



Defiance to Intellectual Honesty: An Investigation on Plagiarism Among CTE Students in Academic Writing

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ABSTRACT

This research study investigates the prevalence of plagiarism among College of Teacher Education (CTE) student researchers and explores the contextual and situational factors contributing to this behavior. The research was conducted by evaluating the similarity rate of CTE student researchers' papers using Turnitin and administering a questionnaire to gauge their awareness and engagement in plagiarism. The findings reveal a high percentage of similarity rates among the research papers, with an average degree of similarity index of 53%. Surprisingly, despite receiving regular supervision from research advisers and undergoing a course on research and academic writing, CTE student researchers continue to produce papers with substantial similarities. The questionnaire responses indicate that 90.2% of the respondents are aware of what plagiarism entails; however, they still "sometimes" engage in plagiaristic practices. Furthermore, 97% acknowledge that using someone else's processes, results, or words without proper attribution is a form of plagiarism. The study highlights several reasons, as generated from interviews, why CTE student researchers engage in plagiarism. These include a tendency to disregard plagiarism detection software, copying others' work without paraphrasing, and directly copying and pasting sections from external sources without appropriate attribution or quotation marks. Contextual and situational factors such as the widespread availability of information and communication technology (ICT) and the Internet, lack of teacher control, attitude, and poor self-competency contribute to students' defiance of intellectual honesty. In conclusion, despite possessing adequate knowledge about plagiarism, CTE student researchers still exhibit plagiaristic behaviors, as confirmed by both the Turnitin evaluation and the research questionnaire. Efforts to address these issues should consider improving students' understanding of ethical writing practices, enhancing academic writing skills, and implementing stricter controls to discourage plagiarism in CTE research papers.

Keywords: *Plagiarism, Intellectual Honesty, Academic Writing, Knowledge on Plagiarism, Practices Towards Plagiarism, Causes of Plagiarism, Turnitin*



INTRODUCTION

In the academic community, stealing could be taking possession of information as if it is one's own. The act of taking someone else's words or ideas as one's own without properly citing the source is termed as plagiarism, whereas according to the Committee on Publication Ethics (COPE), "plagiarism ranges from the unreferenced use of others' published and unpublished ideas, including research grant applications to submission under "new" authorship of a complete paper, sometimes in a different language" (COPE Report, 2000). Hence, failure to acknowledge the sources of the concepts, language, and information that served as the foundation for one's own work is a defiance to intellectual honesty.

The evolution of defiance to intellectual honesty, specifically plagiarism, has coincided with changes in the educational environment as according to Eret, E., & Ok, A. (2014). Plagiarism is a recurring issue that discourse communities face (Larkham, P. J., & Manns, S., 2002) and has grown to be a common and significant learning problem among students (Echanique, 2020). Unfortunately, not all academicians write their papers with the utmost honesty, as evidenced by the conclusion that plagiarism occurs at all levels of learning, even among seasoned academics (Bretag, T 2013). This implies that avoiding plagiarism is not an easy task for some members of the academic community, more so, if learners are not trained from the early stages of their study.

In the Philippines, the education system provides learners the opportunity to be a researcher. A research course is offered among Cagayan State University (CSU) undergraduate students. Just like any undergraduate student, students of CSU Piat Campus have to submit papers and conduct research in their research course as one of the requirements for their graduation.

In this course, students received training in research methods and academic writing, including how to use

electronic databases to find relevant material, how to correctly cite sources, how to summarize and paraphrase original content, what plagiarism is, and how to avoid it.

A lack of understanding and poor competency of many students such as the undergraduate students of CSU-Piat on what plagiarism is may be to blame for the inadequacy of abilities for properly referring and citing various sorts of sources in their papers specifically using a particular referencing style. Some student factors have been investigated in other studies of a similar nature as potential predictors of knowledge and attitude toward plagiarism. For instance, it was reported that intellectual theft was mostly caused by time constraints, workload, and task complexity (Eret, E., & Ok, A. 2014), these include lack of time, hectic schedules, poor academic writing skills, and prolonged computer use have all been linked to internet plagiarism (Kayaoğlu, M. N., Erbay, S., Flitner, C., & Saltaş, D. 2016).

Though there is a substantial amount of literature that has been produced on plagiarism, exploring its prevalence by understanding students' knowledge and practices on plagiarism and its perceived causes in the Philippine context remains to be investigated. The perspectives of second language learners, the extent of plagiarism, and the factors motivating the students to plagiarize have not received enough attention. The researchers think that in order to enhance their efforts to combat plagiarism, the institution and academic authorities need such information. Furthermore, the researchers' chosen location has never been used for studies on student plagiarism. Hence, there is little empirical investigation on this aspect. These were all the voids or lines of inquiry that the researchers were looking to fill.

In pursuing these research opportunities, by using a plagiarism-detection method to calculate the precise quantity of textual plagiarism, the researchers generally aim to identify the degree of plagiarism in the research papers of CTE students.

This research also intends to investigate students' understanding and practices of plagiarism and the factors that lead to it.

From there, this study aims to identify some areas for study and pedagogical activities to revise the module or syllabus in their research subject to eventually lessen or even rid of practices on plagiarism. More so, it would be interesting to confirm the university's function in helping students develop ethical behavior and preparing them for more difficult academic work as potential future teachers.

If educational institutions are to maintain their core values, they must pay close attention and be vigilant against this kind of defiance to intellectual honesty.

Objectives of the Study

This study undertook an investigation with the primary objective of assessing the prevalence of plagiarism and identifying the influential factors in plagiarism behavior within the context of research proposal writing among scholars in the field of Career and Technical Education (CTE). To achieve this, the study addressed four distinct research inquiries: 1) An exploration into the degree of source text plagiarism in research paper composition, 2) An evaluation of the respondents' comprehension of plagiarism, 3) An examination of the respondents' engagement in practices related to plagiarism, and 4) An analysis of the perceived drivers of plagiarism, categorized into contextual factors and situational factors.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Research Design

This study utilized a mixed-method design to comprehensively investigate the phenomenon of plagiarism among CTE (Career and Technical Education) student researchers. The mixed-method design combined both quantitative and qualitative research techniques to gain a deeper understanding of how CTE students perceive and engage in plagiarism.

Sampling Technique

The researchers employed a total enumeration approach, including all 4th-year students from three different academic programs offered by the department: (1) Bachelor in Elementary Education, (2) Bachelor in Secondary Education Major in English, Mathematics, and Social Studies, and (3) Bachelor in Technical Livelihood Education Major in Home Economics. This approach aimed to gather data from the entire population of interest.

Locale of the Study

The study was conducted at Cagayan State University-Piat Campus, located in Baung Piat, Cagayan, Philippines.

Research Instruments

three distinct instruments were employed to gather both quantitative and qualitative data. Firstly, Turnitin, a widely recognized plagiarism detection software, was utilized as a tool to assess research papers submitted by CTE (Career and Technical Education) students for any instances of intellectual dishonesty, thus providing quantitative data on the prevalence of plagiarism.

Secondly, an online questionnaire, adapted from previous studies by Phyo, Lwin, Tun, et al. (2022) and AlSmari (2020), was administered to assess the knowledge and practices of CTE researchers concerning plagiarism. This questionnaire provided a quantitative perspective on the respondents' understanding and behaviors related to plagiarism.

Lastly, in-depth interviews were conducted to delve into the qualitative aspects of the research. These interviews were aimed at exploring students' awareness of plagiarism and gaining deeper insights into the factors influencing their decisions to engage in plagiarism. The qualitative data gathered from these interviews enriched the study by providing a more comprehensive understanding of the human factors involved in plagiarism within the CTE student population.

Data Gathering Procedure

For quantitative data collection, an online questionnaire was administered to 4th-year students from the specified CTE programs. This questionnaire aimed to evaluate their understanding of plagiarism and their tendencies regarding plagiarism.

In addition to the questionnaire, Turnitin, a plagiarism detection software, was utilized to analyze research papers submitted by CTE students. Turnitin generated a similarity index, which indicated the degree of textual overlap between the submitted papers and other sources.

For qualitative data collection, follow-up interviews were conducted with CTE students. These interviews delved deeper into their perceptions of plagiarism and explored the underlying motivations for their engagement in plagiarism. Through these interviews, qualitative insights were gathered to enrich the overall research findings.

Analysis of the Data/ Statistical treatment

The collected data underwent a thorough analysis employing a variety of methods and tools. To scrutinize the quantitative data derived from the questionnaires, the researchers applied statistical analysis techniques, encompassing the creation of frequency distribution tables, calculation of mean scores, and generation of descriptive values.

These analytical tools were instrumental in evaluating the knowledge and practices of students concerning plagiarism. The Turnitin software, on the other hand, furnished a similarity index and employed color-coded similarity classifications (ranging from Blue to Red) to pinpoint and quantify textual plagiarism in the research papers. The results from Turnitin's analysis were seamlessly integrated into the overall data analysis process.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Research Students' Extent of Plagiarism in Their Research Papers

Table 1. Similarity Index of CTE Researchers' Paper Reported by Turnitin

Similarity Rate	Definition of Similarity	N	%
Between 75% and 100%	Very High Extent	5	17.24
Between 50% and 74%	High Extent	12	41.38
Between 25% and 49%	Moderate Extent	9	31.03
Between 1% and 24%	Low Extent	3	10.34
0%	No Similarity	0	0
TOTAL	29		100

The data provided above represent the similarity index of research papers reported by Turnitin among College Teacher Education researchers. The similarity rate is divided into different ranges, each with its corresponding definition of similarity.

The highest extent of similarity, categorized as "Very High Extent," was observed in 5 out of 29 papers (17.24%). These papers had a similarity rate between 75% and 100%. This indicates a significant overlap of content with existing sources.

A "High Extent" of similarity, ranging between 50% and 74%, was found in 12 papers (41.38%). These papers exhibited a substantial level of similarity, suggesting significant matches with existing materials.

A "Moderate Extent" of similarity, ranging between 25% and 49%, was present in 9 papers (31.03%). These papers showed a moderate level of similarity, indicating some matches with external sources but with less overlap compared to the previous categories.

A "Low Extent" of similarity, ranging between 1% and 24%, was observed in 3 papers (10.34%). These papers had a relatively low level of similarity, indicating minimal matches with external sources.

Interestingly, no papers in the dataset showed a similarity rate of 0%, indicating that there were no papers without any similarity to existing sources.

Research Students' Extent of Plagiarism in Their Research Papers According to Major

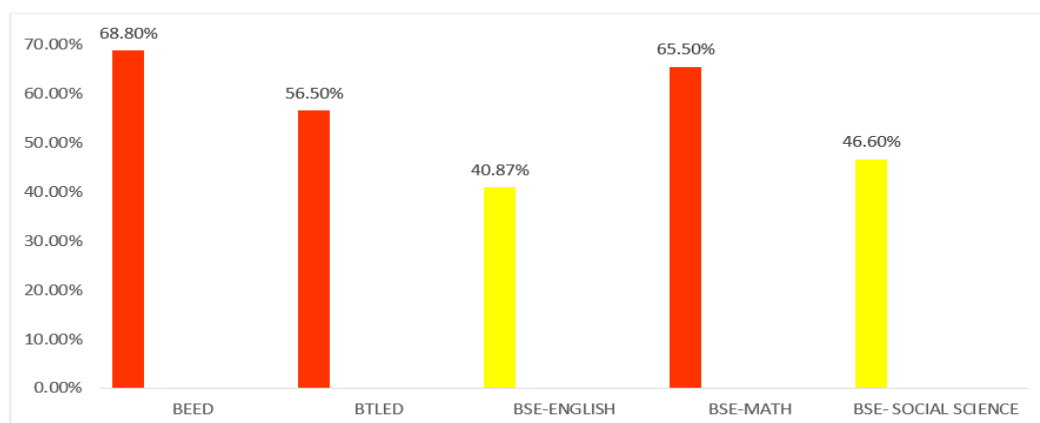


Figure 1. Similarity Index of CTE Researchers' Papers Reported by Turnitin According to Major

Of the 5 CTE programs, 3 programs were marked by Turnitin as "Very High Extent". The similarity index for texts in the Bachelor of Elementary Education (BEED), Bachelor of Science in Education major in Mathematics (BSE-MATH), and Bachelor of Technical and Livelihood Education (BTLED) programs was reported to be 68.80%, 65.50%, and 56.6% respectively. This suggests that the submitted texts had a high level of similarity with other sources. It indicates a need for students in this field to enhance their ability to paraphrase and cite sources properly to avoid potential issues related to plagiarism.

The similarity index for texts in the Bachelor of Science in Education major in English (BSE-ENGLISH) and the Bachelor of Science in Education major in Social Science (BSE-SOCIAL SCIENCE) was found to be 40.87% and 46.60% respectively. This relatively lower percentage suggests a higher level of originality and uniqueness in the submitted texts for this subject. These percentages suggest a "Moderate Extent" of similarity in the submitted texts.

While some demonstrate a higher level of similarity, indicating a need for improvement in originality and citation practices, others exhibit better results with a moderate extent of similarity index.

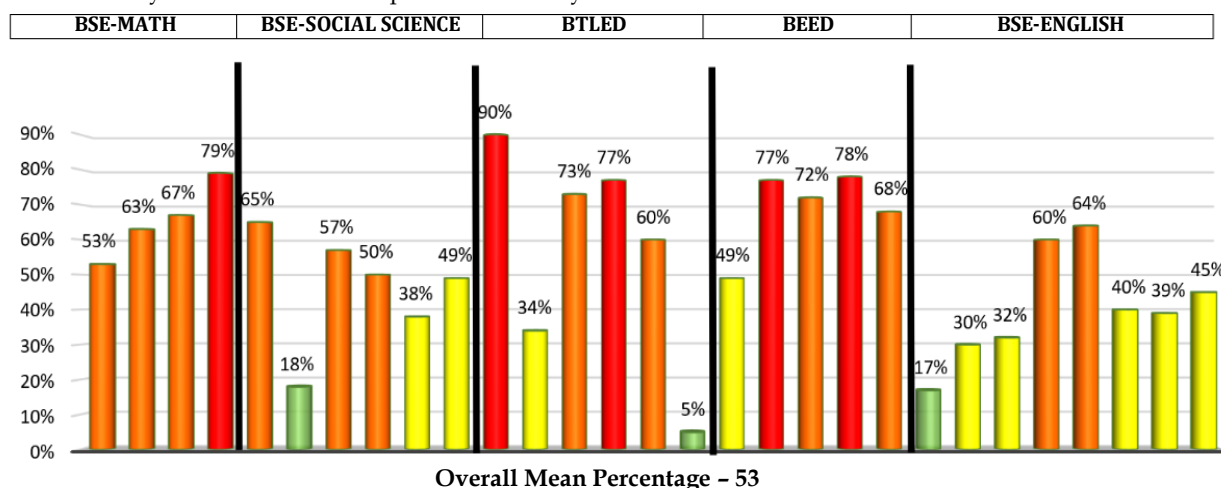
Research Students' Extent of Plagiarism in Their Research Papers

Based on Turnitin's determined percentages of copied words, phrases, and texts, the results revealed a high extent of plagiarism practice among the CTE student researchers as reflected in their overall mean percentage of 53 in the cross-textual similarity index in their papers.

In terms of college programs, BEED papers received the highest average among all CTE programs with an average of 68.8% which was defined by the software as high. On the other hand, BSE-English papers received the lowest average with an average of 40.87% which was defined by the software as moderate.

Among all research papers, 5 papers (Math 4, BTLED 1, BTLED 4, BEED 2, and BEED 4,) were marked by the plagiarism software as red (Very High), receiving a highest plagiarism extent not lower than 75%. This represents 17.24 % of all the submitted papers. BTLED 1 has the highest percentage of plagiarism extent among all CTE research papers with 90% of similarity index.

Only 3 research papers (SocStud 2, BTLED 6, and English 1) out of 29 were marked by the plagiarism software as green (Low), receiving a plagiarism extent not higher than 24%. This represents 10.34% of all the submitted papers. BTLED 6 has the lowest percentage of plagiarism extent among all CTE research papers with 5% of similarity index from Turnitin pool of sources.

Table 1. Similarity Index of Research Papers Submitted by CTE Students

The results indicate that despite taking a course on the fundamentals of academic writing and research, as well as receiving regular advice from research advisers, the average level of similarity index, as shown in Table 1, across all research papers was 53%. That is to say, more than half of the CTE's research papers consisted entirely of phrases, sentences, and paragraphs that were copied

verbatim from the sources without any citation or quotation marks.

Among the sites that respondents frequently plagiarizer sources are open access sources such as Research Gate, Course Hero, eric.ed.gov, and other open libraries.

Themes	Sub-Themes	Codes
Contextual Factors	1. ICT And Internet Access	Copying and pasting due to contemporary technology is easy.
		Combining materials from multiple sources is easy.
		Sharing documents, information, and data is easy.
		Accessing materials from the internet is easy.
	2. Lack of Control	There is no teacher control over plagiarism.
		There is no university control over plagiarism.
		There are no penalties.
		It is impossible to get caught plagiarizing.
Situational Factors	1. Poor Self-Competency	Citing resources is difficult
		Writing in English is difficult.
		Expressing ideas accurately is difficult.
		Summarizing and paraphrasing a text using proper academic language and vocabulary is
	2. Positive Attitude	Plagiarism does harm to the value of a university degree.
		Plagiarism is a big deal.

Figure 2. Table Map of Themes, Sub-themes, and Codes Generated from the Qualitative Interview on Perceived Causes of Plagiarism

Perceived Causes of Plagiarism

Despite students' understanding of basic kinds of plagiarism, as shown in the preceding section, high rates of plagiarism were identified in their writing projects, and numerous excuses for their plagiarism were

validated through the interview. An informative map was created to concretely reveal the connections between the code, sub-themes, and themes created during the analysis process. Figure 2 presents the table map.

Contextual Factors

The qualitative analysis revealed that participants have contextual causes that encouraged them to commit plagiarism including the availability of ICT, teacher/university control and related penalties.

ICT and Internet Availability

The result of the interview indicates the availability of ICT as one of the common reasons for committing plagiarism. Some of these are it is easy to copy/paste due to contemporary technology, and it is easy to access. The widespread availability of information and the ease of accessing it through the internet contribute to plagiarism. With a few clicks, students can find vast amounts of content that can be copied and pasted into their own work. A participant stated that *"It is easy to copy and paste on the internet, and it is also easy to access. It makes the life of students easier"*. They also added that the *"Internet provides all the information that we need, so we just copy it but we didn't properly cite it"*. One participant mentioned, *"With the internet, it's so tempting to take shortcuts. There's so much information out there, why bother coming up with something original?"*

Additionally, the ease of combining materials from multiple sources further facilitates plagiarism. "Sharing documents and data is so easy nowadays. Sometimes, I receive work from others and unintentionally include it in my own without proper attribution." Students may simply gather content from various online sources without proper attribution, resulting in a patchwork of copied material. This is particularly tempting when faced with tight deadlines and a lack of time for proper research and synthesis.

Lack of Control

The perception of minimal control and penalties from teachers and universities contributes to the prevalence of plagiarism. Some respondents believed that teachers and universities were not effectively monitoring or detecting instances of plagiarism. Some of the participants reported that *"The main reason we plagiarize is because the teachers do not give feedback when we pass our written*

outputs. We don't if they are really checking our outputs". Other participants also said that *"There is no set of rules to sanction those students who plagiarized and there is no teacher control and enough technology to track those papers that are plagiarized."* (SR26) *"The main reason is there is no teacher control."* (SR27) *"There is no penalty, is someone got imprisoned because of that?"*

This lack of oversight gave students a false sense of security, thinking that they could plagiarize without consequences. As one respondent stated, *"I don't think my professor even reads our papers. It feels like they don't care if we plagiarize or not."* The absence of severe penalties further reinforces this notion. If students believe they can plagiarize without facing significant repercussions, they may be more inclined to engage in such behavior. Respondents expressed sentiments like, *"Even if they catch me, what's the worst that can happen? A slap on the wrist? It's worth the risk."*

Situational Factors

The qualitative analysis revealed that participants have situational factors that encouraged them to commit plagiarism, including their self-competency which includes difficulty in citing sources, difficulty in writing in ideas in English, and difficulty in completing tasks in the allotted time

Self-Competency

Participants feel that plagiarism might be necessary considering certain conditions. Some of them stated that: *"We copy from the internet but without citation because we don't know how to cite."* Participants also added, *"Writing a correct citation was not properly taught to us"*.

Difficulties in various academic skills can lead students to plagiarize. Citing resources accurately requires knowledge of proper citation styles, which some students may struggle with. Writing in English, particularly for non-native speakers, can be challenging, making it tempting to borrow from existing texts instead of

formulating original ideas. Expressing ideas accurately and summarizing or paraphrasing using appropriate academic language and vocabulary can also pose obstacles, pushing some students towards plagiarism as an easier alternative.

These challenges are reflected in the participants' statements. One participant confessed, "I find it so hard to put my thoughts into words, especially in English. It's easier to find something that someone else has already written and just use it." Another respondent expressed, "lack of time/ more work to do/ busy sched "hctic/busy schedule like in our home and some of us are already working part-time when there are no classes. I think that is one of the causes of plagiarism."

These responses are evident that their plagiaristic behaviors were intentional acts and they do not take it seriously as long as it paves the way for them toward the path of success. This academic misconduct could be avoided through hard work and good time management.

Attitudes

While there were justifications for plagiarism, the results from the interview displayed a positive attitude toward plagiarism. They recognized that plagiarism undermines the value of a university degree and understood the seriousness of the offense, however, participants still believe that it is necessary to commit such acts. They also believe that plagiarism is a big deal, and plagiarism does harm the value of a university degree, but they still commit it as evident in their research papers that were evaluated through Turnitin. This indicates a level of awareness and ethical understanding. Despite this awareness, some respondents still succumbed to the pressure to succeed and resorted to plagiarism as a desperate measure to achieve better grades.

The attitudes expressed by respondents highlight the internal struggle they face. One respondent admitted, "I know plagiarism is wrong, and I'm aware of the consequences. But sometimes, I feel so overwhelmed by the expectations to excel that I give in to the temptation

to plagiarize." Some of the participants said that "Plagiarism is wrong, but we don't have any choice to do it especially when we have more important tasks to do, and when we are aiming for high grades." In addition, they said that "Plagiarism is a sin, and it is a big deal, but we still do it since there are no rules to sanction those students who plagiarized".

In conclusion, a combination of contextual and situational factors contributes to the high rates of plagiarism observed among students. The easy accessibility of information through technology and the perception of minimal control or penalties create an environment that encourages plagiarism. Furthermore, difficulties in academic skills and the pressure to succeed push students towards unethical practices despite their awareness of the importance of academic integrity. Addressing these factors requires comprehensive efforts such as fostering a culture of academic integrity, providing support for academic skills development, and implementing robust systems to detect and deter plagiarism.

CONCLUSION

Although CTE student researchers have adequate knowledge of the nature of plagiarism, they still commit and practice it based on the Turnitin evaluation of their research and which was further confirmed through the research questionnaire. These respondents' plagiaristic behaviors were brought on by a combination of contextual and situational factors, including easy access to ICT, lack of teacher control, disposition towards plagiarism, and weak academic writing abilities, which push students to participate in various plagiaristic activities.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Addressing the defiance to intellectual honesty requires a multi-faceted approach, and we propose several recommendations to tackle this issue effectively. Firstly, educational institutions, including universities and their faculty, should consider investing in web-based anti-

plagiarism solutions like Turnitin, iThenticate, CrossCheck, and similar tools. These plagiarism detection systems can assist instructors in identifying instances of plagiarism in the coursework of students, thus serving as an educational strategy to deter text-based borrowings, missed quotations, and improper citations, ultimately preventing intellectual dishonesty.

Teachers should develop specialized instructional plans designed to address students' English proficiency and deficiencies in academic writing. This could involve providing additional support to students in areas like summarizing, paraphrasing, synthesizing, and citing sources. Teaching students the standards of academic writing and offering them opportunities to practice proper quoting, paraphrasing, and summarizing will help reduce instances of plagiarism.

It is crucial for teachers and academic institutions to provide clear guidance and strictly enforce policies against plagiarism. Mere awareness of plagiarism may not suffice; clear standards and stringent procedures are necessary to prevent plagiarism effectively. Teachers should also report cases of plagiarism and take appropriate action in collaboration with academic institutions to combat intellectual theft.

Students should receive education on the ethical guidelines for using information and communication technology (ICT) systems, given the increasing role of technology and the internet in language learning. Early instruction on the ethical principles of using ICT systems and awareness of the negative impacts of plagiarism can help deter students from engaging in such practices.

Minimizing the prevalence of plagiarism is not solely the responsibility of individuals practicing it but rather a collective effort involving students, teachers, and educational institutions. To uphold their core values, educational institutions must remain vigilant and proactive in combating intellectual dishonesty.

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