

## **Enhancing 18 Students' Ethical Behavior in Academia through Action Research: The case in 3<sup>rd</sup> year room 10 extension civic and ethical studies in ICTE.**

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**Abstract:** *The purpose of this action research was to enhance students' ethical behavior in academia through action research. Hence, this action research project was initiated and implemented by the practitioner in Injibara Teachers College. The participants were room 10 third year extension civic and ethical study student teachers. From among 40 students, 18 of them were taken purposively to get the root causes of the problem. Within this scope, questionnaires, observation and documents were used to see the prevalence of cheating and plagiarism in the class and to detect its causes. The collected data was analyzed quantitatively and qualitatively using percentage and descriptive sentences respectively. Thus, the majority of the students used unauthorized notes during exam and they plagiarized the works of others without any modification due to lack of paraphrasing and summarizing skill. Accordingly, strategies for avoiding cheating and plagiarism and preserving academic integrity were implemented mainly through raising students' consciousness about moral values. After a tiresome implementation of the action strategies, for about three months, the project was found to be fruitful in enhancing the students' ethical behavior in academia. In my second cycle of the research, I will include the impact of unethical behavior on the academic achievement of students.*

**Key Words:** Ethical behavior, Cheating, plagiarism, Action research

### **1. Introduction**

The aim of the educational program is to improve students' ethical behavior and help them to have the ability to see the difference between right and wrong. Developing students who behave ethically is an important mission for higher education. In our context, those student teachers who graduate from teacher colleges will become teachers, and should not engage in any unethical practices such as examination malpractices, favoritism, soliciting gifts etc. and be a role model for their students.

As a teacher educator, I would like my students to become moral and ethical in their own daily life since they will be prospective primary school teachers. However, many of the students are not very ethically conscious. As a reflective teacher educator I have observed unethical behavior in my class such as stealing the property of others, giving false information, violating orders and discipline, cheating on exams, disruption of teaching during lectures, photographing a test (stealing test), copy others work, swearing, whispering in exams, use unauthorized note, alter graded work after it has been returned and inappropriate dressing style against generally accepted rules and regulation of the college. This worried me a lot, and the situation became a big problem for the students because it affected the students' moral integrity.

I understand that promoting the students' moral behavior is not an easy process to enhance, but I have focused on the most frequently observed unethical behaviors of the students such as cheating, whispering in exams, and plagiarism in academia.

When a researcher is motivated to conduct a research project, he or she must first think about whether the problem can be solved on its own or not. In this regard, I will identify the most frequently observed unethical problems such as cheating and plagiarism and decided to study on them. These unethical behaviors are very dangerous and affect students' learning processes. It also undermines their self-confidence and has a significant impact on the quality of education.

If cheating and plagiarism are not dealt successfully, more students will seek unfair means to obtain high scores, not trust each other, and feel they are being victimized or disadvantaged. Based on the results of interviews with some of the classroom teachers conducted on November 12th, 2021 obtained that the ethical behavior of the students' in terms of ethics was not good. They further mentioned that the majority of the students commit academic dishonesty. They substantiate their argument by providing the following practical evidence: "the majority of the students' portfolio and action research report during practicum is all the same; they submit the same piece of work and the efforts of copying during exam are very high". If these problems continued and not resolved, it will have an impact in their future ethical behavior

In order to alleviate the above situation of the study in my regular teaching practice, I exerted my maximum effort to minimize the students' unethical behavior using multiple assessment styles, create an atmosphere of asking questions, talking about honesty and integrity, discuss ethical issues with students in the classroom etc.

After these interventions strategies, I have made frequent observation on the students' ethical behavior and found some improvements on the students' ethical conduct. I have observed changes on the students' ethical behavior. The majority of students avoid inappropriate dressing style; they minimized whispering in exam, they begin to be honest in tests and assignments (no cheating). But I could not bring changes on 18 students. These students committed academic dishonesty like cheating on exam and plagiarism. The practical evidence for this situation was that during exam I caught two students who photographed answers of the exam and send it to his girlfriend, I documented the case and reported to concerned bodies, but I was not satisfied with the decision they made. On the other day of the exam, I caught a girl who used unauthorized notes to do her exam. I also documented the case as an evidence to show for others how much academic dishonesty is prevailed in my class. Having this fact in mind, as a practitioner, I believed that these students should learn about moral rules and ethical behavior and understand that honesty is the right way.

If these problems continued, untreated and remained unsolved, it would be difficult to get ethically competent and responsible teacher educators; this would negatively impact on the quality of education. It will also crucially influence their qualification, future employment and manners in their professional career. Thus, I want to look at this problem and find out a solution to the issue through doing an action research.

In order to address the above situations of this study, I have drafted the following leading research questions: What are the different cheating mechanisms/cases? What are the causes for cheating on examination and plagiarism? What strategies should I use to enhance the students ethical behavior?

## **1.2 Significance of the study**

Both the teacher and the student teachers will be benefited in this action research. In that, the student teachers will respect the moral codes and minimize unethical behavior like cheating. It also helped them to get awareness about how to avoid plagiarism. Furthermore, the researcher will develop insight and identify strategies which are found to be important to overcome problems in relation to cheating and plagiarism. It is hoped that some incidents that happened in this action research may be relevant to other teachers' situations to adapt the experience to their own situations.

## **2. Methods**

Action research is a form of self-reflection aimed at the improvement of a social practice (Hopkins, 1985:56). This paradigm relies on qualitative data, holistic analysis and description derived from close contact with the participants of the study. For this particular research, Classroom Action Research type is adopted and classroom action research design (which involves planning, acting, observing and reflecting) was used; and the data were collected through questionnaires, observation and document analysis (students' assignments and project works) for analysis purpose; thus, I have used more of qualitative approach and to some extent quantitative approach for I have used some numerical data (percentage). This action research project has followed the model that is developed by Kemmis and Robin. It was a famous representation of the action research "spiral" that contained four stages; planning, acting, observing and reflecting.

### **2.1 Participants of the study**

Student teachers who are learning in room 10 extension civic and ethical studies were my target population. In the selected classrooms, there are 40 students (24 females and 14 males) who are learning in the class. Among these, 18 student teachers (8 males and 10 females) were selected purposefully for the study. These students were highly observed in cheating during examination and plagiarize the works of others. Hence, they have been taken purposefully for the study to get the necessary data about the root causes of the problem.

### **2.2 Data collection tools**

#### **2.2.1 Questionnaires**

Both closed ended and open ended questionnaires were used with a rating scale of often, exceptionally and never. These items addressed the core ideas of unethical behavior of the students in relation to cheating and plagiarism. The questionnaire was completely anonymous. The first part of the questionnaire was focused on the unethical behavior at the exam; it consists of five items. In this part, questions were also drawn to express their preferences by placing numbers from 1 to 10 to identify the major causes of the problem. One open ended question was also provided to write their suggestion to solve the problem of cheating; and the second part of the questionnaire was dealt with plagiarism.

### 2.2.2 Observation

I used observation as a data collection instrument for it helps me to see my participants in their natural sitting during examination. The students' assignments and project works were also observed to check their plagiarism. Thus, I continuously observe and record the activities of the students at the time of examination with regard to cheating and plagiarism.

### 2.3 Data Analysis Techniques

After relevant information is collected, data analysis is the necessary step. So the data collected from questionnaire was analyzed using percentage. The data collected through observation and documents were analyzed and interpreted using narrative and simple descriptive statements.

## 3. Data analysis and Interpretation

In this section, the data obtained from questionnaires has been analyzed using percentage around the thematic areas of the research questions, and found the following results.

Table 1.View of the students in written examination/tests

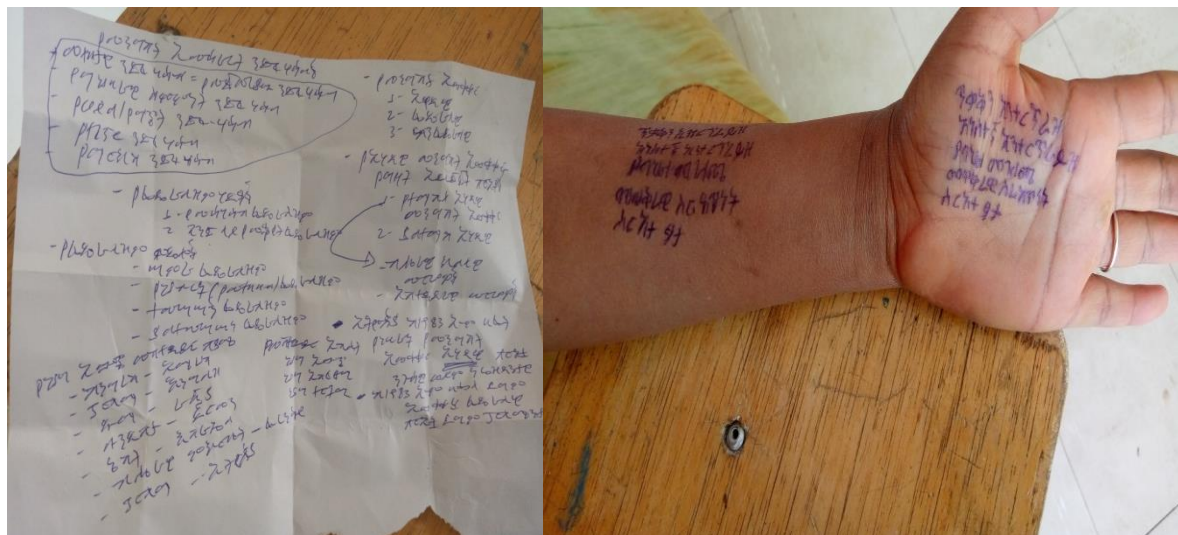
| No. | Questions                                                      | Often | Exceptionally | Never |
|-----|----------------------------------------------------------------|-------|---------------|-------|
| 1   | Do you use unauthorized notes (cribs) or other aids?           | 11%   | 56%           | 33%   |
| 2   | Do you use (copy) other students' answers?                     | 22%   | 44%           | 33%   |
| 3   | Do you communicate with other students (prompt)?               | 33%   | 39%           | 28%   |
| 4   | Do you use electronic device (mobile phone)?                   | 11%   | 17%           | 83%   |
| 5   | Do you use information from students who have passed the test? | 67%   | 22%           | 11%   |

The first part of the questionnaire investigated the behavior of the students at the examination or the midterm tests. Accordingly, in table 1 above clearly showed that among the total respondents 10 of them which accounted 56% responded that they exceptionally used unauthorized notes during examination. 44% and 39% also responded that they copy answers and communicate with others respectively. From this response, it can be seen that unauthorized notes, copying or prompting was described most frequently as exceptionally used. Rarely used cheating was an exploitation of electronic device or mobile phone. 83% respondents stated that they never use this way of cheating, only 11% answered that they use it often. The students quite often try what is possible in the concrete subject, with the concrete teacher. Many students use information from their college colleagues who have already passed the test (67%).

From the above data, it can be concluded that the majority of the students have most frequently been used unauthorized notes (cribs), copying or prompting. In line with this, Clabaugh & Rozychi (2001, p.15) stated that students use "crib notes" written on "small pieces of papers" (cheat sheets) which they keep hidden until they get a chance to use them. Moreover, students write on the tables and use symbols during the test. They sometimes get the questions before the test (Davis et al., 2009, p. 92).

As most literatures stated above, cheating has been dramatically increased in the academic institution from primary to tertiary universities. They used different techniques of cheating. A case in point is, in my

class situation during exam, I caught two students who were cheating using tiny paper notes and writing notes on their hands. The following were pictures that I documented during exam time as evidences.



Picture 1. Techniques of cheating used in a classroom

In addition to the above data, I want to investigate the causes of cheating committed by the students during examination so as to minimize the problems one by one.

Table 2. Causes of cheating as ranked by the students

| Causes                                | Percentage | Rank |
|---------------------------------------|------------|------|
| Competition for grades                | 13 72%     | 2    |
| Parental expectations                 | 10 55%     | 4    |
| The teacher is not a good invigilator | 5 27%      | 9    |
| No motivation to study the subject    | 4 22%      | 10   |
| Not being well prepared for exams     | 8 44%      | 6    |
| The difficulty of tests               | 9 50%      | 5    |
| Fear to fail                          | 14 78%     | 1    |
| The nature of the test                | 7 38%      | 7    |
| No punishment                         | 6 33%      | 8    |
| Heavy workload and insufficient time  | 11 61%     | 3    |

As it can be seen on the table 2 above, students was asked to express their preferences by placing numbers from 1 to 10 in order to indicate the most important cause behind cheating. Eventually, fear to fail was ranked in the first position with a percentage of 78%. Also, competition for grades was rank-ordered as the second most prominent cause of cheating (72%). This implies that students were highly competitive since their aim is getting the best marks from the class. Moreover, heavy workload and insufficient time was ranked as students' third cause (61%) which entails that students are encouraged to cheat because they are claiming that they are busy as they are labor workers for their income. The fourth rank was assigned to parental expectations (55%). This implies that students want to get good marks for the sake of their parents who have high expectations about their academic achievement.

Furthermore, difficulty of the test and not being well prepared for exams were ranked in the fifth (50%) and sixth (44%) positions respectively. This implies that lack of preparation for exam has played a significant role in their academic achievement. Besides, the difficulty of the test encouraged them to cheat from their colleagues. Surprisingly, the nature of tests was not perceived as an overwhelming cause since it was rank-ordered in the seventh position (38%). No punishment was placed in the eighth rank with a percentage of 33%. More interestingly, the severity of punishment could play a major role in hindering students' cheating trials. Additionally, the teacher is not a good invigilator and no motivation to study the subject was placed respectively in the ninth (27%) and tenth ranks (22%). This implies that teachers' effectiveness and skills have less influence over students' cheating than the other causes. The causes of cheating from 1 to 10 have approximate percentages. Therefore, this study ought to be replicated to validate the findings.

I have also asked these students on an open-ended question to mention the solutions to minimize cheating. They suggested that there must be increased commitment among course owners, invigilators and higher officials to reduce cheating in exams. There must be awareness creation among students to reduce cheating. They also suggested that better scoring students has to sit at the back of the exam rooms. One of the major factors that trigger students to cheat is the exam item type and more items of subjective types can reduce cheating. Having small class size in the exam rooms can also reduce cheating.

Table 3. The behavior of students in writing assignments (%)

| No. | Questions                                                                                      | Often | Exceptionally | Never |
|-----|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------|---------------|-------|
| 1   | Do you resubmit a paper that was submitted in the previous, without major adjustment?          | 11%   | 22%           | 67%   |
| 2   | Do you use Internet or other sources for downloading the works of someone else?                | 17%   | 28%           | 44%   |
| 3   | Do you let another person to do your assignments?                                              | 33%   | 22%           | 44%   |
| 4   | Do you copy other persons' texts in your projects or assignment without station of the source? | 33%   | 17%           | 39%   |
| 5   | Do you use not existing sources and fabricated data in your works?                             | 17%   | 33%           | 50%   |

The second part of the questionnaire deal with the unethical behavior in working on term papers and assignments, and on project works. According to Li & Casanave (2012) plagiarism is representing someone else's ideas, words, statements, or other works as one's own without proper acknowledgment or citation. With regard to this, the target students were asked to rate their level of unethical behavior in terms of plagiarism. Thus, as it can be observed from the above table 2, out of 18 respondents 12 of them which accounted (67%) affirmed that they never resubmit a paper that was submitted in the previous. 22% of them was exceptionally resubmit their paper from the previous without major adjustment and 11% of them often resubmit their paper as it was.

The internet was used for plagiarism often by 17%, exceptionally by 28% and never by 44%. Again about 33% of the respondents often reflected that they let another person to do their assignments. The rest which accounted 22% exceptionally let another person to do their assignment and never by 44%. Copying without mentioning the source is often used by 33% and exceptionally by 17% of students. From these responses, it can be understood that the majority of the students did plagiarism in different ways.

Furthermore, to triangulate the data obtained from the above questionnaires, I have also seen their assignments/project works to check the degree of plagiarism made by the students. From the observed assignments, it has been found out that almost all the students' assignments were quite similar, copying word for word and done by a single individual. From their assignments, the problems of paraphrasing and summarizing skills have been observed. The words of the statements in their papers are identical. This is a serious problem that needs to be avoided.

### 3.1 Major Findings

To get adequate and valid data from the target groups, I selected 18 students purposely; I administered questionnaires to those selected students to get the methods and causes of cheating. Then, I got the above presented data. At last, depending on the aforementioned presented data, data analysis and interpretations; I got the major findings mentioned here under:

- With regard to the views of the students during examination, the majority of the students used unauthorized notes (cribs), copy from other students' sheet and use oral communication.
- It was also found out that fear to fail, competition for grades, heavy workload and insufficient time, parental expectation and difficulty of the test were the most important causes rank-ordered by the students.
- With regard to plagiarism, the majority of the students plagiarize the works of others without any modification. This was confirmed from the observed assignments and project works.
- The finding also revealed that most of the students did not fully understand what plagiarism is, they lacked paraphrasing and summarizing skills.

### 3.2 Action strategies

Derived from the findings of the above baseline qualitative research, the following action strategies were developed.

#### I. Drill on the culture of time-Management Skills

Students are not aware of the importance of time organization either for daily assignments or examinations. This was confirmed by Zimmerman, Banner and Kovach who stressed the fact that most students wait until the last minute before studying for major tests or writing important papers (Zimmerman et al., 1996, p. 36). They could draw a *study time self-monitoring chart* to help students organize their time (Ibid). Students have to assess their time use accurately in order to improve their time planning and management (Ibid). Thus, time management is extremely effective in regards to preparing for tests (Harvey & Chickie-Wolfe, 2007, p. 229).

More interestingly, teachers have to provide students with sufficient time on the test (Harvey & Chickie-Wolf, 2007, p. 230). Hence, *time-regulation strategies* could be effective for students, they may include: setting regular study periods and realistic goals, making priorities in tasks, avoiding distraction, and self-reward (Zimmerman et al., 1996, p. 33). To sum up, time plays an important role in cheating avoidance either on the side of the teacher or on the side of the learner.

## **II. Managing the Classroom during Tests**

Some procedures should be taken into consideration during examination to reduce cheating. These may include separating students' seats, walking up and down the rows in tests, and watching the students constantly (Davis et al., 2009, p. 118). Furthermore, teachers could make counter measures by using jammers to stop receiving and transmitting signals may be helpful in deterring cheaters (Curran et al., 2011, p. 60).

## **III. Preparation for Examinations/ Tests**

Good preparation plays a significant role in raising academic achievement. Zimmerman et al. (1996, pp. 93-94) insisted that students who are well prepared for an exam are more likely to do well than those who have not prepared adequately. In this respect, it is explained that correct exam preparation is built on efficient time management, skillful text summarization, and high quality note-taking and review (Zimmerman et al., 1996, p. 94). Accordingly, revision for half hour daily leads to higher grades because it is better than revision in the last moments (Harvey & Chickie-Wolfe, 2007, p. 216). Besides, anxiety before and during examinations could be reduced when students create a relaxing atmosphere and take deep breaths. Also, they should come to the exam hall feeling confident, happy, and ready to do well (Harvey & Chickie-Wolfe, 2007, p. 229). More importantly, teachers have to raise learners' consciousness towards integrity before the exams (Davis, 2009, p. 347). This sounds very interesting in reminding them of the crime of academic dishonesty and the need for avoiding cheating.

## **IV. Give credit for codes and cheaters' Punishment**

As advocated by Davis and his colleagues, informing students about the reasons of the necessity to avoid cheating may be an effective solution (as cited in Davis et al., 2009, p. 118). Therefore, a code is necessary to clarify "what students shouldn't do" and "what they should do instead of cheating" (Davis et al., 2009, p. 136). Providing credit for codes would better be accompanied with an "academic pledge" for example: "I have neither given nor received unauthorized help on this assignment and exam" (Hayes, as cited in Lathrop & Foss, 2005, p. 76). In this respect, Davis et al. explained the importance of "respect the code" as follows: The holy grail of academic integrity for many schools has been the creation of a student-run honor code. As discussed in the above quotation, respect the code is interesting to decrease cheating. The latter would diminish when there is punishment through a pre-established code. Interestingly, lack of punishment and ignorance are behind the overspread of cheating (Davis et al., 2009, p. 114). Hence, teachers have to act as soon as possible whenever integrity is threatened. Punishment is the first practical solution that could serve as a deterrence technique. It could be done by teachers or administrators through disciplinary workshops. In this respect, the intensity of punishment depends on the severity of cheating.

## **V. Create awareness about how to avoid plagiarism**

It is important to minimize plagiarism by providing training for the students because it is still problematic, especially when the students are asked to write their assignments.

### **3.3 Implementation**

In order to minimize the students' unethical behavior particularly on cheating and plagiarism, I designed the above strategies. The designed strategies were put into practice with their time table to get the expected outcomes as it was outlined in the aforementioned table; I did the following activities:

At the beginning I have developed the training program that related to different hot topics from ethics and ethical behaviors. It is important to learn what ethics mean and why it is important to act in accordance with ethical behavior. All human beings should know that ethics is present in many aspects of life; from the school to the workplace. If I trained my students about moral and core values more often in the classroom, many students would behave positively and uphold academic integrity and would not desire to cheat. Due to this fact, I trained my students by presenting good and bad stories in relation to ethics: students who often used different unethical methods, and students who obey academic honesty on exam.

If I get a student who makes a specific violation more than once, I punished them harder to teach others not to do academic dishonesty on exam. However, perhaps the punishment for bad behavior may not be the only solution; I usually introduce rewards for good behavior. Good behavior would mean the normal and regular attendance of the class, attending seminars about ethical behavior, and respecting academic honesty. I repeatedly did this action strategy for the continuous of two months.

The other action is drill on the culture of time management skill which is a typical strategy that helps the students to improve their time planning and management. Within this scope, time management is very influential in regulating other aspects of students' learning especially by raising awareness of their use of study time. A student cannot enjoy learning and cannot modify behavior according to environment, if he/she does not know how to manage time. Different literatures confirmed that managing the time plays an important role in cheating avoidance. To do this, what I did here was that I allocate an amount of time which is sufficient for the task/ test, and students should know how to manage their time effectively to accomplish the task/test in due time. This could be promoted through self-regulation and self-responsibility. This activity was done twice a month for about two months (i.e. from 4 April 2022 to 30 May 2022).

The third action was managing the class during tests. To eliminate the temptation of cheating in exam, I have to manage the class as well as avoid any indication that encourages cheating. The suggested remedies given by the students like placing better scoring students at the back of the exam rooms, preparing more items of subjective types, and small class size were effectively implemented during the exam time. Furthermore, as it was recommended by Davis et al., (2009), I constantly watch the students during examination and if any misconduct like activity of cheating or movement was seen, I immediately put my sign for other will learn on his/her mistakes and begin to respect academic integrity.

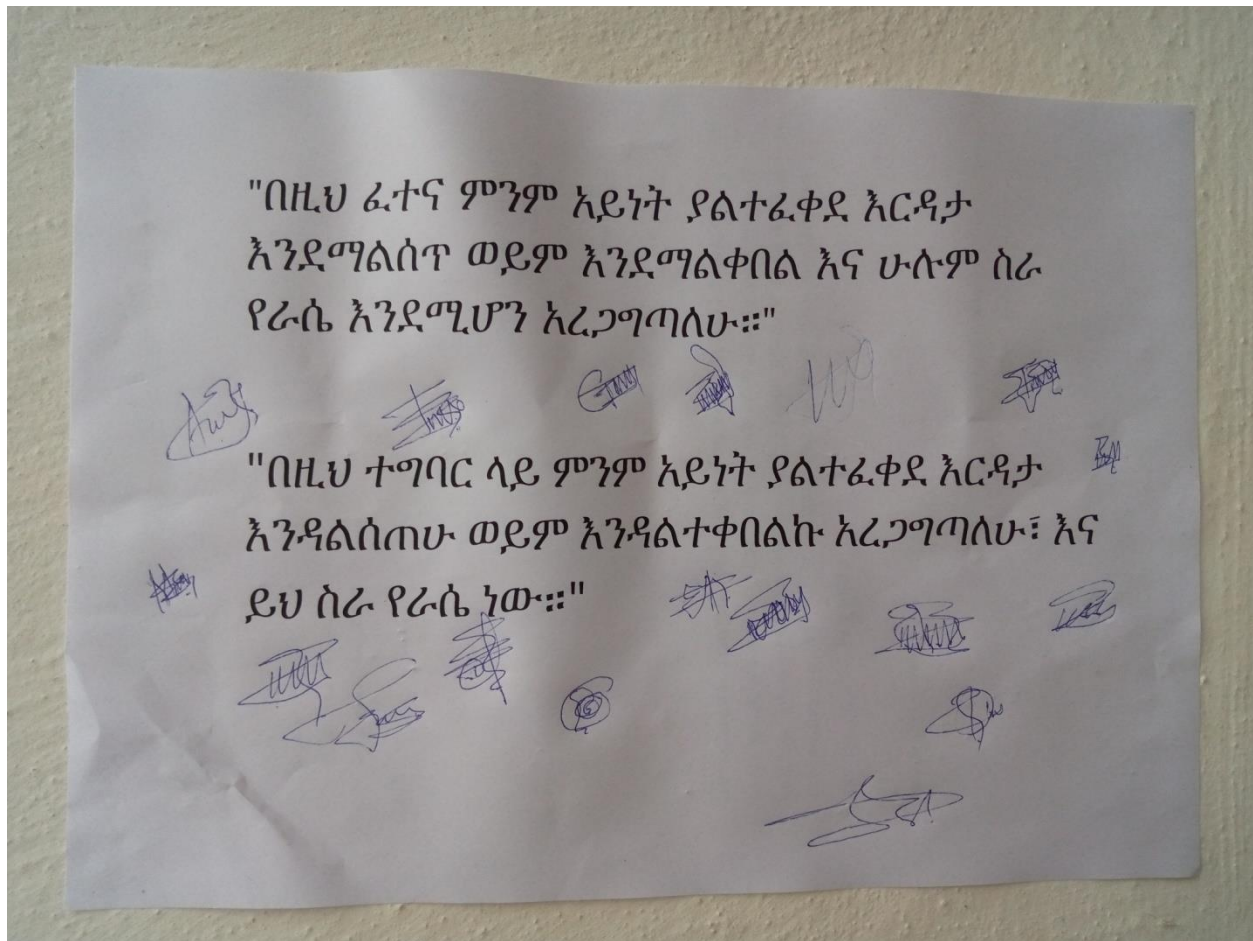
The other implementation session was training them how to prepare for examination. Bad and unhealthy exam preparation creates tension and frustration of the students and they do not freely enter to the exam room. As a result of this, they search other opportunity not to fail in exam and finally used different methods for cheating. So to minimize this problem, I devised the ways by which they develop their exam preparation habits to make them feel confident, happy, and ready to do well. It also helps them to minimize anxiety before and during examination. Furthermore, I told them that one of the most effective ways to prepare for exams is to practice with an old version of previous exams. It help them to see the format and formulation of the questions and it will be good for them to know what to expect but also as a worthy practice for measuring the time they need for the actual text. I did this repeatedly for one month before and after examination.

The other action strategy was creating awareness about how to avoid plagiarism. Accordingly, when considering the awareness of plagiarism in academic contexts, many researchers found that most of

the college students have less awareness of plagiarism because of the information of plagiarism at the colleges have not been informed. Powell (2012) stated that students may be aware of plagiarism because they do not understand what plagiarism is and/or that is it considered undesirable by their learning institution, this causes intentional plagiarism. Consequently, as a practitioner raising the students understanding and awareness of plagiarism is necessary at least to prevent unintentional plagiarism. To do this, what I did here was that I gave them a certain assignments to do independently by themselves and then, I collected it. From their assignment, I observed that their assignments were similar and copying each other. I realized that this activity is unethical in academia and remedial action should be given. Depending on the feedbacks and comments given by me, I organized training to create awareness about plagiarism. The training sessions comprises paraphrasing, summarizing and citation. I also told them why plagiarism is undesirable and encourage them to do their work by recognizing the owner of the sources. The training was given twice a month using their assignments, and then, the trainees have got knowledge which could alter their perceptions towards plagiarism.

The other important action strategy was implementing honor codes as an instrument to minimize cheating. The major purpose of applying this honor code is to discourage cheating, plagiarism, and other misconduct behavior in the classroom activities. It can also teach the students self-discipline, respect and responsibility. To do this, I required the students to sign on the exam honor pledge on all examinations and assignments. The honor pledge has been displayed in the classroom during the exam. I apply this academic honesty policy to all submitted students work, regardless of whether the teacher used an honor pledge. The students are required to sign in the following honor pledges: *“I affirm that I will not give or receive any unauthorized help on this exam, and that all work will be my own.”*

*“I affirm that I have not given or received any unauthorized help on this assignment, and that this work is my own.”*



Picture 2. Honor pledges made by the students

The other action strategy was applying reinforcement and positive feedback which is guided by the following expected outcome: “*The students should show appropriate behavior during exam.*” Hence, when I get students who have self-disciplined, and honor the pledges that he/or she made during examination and project work, I always appreciate, motivate and acknowledge his/her personality for others as a model.

### 3.4 Project Evaluation

In action research, evaluation plays a critical role in ascertaining whether or not the action strategies implemented have brought the desired changes (McKernan 1996). It is also through evaluation that the practitioner should check the effectiveness of his/her action research project as a whole. Hence, after rigorous, careful and continuous implementation of the above intervention strategies, I have collected data to assess if I have got the situation improved or changed. The following are the evaluation methods that I used to check whether the situation was improve or not.

### **3.5 Evaluation Methods**

Expert Evaluation: In order to obtain unbiased and neutral data on the quality and effectiveness of my action research report, I involved my critical friends/ colleagues, who were requested to observe changes during examination. He was also invited to observe the students' assignments submitted to the practitioner to check whether they made plagiarism or not.

Interview: In order to obtain the data concerning the success of the project, I also interviewed two teachers who were teaching these trainees other courses to check whether the degree of cheating and plagiarism were minimized or not. To do this, I requested two instructors to give assignments for the selected classroom students so as to check the degree of plagiarism in their own subjects.

### **3.6 Changes**

Based on the evaluation data obtained through the aforementioned methods, the following changes were obtained.

I inferred that there were changes of situations when I considered students' ethical behavior after action strategies were implemented. I have seen that the implementation strategies that I have used helped me to overcome the problem of cheating and plagiarism. However, I and my colleagues/ critical friends/ confirmed that the changes observed were not to the maximum expected outcomes as designed in first cycle strategic action plan. Nonetheless, as the result of the observation made during exam, it can be said that much improvement was observed on the students' ethical behavior in terms of cheating. We confirmed that the target students do not incline to adopt cheating behavior. In terms of plagiarism, almost all students honor the pledge that they made and did not receive any unauthorized help when they do their assignments. I confirmed this when I receive their assignments.

To triangulate the data obtained from the observation during exam with my colleague, I also interviewed two course teachers of the selected room about the students ethical behavior related to cheating and plagiarism; the interviewed course teachers confirmed that they have observed better changes on the students' ethical behavior. Regarding plagiarism on the submitted assignments, two of the interviewees have claimed that the majority of the students begin to use their own words and do not share copies of their own with other students. They further stated that two months before, all the students assignments were copy and paste, but now they begin to do their assignments by themselves. If we are suspicious about a few, then perhaps invite those students to a viva voce - where we can ask them to explain particular points in their work, to cross check it is indeed their work. Of course, setting up a viva voce is time consuming but it may be worth it in the long run. Eventually, they confirmed that there is improvement on the students' ethical behavior for they begin to practice academic honesty which had been rare in the past.

### **4. Evaluation and Reflection**

In the overall process of this action research, I have got several strengths and learnt lessons as well. Some weaknesses were also there. These are described here under as follows.

### **A. Strengths**

In the overall process of this action research project, I have got several strengths. Thus, the action research that I have carried out have greatly changed my class in terms unethical behavior, which has been improved through the intervention strategies I have used. I acted as a teacher, encourager and facilitator to help students to develop academic honesty. Then I did well on understanding changes of the situations from different sources like from critical friend and course teachers of the target students.

### **B. Weaknesses**

The first and most challenging issue which can be considered as a weakness was that I could not employ my maximum effort for this action research for I was very busy with other regular activities of the college. Due to little time, I felt a little rushed with some of the intervention strategies I designed. I think some actions needed more time to exercise in order to achieve the desired behavioral changes due to the fact that avoiding plagiarism and other unethical behavior take longer time to learn and improve. Overall, the majority of the target students minimizes cheating and almost avoids plagiarism, but next year I will not rush to implement the strategies until the expected result will be achieved.

### **C. Educational Lessons Got from the research process**

In this section lesson learnt from the practices, my prior experiences and my interest of changes in the project were presented. I have started this action research project with many things in mind. As a teacher educator, one of my professional duties is looking possibilities to enhance the students ethical behavior, creating effective teaching learning process; producing a prototype action research report for student-teachers and teacher educators in my college, and becoming a pioneer in conducting action research in my college were some of the issues behind undertaking this action research project.

From this action research, I have got lots of knowledge, experiences, and skills. The knowledge I have gained through this process, but more importantly the success I have seen through the use of the interventions, has led me to implement these intervention strategies on a permanent basis in my classroom to fight academic dishonesty. As a teacher and a researcher, I have gained significant benefits from the overall process of this action research to minimize unethical behavior like cheating and plagiarism.

The action research that I have carried out has not only enabled me to help students to avoid cheating and plagiarism but also to be equipped with the basic knowledge of carrying out an action research.

This action research journey has been quite rewarding both for my students and for me. The result of the action research has given me the confidence about how to integrate the intervention strategies during examination and written texts. It has also helped me to become a systematic and critical thinker and to reflect on the expected and unexpected situations that happened in and outside the class. As for students, it has enabled them to avoid unethical behavior in and outside the classroom.

### **5. Recommended Changes (Future plans)**

As indicated in the result section, there are a lot of situations improved that I planned. I can say that the target students avoid unethical behavior. These students have avoided cheating and plagiarism willingly

not by force but due to the intervention strategies that I used. This does not mean that all the target students have shown the expected ethical behavior. It needs further activities to be performed to bring desirable behavioral changes; thus, I will develop another cycle of the same research issue for the situation will be further improved. In my second cycle of the research, I will include the impact of unethical behavior on the academic achievement of students.

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