Chapter 11
Relationship between
Knowledge Management
and Academic Integrity in a
Middle Eastern University

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ABSTRACT

The difference between knowledge sharing as enabled in a knowledge management (KM) environment, and
academic honesty continuously needs clarification and reinforcement in academic institutions. Teaching
includes getting students to realize that knowledge is an asset that can be ethically used for creativity
and innovation, resulting in the enhancement of the corporate image and effectiveness of a university.
Studies have confirmed that academic dishonesty is an ethical challenge facing many academic institutions
of higher learning. In the Middle East, the use of English as a second language is often cited as
a contributing factor to students’ plagiarizing, but the problem extends to the use of Arabic language
sources too. Conflicts in approach may arise because KM works well in an environment of sharing, and
yet acknowledging academic productivity of others may not always happen spontaneously. This is a
challenge faced in MOOCs and by institutions of higher learning the world over.

INTRODUCTION

In the United Arab Emirates (UAE) education system, as in most countries around the world, academic
integrity is considered as very important in determining the quality of students and faculty that come out
of a university. According to Kirk (2010, p. 41), among UAE plans is an emphasis on the significance
of “academic integrity policies to give value to awarded degrees”. One of the UAE Ministry of Higher
Education Strategic goals for 2011-2013 is to “support scientific research and encourage innovation”.
Supporting innovation carries with it a KM agenda. The National Qualifications Authority (2013a, p. 11)
of the UAE, in a document giving an overview of performance in the education system clearly explains

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that a knowledge agenda implies a shift in the education system, mainly in the teaching-learning process. Because the current information environment broadly uses internet based applications that come in a variety of formats, academic institutions concern themselves with how the availability of these resources impact teaching and learning. This chapter uses a knowledge management (KM) approach in discussing the academic integrity topic. The view is that good academic conduct or academic integrity helps students learn, and the academe guides them in order to attain high quality qualifications. Thus, the better the quality of perceived products of a university, the more likely employers are encouraged to provide internship opportunities, hire the graduating students, and the more the reputation of the university is perceived to be superior. The discussion that results is about its corporate image – making a case for aligning higher education policy with how teaching and learning is taking place at an individual institution. From this introduction, it is evident that there are both individual, organizational, and national aspects involved. The individual is the student and the educator, while the organization is the academic institution.

BACKGROUND

In discussing KM and academic integrity, there is the requirement to understand the concepts and how applicable they are. While KM has widely been used in business, the use of its principles in academic library environments has been limited but appears to be more comprehensive than other models that focus only on regular library functions such as circulation, or technical services, or reference in that interactivity and the needs of the library users are of paramount importance. In approaching the academic integrity topic, use of KM practices is discussed in this chapter with the implication of institutional overall systemic change in teaching, learning, and library support because the latter does not stand independent of the university for which it has been set up. The change is designed to amplify the quality of academic products of a university for its marketability. Faculty are therefore expected to be qualified to meet the challenge. Thus, revelations of the proliferation of fraudsters selling fake academic qualifications in the UAE as has already been happening in other parts of the world, such as reported in *Khaleej Times* by Croucher (26 April 2009) and in *Gulf News* by Farooqui (28 May 2014) make both academic institutions and employers concerned and stay on the look-out for these. Employers want only the genuinely qualified, while universities want to have faculty who are qualified to teach and research for the education of appropriately qualified new professionals.

Academic Integrity

Academic integrity in this chapter is used interchangeably with academic honesty or good academic conduct. Discussing it includes dialogue on the responsibilities and accountability of faculty and of students. The concept is broad and includes ethical use of information and resources while acknowledging the original source of the information used. It also includes originality and creativity that is central to academic culture. On the other hand, academic dishonesty (a big part of general academic misconduct) includes cheating, plagiarism, falsification or fabrication of data or information, copying without acknowledging, submitting outsourced assignments, “using someone else’s language, ideas, or other original material without acknowledging its source” (Correa, 2011, p. 66). Lack of information about academic integrity, or societal emphasis on getting certificates regardless of cost, are sometimes the issue too, rather than the likelihood of students being generally prone to experimenting with academic dishonesty.