

Academic honesty: current status and forms of improvement

Honestidad académica: estado actual y formas de mejora

Академічна доброчесність: сучасний стан та шляхи удосконалення



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Resumen

Objetivo: El propósito de este artículo es analizar el estado actual de la probidad académica, mejora de sus principios organizacionales y legales. **Método:** Para lograr este objetivo se utilizaron métodos como el análisis lógico-legal y sistemático, dialéctico y dogmático, formal-lógico, comparativo. La aplicación interrelacionada de estos métodos condujo a conclusiones y sugerencias basadas en la ciencia. **Resultados:** Se han investigado los temas de la esencia y trascendencia de la probidad académica, el estado actual de estos aspectos problemáticos, así como las formas de mejora cualitativa de los principios legales y organizacionales de la probidad académica. Se ha argumentado que la honestidad académica es una parte integral tanto para garantizar la calidad de la educación superior como para realizar investigaciones. Se ha proporcionado la definición legislativa y doctrinal del concepto de “honestidad académica”; Se han definido los tipos de responsabilidad por la violación de la probidad académica. Los temas relacionados con la formación y el funcionamiento de una atmósfera de respeto mutuo entre académicos se han considerado tanto para sus propios trabajos científicos como para los trabajos científicos de sus colegas. **Conclusiones:** Sobre la base de los resultados del estudio realizado, se han formulado propuestas para mejorar los principios legales para garantizar la honestidad académica en Ucrania.

PALABRAS CLAVE: honestidad académica, superación, principios legales, entorno académico, ciencia moderna, reputación de los académicos.

Abstract

Objective: The purpose of this article is to analyze the current status of academic honesty, improvement of its organizational and legal principles. **Method:** To achieve this goal, such methods as logical-legal and systematic, dialectical and dogmatic, formal-logical, comparative analysis, was used. The interrelated application of these methods led to the science-based conclusions and suggestions. **Results:** The issues of the essence and significance of academic honesty, the current status of these issues problematic aspect, as well as the ways of qualitative improvement of the legal and organizational principles of academic honesty have been researched. It has been argued that academic honesty is an integral part of both ensuring the quality of higher education and conducting research. The legislative and doctrinal definition of the concept of «academic honesty» has been provided; the types of responsibility for the violation of academic honesty have been defined. Issues related to the formation and functioning of an atmosphere of mutual respect among scholars have been considered both to their own scientific works, and to scientific works of their colleagues. **Conclusions:** Based on the results of the conducted study, propositions to improve the legal principles for ensuring academic honesty in Ukraine have been formulated.

KEYWORDS: academic honesty, improvement, legal principles, academic environment, modern science, reputation of scholars.

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I. Introduction

Nowadays, issues that in one way or another are considered relevant to the problems of the functioning of such a specific social institution as academic honesty, cannot be considered separately from the current state of affairs in national science. We should in no case ignore the current global tendencies in the scientific environment, which are set by the most developed and progressive countries in the world, and later these tendencies are intercepted by other countries.

As researchers rightly point out, compliance with the code of academic honesty in modern developed society is the image and reputation of the educational institution. The transfer of knowledge, culture is possible only under the condition of observance of academic honesty and at the same time new ideas are produced, innovations are created on this foundation (Sorokina, Artiukhov, Dehtiarova 2017: 160).

Such global changes concern not only some scientific and theoretical provisions or statements, but also moral and ethical standards, compliance with which is an important element of effective cooperation of the entire scientific community. Examples include the growing interest in ensuring the freedom of scholars in their research and the emphasis on their copyright. Besides, there has recently been a demand for a clear division between the scholars personal life, his political views and his professional activities.

II. Methods and Literature review

To achieve this goal, as well as to provide science-based results of the study, a set of general scientific and special methods used in legal science was used. The methodological basis of the study is the theory of knowledge of social and legal phenomena. Logical-legal and systematic methods were used for the formulation of logically relevant conclusions, and consistent presentation of study materials. The

dialectical and dogmatic methods became the base for interpretation of the legal categories and specifying the conceptual and categorical apparatus, in particular, «academic honesty». The work also used special research methods, in particular: 1) formal and logical - to clarify and deepen the understanding of the conceptual and categorical apparatus related to the subject of study; 2) comparative analysis - when generalizing the opinions of scientists about concepts related to the subject of study. The following methods were used in the article in interconnectivity and interdependence, which ensured the comprehensiveness, completeness and objectivity of the study.

Considering the fact that the problem of issues related to the proper functioning of the scientific environment in Ukraine and through the whole world is extremely important and relevant, as well as the issue of academic honesty, it is quite rational that a lot of number of specialists was involved in studying this issue. Quite a high interest of scholars to this issue lies in the fact that this topic directly affects the daily lives of scholars. The essence and problem of academic honesty, as well as the ways and methods of their improvement have been and will be a source for further research.

In fact, it can be stated that national science already has a certain list of scientific works, where the issues related to the subject of this article have been qualitatively studied. Among the mentioned works, we should single out the works of such scholars as: Artiukhov A. (Academic Honesty and Science: Is It Joint Movement or Different Paths? 2017), Dehtiarova I. (Impact of Academic Honesty on Institutional Practice of Ukrainian System of Higher education 2016), Fishman T. (The Fundamental Values of Academic Integrity 2014), Hapsari A., Ghali M. I., Ammar M. H. (The Use of Turnitin to Teach Academic Integrity in Essay Writing Coursework 2020), Kravchenko O. P. (Academic Honesty: Current Status and Perspectives of Development 2019), Maslova N. H. (Academic Freedom and Academic Responsibility 2017), Ryan G., Bonanno H., Krass I., Scouller K., Smith L. (Undergraduate and Postgraduate Pharmacy Students Perceptions of Plagiarism and Academic Honesty 2009), Sorokina N. H., Artiukhov A. Ye., Dehtiarova I. O. (Academic Honesty: Problems of Adhering and Priorities of Spreading among Young Researchers 2017), Tytska Ya. (Academic integrity as an element of the education quality assurance system 2018), Yehorchenko I. (Academic Honesty: Are These Standards of the World Community or Simulation? 2018) and others.

III. Results

The active processes of increasing informatization that affect every member of society in one way or another, as well as the powerful technological development that is currently being observed around the world, have greatly increased the number of individuals and organizations who can now easily access any information posted in open sources. As of today, more than 90 % of the information on various web pages is in the mode of free access. In this regard, experts in the field of cyber security and copyright protection have to state the fact that the set of opportunities that allow the use of intellectual property products has never been so accessible as now. This reality contains both socially positive and socially negative phenomena (Law of Ukraine No. 2145-VIII). For example, the current opportunity to freely view, study and research almost infinite number of scientific papers, dissertations and articles in any field of science is certainly a powerful catalyst for the rapid development of the entire scientific field, which eventually leads to specific scientific discoveries and inventions. In turn, services and applications that perform automatic instant translation of any language, thus perform an extremely important function of comparison and generalization of scientific opinions, creating an opportunity for each person to get acquainted with scientific works by removing the language barrier. At the same time, using the scientific achievements of foreign researchers, you should always pay attention to the translation of the text, so as not to create so-called «quasi» links.

Thus, the rapid and continuous development of the Internet has become a major factor in facilitating the process of obtaining information by subjects of research activity, including the process of acquiring new knowledge. According to some scientific forecasts, the capabilities of the average user of the «World Wide Web» will achieve impressive results in the nearest future. But, unfortunately, some scholars do not always adhere to ethical principles, thus creating a violation of the principle of academic honesty.

The development of information technology, the growth of the Internet possibilities has led to a number of factors that negatively affect world and national science. Those factors include such as the misappropriation of other peoples sayings and statements by unscrupulous Internet users, which are primarily protected by copyright, by passing them off as their own opinions. Another related problem is borrowing of excerpts from someone else work by an unscrupulous scholar without clear and reliable references to the original source. Unfortunately, you can often find cases of falsification of sources in the scientific field, i.e. to provide certain information, the author of which is one person, the false authorship of another person (Dehtiarova, 2016).

It should be emphasized that although this problem of «academic dishonesty», which is harmful to the entire science, is mostly observed among young and insufficiently qualified or inexperienced specialists, cases of literary piracy can be found among the scientific works of the so-called «bigwigs» of the scientific world. It should also be added that the problem of literary piracy by some «a miserable excuse for scholars» is not unique only to Ukraine. In particular, the world community is aware of a number of bitter incidents of literary piracy that have taken place in some Universities dominant in the research area of the countries. First of all, in our opinion, this has a negative effect on the authority of the University itself, where unscrupulous scholars work or where a scientific work containing literary piracy was written.

Although cases of violating scientific ethics and academic honesty occur in developed countries, such as the United Kingdom, the United States, Canada, and Western European countries, the situation with literary piracy there and, for example, in the post-Soviet countries is markedly different. Certain standards and high standards of academic honesty have long existed and functioned in advanced countries in terms of quality of life and education. They are related both to the sphere of quality of education, the sphere of writing and evaluation of scientific works, and, of course, the sphere of human ethics and morality.

Nowadays there are the following systems for verifying academic texts for literary piracy, like WCopy-Find (USA), Turnitin (Indonesian, USA), Viper (Great Britain), Urkund (Sweden), PlagScan (Germany), Strike-Plagiarism (Poland), Unicheck (Ukraine), IThenticate (USA), CrossRef Plagiarism Check (USA). For example, in Indonesia in teaching academic writing, such as: essay, Turnitin is an online software which can help lecturers in teaching academic integrity. It matches students' work submitted to Turnitin with other online texts on the internet and helps the lecturer to trace students' originality in writing. Turnitin as is used as a tool to give students' feedback in essay writing coursework in order to teach them academic integrity (Hapsari, Ghali, Ammar, 2020).

In their scientific work, the Indonesian researchers Zulfadli A. A., Silfian and Faisal M. (2020, p. 87) noted the following «The results show a contradiction between junior lecturers' awareness of their practical behavior. Their high awareness of plagiarism was not a benchmark from the misconduct or plagiarism. Surprisingly, the findings show some junior lecturers were intentionally plagiarizing by paying more professional writers to finish their articles. They also copied the whole source or part of it to produce better writing work. Finally, lack of consequences and lack of ability in academic writing are the major reasons why young lecturers plagiarized».

Thus, it is safe to say that democratic and most developed countries, with real rule of law, have created a real positivist cult of academic honesty, as well as an institution of mutual respect among scientists and scholars. Moreover, unlike many professional traditions that have existed for many years and have a weak perception and support among the younger generations, traditions of proper adherence to the principles of academic honesty are passionately and actively supported by young students and young scholars in Western Academies and Universities (Law of Ukraine No. 5460-17).

The high quality standards of education that have been established in legal and democratic countries are one of the key elements of the extremely high level of general awareness and culture inherent in North American and Western European countries. While developed countries are rapidly improving their living standards and the environment through scientific and technological advances, some authoritarian states are doing their best to promote corruption and bribery in their countries educational and scientific fields, creating an environment, where literary piracy has become so prevalent that is very common.

Ryan G. et al. (2009) noted that «Findings indicated widespread deficiencies in student knowledge of, and attitudes towards, plagiarism. Students did not perceive plagiarism as a serious issue and the use of inappropriate strategies for sourcing and acknowledging material was common. The study highlights the importance of achieving a balance among the 3 dimensions of plagiarism management: prevention, detection and penalty».

In turn, the cessation of educational and technological development directly affects the economic well-being of the country population, its political culture and the defense capabilities of its armed forces. Since it is well-known fact that the systematic lack of quality scientific achievements together with the lack of interest of the political authorities and the majority of the population in the real development of the country's technology industry (in particular, in the field of information and high technologies), as well as the lack of proper funding for such activities inevitably lead the country to a deep crisis (OECD Reviews on Integrity in Education 2017).

With the main goal of making money for themselves and their families by illegally pumping money, namely stealing state budgets and creating a lot of extra taxes, the ruling elite can only imitate their own «achievements» through the pocket media or claim other peoples achievements as own. Such criminal audacity of the leadership about the future of the country has logically led to the spread of arbitrariness among various middle-ranking officials, including the heads of educational institutions and research centers.

Numerous rectors, deans and ordinary professors have become accustomed to corruption, bribery and scientific falsifications. Feeling their own inability to somehow improve the situation, the vast majority of them have forever abandoned their chances and ideas for reforming and developing the science, where the main goal of their existence is only to make money. Taking into account that the official salaries of most of them are extremely low to maintain a decent standard of living, they focused on building their own enrichment schemes by extorting and receiving bribes for exams, as well as actively writing various scientific papers for a fee.

Although the negative phenomena that are characteristic of the daily functioning of science and education, and partially spread to the Ukrainian scientific community, but due to the active activities of the Ukrainian public, as well as the incentive of the bulk of Ukrainian citizens and national politicians to move towards European quality of life, the level of the above stated harmful tendencies is gradually fading. It should be emphasized that the problem of proper observance of academic honesty among the members of the scientific community is primarily complex.

In other words, this means that it is necessary to promote the simultaneous improvement of the situation in several spheres of public life in order to overcome the negative phenomena that are characteristic of the modern scientific and educational system of Ukraine. The point is that only under a number of conditions it will be possible to establish an effective system of educational services and research in Ukraine, which, in turn, can play a key role in the process of creating a healthy and competitive scientific environment, which consists of real professionals.

The ultimate result of such changes will inevitably be the final establishment of a regime of proper observance of all principles of academic honesty in Ukraine without exception. It should be noted that besides solving various problems related to the process of effective and independent evaluation of the quality of educational services, problems that are not directly related to the scientific environment are also identified as obstacles to the normal and transparent functioning of the national academic and teaching sector. But such problems can have a rather strong influence on national science due to the existence of the so-called «human factor». First of all, these are problems of economic nature, such as the low level of salaries of ordinary professors and researchers, as well as the lack of full support for scientific activities and research by government agencies. Such assistance could in practice look like funding for research and education projects or providing cash grants for important research (Law of Ukraine No. 2148-19).

Legislative standardization of the concept of «academic honesty»

According to O. P. Kravchenko (2019), the institution of academic honesty was consolidated in the Ukrainian educational environment in 2009, when a number of events devoted to the support and implementation of the Code of Honor in Ukrainian Universities were held at the initiative of the Democracy Foundation of the US Embassy and associations of NGOs. However, the principles of academic honesty in Ukrainian Universities of that time were either perceived as something fashionable (spoken but not understood), abstract (spoken but not applied in practice), or their use was limited to the rules of working with information and as a reason to ban students and teachers to uncontrollably and irresponsibly use other peoples thoughts.

The legislative field for strengthening academic honesty has been already established in Ukraine, in particular, this issue is addressed in the Laws of Ukraine «On Education» and «On Higher Education», «On Scientific, Scientific and Technical Activities», etc. In particular, a new Law of Ukraine «On Education» was adopted on 5 September 2017. The Article 42 of this Law stipulates that academic honesty is a set of ethical principles and statutory rules that should be guided by participants in the educational process during training, teaching and carrying out research (creative) activities in order to ensure confidence in learning outcomes and / or scientific (creative) achievements» (Law of Ukraine No. 2148-19).

It should be noted that academic honesty, in accordance with the Art. 6 of this Law, is one of the principles of state policy in the field of education and the principle of educational activity. In addition, the quality assurance system in educational institutions (internal quality assurance system of education), according to Part 3 of the Art. 41 of this Law, may also include the system and mechanisms for ensuring academic honesty.

For the violation of academic honesty pedagogical, scientific-pedagogical and research employees of educational institutions can be brought to the following academic responsibility:

- refusal to award a scientific degree or confer an academic title;
- deprivation of the awarded scientific (educational and creative) degree or the awarded academic title;
- refusal to assign or deprivation of the awarded pedagogical title, qualification category;
- deprivation of the right to participate in the work of statutory agencies or to hold statutory positions.

For the violation of academic honesty, degree-seeking students may be held subject to the following academic responsibility:

- re-assessment (tests, exams, pass-fail exams, etc.);
- re-passing the relevant educational component of the curriculum;
- expulsions from the educational institution (except for persons receiving general secondary education);
- deprivation of an academic scholarship;
- deprivation of benefits to pay for the education provided by the educational institution.

As we can see, the legislative standardization of academic responsibility on the part of pedagogical, scientific-pedagogical and research workers of educational institutions, as well as degree-seeking students for higher education should be recognized as positive.

N. H. Maslova (2017, p. 75-76) calls this type of responsibility as a kind of social responsibility, which includes three levels:

- 1) responsibility to oneself (is purely moral in nature);
- 2) responsibility to other subjects of the academic community (has moral, corporate or legal character);
- 3) responsibility to the state and society (has legal nature).

Supporting this position, we consider it appropriate to highlight the fourth level the responsibility to higher educations degree-seeking students. This issue acquires special significance at the second (masters level) and third (educational and scientific / educational and creative) levels of higher education. Applicants select supervisors to write scientific (creative) works at these levels, which is done by getting acquainted with the works of future supervisors. Considering this, the quality of scientific work of scholars is essential, because in case of violation of academic honesty, this indicator is lost.

Taking into account the importance of the above issue, it is considered appropriate to establish a procedure for bringing a person to responsibility at the legislative level for violations of academic honesty. In turn, it will be also appropriate for educational institutions to provide procedural issues in the relevant provisions that concern of bringing a person to academic responsibility, in particular, to establish the agency authorized to consider the issue of the violation of academic honesty, terms of consideration, stages, consequences, procedure for making and appealing such a decision, etc.

Thus, the establishment of the principles of academic honesty is a rather difficult process, which involves both the delineation, fixation, conscious and free acceptance of these principles by all members of the academic community. The presence of good will, educational enthusiasm, confidence in the correctness of the adepts of academic honesty, combined with modern information technology, can accelerate this process over time and expand the range of ideological supporters of these principles (Artiukhov, 2017, p. 19-20).

Doctrinal interpretations of the concept of «academic honesty»

Academic integrity is the basis of educational experiences. Built upon six values: honesty, trust, fairness, respect, responsibility and courage (Fishman, 2014).

Ya. Tytska (2018, p. 4), based on defining dictionaries of the Ukrainian language, noted that the concept of «academic honesty» etymologically consists of a combination of two words: «academic», which means in the dictionary literature:

- 1) refers to the academy; carried out by it;
- 2) educational;
- 3) purely theoretical, abstract; which has no practical significance, detached from life;
- 4) that adheres to established traditions in the art and «honesty» a property meaning «honest»; who lives honestly, follows all the rules of morality; which is a manifestation of honesty, morality.

I. Dehtiarova in her research, has come to the conclusion that it is expedient to consider academic honesty in four dimensions (Dehtiarova, 2016, p. 199-200):

- individual at the level of a particular personality — a student, a teacher, a researcher, a leader, when the focus is on the personal and professional ethics of a particular person and his own values, adherence to moral principles and code of professional ethics, care for reputation and respect within academic community;
- institutional tolerance / intolerance of such phenomena at the level of a separate higher educational institution or research institution, creation of certain regulatory prerequisites for cultivating academic honesty at the institutional level, implementation of these principles in the process of training, evaluation and rating of academic staff in personnel policy;
- systemic approval of the principles of academic honesty at the level of the entire system of higher education and science, in particular by legitimizing the relevant positions in regulatory acts that constitute the legal basis for its functioning;
- collegian at the level of the academic environment in its broadest sense as a formal / informal association of participants in educational and research activities (students, post-graduate students, researchers, teachers, administrators, etc.).

IV. Conclusions

Thus, the establishment of high standards of professional ethics among the representatives of national scientific community is an extremely complex task. Each of the elements of this task needs to be improved at the same time as the others. Adherence to real principles of honesty will strengthen the academic community of Ukraine.

Academic honesty is an interdisciplinary category that combines ethical norms and rules of human behavior within educational and scientific environment. It is the tool, which assists to develop such fundamental values of the educational process as norms and principles for more than a decade and can be implemented into practice.

An urgent issue of today is the introduction of all levels of violations of academic honesty the same for all types of Universities into the educational process, in particular, such as academic literary piracy, self-plagiarism, fabrication, falsification, copying from, biased evaluation. These types of violations of academic honesty must be clearly stated in the Regulations on the educational process and scientific activities of the relevant educational institution. Among other things, it is necessary to envisage the rights of persons, who are under suspicion of non-compliance with the principles of academic honesty, as well as to provide a possible mechanism for appealing against decisions, which state the violations of academic honesty.

One of the possible ways to improve the situation regarding the prevention and timely detection of academic honesty is the introduction of a separate structural unit for the organization and control over academic honesty into the University payroll schedule or to prescribe such responsibilities in the duties of an employee of Higher Education Quality Monitoring Department (or similar in the direction of activity).

Besides, it is advisable to agree and support the position of I. Yehorchenko (2018) that it is necessary to:

- 1) provide adequate resources and bring the requirements of the participants in the educational process in line with the resources they have;
- 2) train the «academic honesty», i.e., academic writing, citation rules, and the basics of international standards;
- 3) study and remove external incentives and factors of coercion to academic dishonesty (first of all, immediately remove the requirements to «write articles» and «make Junior Academy of Sciences» by unmotivated teachers, students and pupils without proper guidance, etc.).

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