and only if they conform to the moral codes that lead to the production of the general welfare.

a) What aspects of the case would each theory draw attention to?

The ethical theory of utilitarianism directs one's attention to the aspect of punishment in the case. Should the boy plagiarize someone else's work, what are the consequences to face? According to this ethical theory, the sole purpose of an action, punishment included, is to bring about good consequences. Failure of the achievement of a corrective reason deems the punishment useless. Consequences are vital hence; the student should receive punishment if he engages in the act of plagiarism and not get the scholarship to the university. The boy too should confine himself to the real dilemma that he faces and carefully think about the penalty that his actions might attract. Moreover, the boy should see whether his actions would benefit others. Obviously, here, they would not because if he fails to make it

to the university, he might not be able to cater for his family in the future. He would also forego the great chance of getting quality tertiary education and might have to settle for a simple institution, if he is not completely expelled from school.

The next significant ethical theory is that of Kantianism. Kantianism primarily involves asking oneself whether the actions undertaken are right or wrong. It differs from Utilitarianism in that Kantianism focuses on goodwill whereas utilitarianism bases its focus on happiness. In Kantianism, the essential thing is the performance of the right actions for the correct reasons. Intelligence, as in the case of the student, is only valuable if sound will accompanies it. Even if the good will accomplishes nothing, it remains good. One of the key issues in Kant's theory is reason. The will to act in accordance to the provided, reasonable set of rules is what makes a good will good. Reason gives guidance on what to do. Any given moral rule (e. g. Plagiarism is wrong) is a discovery of reason and total admission of no exceptions.

The other main factor in Kantianism is duty. A good will is good if done for the sake of duty i. e. the undertaking of an action should be for the sake of the law. Therefore, it would be wrong for the student to buy the essay as this means lack of conformity to the law. At times, things done in good faith are not as sound as those undertaken for duty's sake. This is because these actions are simply contingent. If there were different inclinations, reactions might also be different. Acting based on inclinations is not very advisable. This could lead us to behaving unfavorably towards others hence duty is crucial in ensuring adherence to moral rules.

Kant goes on to provide a test through which all actions must go to ascertain

that they are moral. This test is the Categorical Imperative (C. I). Generally, imperatives tell an individual what he or she ought to do. Categorical imperatives tell one to do something regardless of its consequences, as that action is a moral requirement. The C. I. is primarily a test of logic. It requires that none of one's actions contradict them. This means that if one is in a situation requiring moral decision-making, one should not make one that brings about some contradiction to them.

The student is to receive the scholarship if he passes by doing his own genuine work and not plagiarizing. He would be contradicting himself by buying the essay and presenting it as his own just so that he attains the scholarship, given that he is intelligent and is probably conversant with the rules.

The third major theory is Virtue Ethics. The question to ask here is: What kind of person should an individual be? Virtue ethics has its emphasis on whole life. This only means that individuals ought to work to be virtuous. Secondly, the theory connects actions to an agent and to the character. What a person did is not what is necessary, but the character revealed. The role of virtue ethics is to mold the development of that character in coming days. The theory also provides a reason to be virtuous in that having virtues means proper living, which brings us joy. Aside from all this, virtue ethics helps give foundation to the considerations of ethics in professions.

Virtue ethics, in this case, therefore, directs attentions to what the student should be. It is advisable that he be sincere in his pursuit of the scholarship even if it means having to fail. The virtue in focus here is honesty; academic honesty. By bearing this principle, the boy can be a better person even in the

future. If he chooses to go down the road of plagiarism, he might face tough consequences and never get another chance to try out for the scholarship again. However, if he decides to do his own work even if it means failing, the school authority might be lenient enough to understand the situation at home and provide him another opportunity.

b) What would each theory suggest as a solution to the ethical dilemma in the case? (To answer this part, you must clearly set out how you perceive the ethical dilemma).

The ethical dilemma is whether the student should buy the essay and present it as his own to gain success and obtain the scholarship or do his own genuine work even if it means failure. Utilitarianism theory suggests that should the boy present someone else's work as his very own he must accept the consequences.

Kantianism states that such actions as cheating contradict themselves in a way. If made universal, they would undermine their fundamental practices. For instance, while this student was to get away with plagiarism on his essay if all students committed the act of plagiarism, the entire purpose of setting exams breaks down. The purpose of the essay is to grade students and test their knowledge to reward the successful ones e. g. with the scholarship. If the intelligent student fails, then like the rest of his fellows, he should not receive that scholarship.

Lastly, Virtue ethics suggests that individual should develop a character of virtuousness. The student, therefore, must strive to be honest in his work and hand in only his own genuine paper.

c) Which resolution do you think best and why?

It is best that the student displays academic honesty and not present the bought essay as his own original work since this could lead to dire consequences. He might be forced to redo the essay and miss the chance of attaining the scholarship at that time or fail it overall. He could even get a reduced grade in his course and receive a grade showing he failed with academic dishonesty. This could ruin his reputation among his teachers as well as his peers. In addition, he would become a disappointment to his family, especially his younger siblings who look up to him. The boy also risks dismissal from the school with a record of academic dishonesty, which taints him.

The wise thing to do is to sit down and carefully think things through before undertaking any action. This means carefully analyzing the situation and pondering about the consequences that each act can attract and how the act might affect those around him. It is also advisable to uphold the virtue of academic honesty as this helps one grow into a better individual even in the future. This means developing one's own knowledge and skills by themselves and not sourcing for help that will otherwise make them believe they have acquired the knowledge and skills. It also attracts less severe consequences if any are to be present at all.

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