

The Value of Honesty in Academic Institutions:**University of Technology and Applied Sciences- Oman- as a Model****Afra AL Hatmi¹, Jumana Al Hatmi², Adeebah AL Sawafi³****Hilal AL Shandodi⁴ and Younes Audeh⁵**^{2,3,4,5} University of Technology and Applied Sciences

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Abstract

Honesty is the best policy. In fact, it could be the core of faithfulness, sincerity, justice, and fairness. In order to provide the readers with a transparent definition and application of “HONESTY”, the researchers have distributed a questionnaire among (20) Foundation Year students(FY) at the Preparatory Studies Center at University of Technology and Applied Sciences -Oman. The results were amazing; almost all participants are for applying Honesty in all fields of life on top of which are: education and democracy. Discussion, recommendations, and explanation will be highlighted in detail throughout this article.

Keywords: children, honest, honesty, parents, peers, sincerity, truthfulness, values**Introduction**

Whenever people face problems: personal, academic, financial, etc., they start gathering information about the nature of those issues. This information might be correct and accurate, or false, incorrect, or damaging. What proves that is what is received, analyzed and sifted in light of honesty and truthfulness of the information, and the criterion upon which things are judged and evaluated.

Our concern here is how honesty, as virtue, affects people's daily life activities and events in the society where people perform their work. Take, for example, the reports on COVID-19. There were discrepancies and gaps between two sides-- which was the most correct and honest report to trust and work accordingly? Much and diverse information was controversial. The academic arena is not in a better position in agreement with honesty.

In the academic atmosphere, however, some institutions do very much care about the value of honesty, while some others do not- still follow the "Soft Marking" policy. This paper highlights some positive ways of honesty applied in classrooms on one hand, and some negative examples related to lack of honesty, on the other hand. The roles of parents, society, teachers, etc. are highlighted, as well, in this article.

Study Problem

This study identifies the ultimate benefit of honesty at Higher Education Institutions—colleges and universities. Upon getting the results and findings of the questionnaire given to participants, things will get much revealed regarding sincerity, honesty, and loyalty.

What can students say about this experience? Upon what criteria should things be evaluated, sifted, and checked? All this will be fathomed in detail in this paper.

Study Objectives

- 1.investigating the significance and merits of honesty in class.
2. highlighting some benefits of honesty teachers and students alike get from, such as dedication, quality, and prosperity.
- 3.contributing to a deeper understanding of honesty.
- 4.identifying the value of honesty and sincerity as perceived by participants.

Research Question

The fundamental question of this study is: What values and merits obtained by the ultimate utilization of honesty at university level- University of Technology and Applied Sciences – Sultanate of Oman-as a model?

Literature Review

Honesty is the '*Best Policy*'. It is a sort of wisdom to follow, provided that it is well considered and practiced during our daily life behavior. Moreover, honesty is related to some other words that almost give the same meaning such as truthfulness, sincerity, and many more. "honesty is: 1. The quality or fact of being honest; uprightness and fairness. 2. Truthfulness, sincerity or frankness. 3. Freedom from deceit or fraud" (Ahearne, (n.d), Para. 1). Honesty could also be a sign of politeness, high level of good manners and education, especially for students, whether they are taught by their families or teachers. "Students develop academic honesty when you build their moral vocabulary, respond appropriately to cheating, use meaningful quotes, and inspire them to believe in themselves" (Price-Hitchell, 2015, Para. 1). Any society is badly in need of a dose of *Honesty* to survive and live in a healthy well-being. Children deserve an environment that respects and considers honesty as a supreme value. They are the future of any country in the globe. "Despite societal forces that test integrity, children deserve a world that values truth, honesty, and justice" (Price-Hitchell, 2015, Para. 9). Teachers play a great role in the classroom in teaching good values such as faithfulness, sincerity, and politeness.

Teachers make integrity the norm in their classrooms in several important ways. They clearly articulate expectations about academic integrity and the consequences of cheating. But they go beyond the issue of cheating to create a culture that rewards success beyond grades (Price-Hitchell, 2015, Para. 10).

Dedicated teachers should work objectively and have a word of honor while doing their job. However, in some cases, especially in private academic institutions, where students pay high fees, and in order not to lose huge numbers of students, some teachers follow what is called '*Soft Marking*', which means giving students higher marks—more than what they deserve. The reason(s) beyond that is/are to pretend that their institution is distinguished and highly ranked. It is a big source of income for those institutions.

Consider another issue: allegations about "soft marking," namely giving students higher marks than they deserve. Often these allegations are targeted at teaching of international full-fee-paying students: failing too many of these students would discourage future enrolments and hence hurt the budget. University administrators have always been quick to deny that soft marking occurs (Martin, 2007, Para. 9).

Principles and ethics should be combined and go hand in hand with practice. This is the way healthy environments are reflected and seen by the public. There is no legitimate justification for

not applying the true rules of honesty and words of honor. Integrity appears as the link between people's behavior and principles.

Most people subscribe to high principles, but living up to them is another matter. Practical realities mean continual compromises. Integrity is about aligning behavior and principles. The challenge in maintaining integrity is to decide when to stand firm by principles and when to allow compromise or deviation - especially when principles clash. This is seldom easy (Martin, 2007, Para. 2).

Regarding *Soft Marking*, dare anybody speak in public about this matter, or is it "Taboo"? Whether it is spread out in public, or kept in the drawers, it still is unethical. What makes faculty members dare not talk openly about this dangerous matter? He/she will get sacked, or accused of misconduct, or maybe sued by the academic institution he/she works for.

Over the years I've talked to many academics concerned about soft marking, but few are willing to go public. On occasion, journalists contact me about it, saying they hear many accounts but have great difficulty finding anyone to comment on the record. There's a good reason for this: it's risky. I've talked to one academic who was dismissed and another who was denied tenure, each of whom had spoken out about soft marking. In addition, Associate Professor Ted Steele was dismissed from the University of Wollongong - where I work - for making public claims about soft marking (Martin, 2007, Para. 10).

Academic honesty could be applied flexibly and smoothly if there is mutual trust between students and parents, and their teachers. When teachers believe in their students' abilities to do tasks themselves, that promotes students' work and behavior in class which leads to ultimate success. "An honest approach to academic work results in a relationship of trust. Students can expect clear guidelines around expectations for work and behavior in classrooms, online, and work-integrated placements" (International Centre for Academic Integrity, 2021, Para. 2).

Teachers play an important role in performing their job in class. They can be facilitators, mentors, counselors, and teachers, as well. Students need their judged critically and timely. Doing so, makes students sure that their work is marked in a just and fair way. "Faculty demonstrate respect by providing critical, timely feedback that aims to support student development and learning, and availing themselves to students through teaching, learning, and mentoring experiences (International Centre for Academic Integrity, 2021, Para. 7).

Honesty means taking truth seriously, which encourages truth-seeking and truth-telling. Accuracy is the role of earnestly seeking valid truth claims to the best of one's ability. Sincerity means being open and straightforward in telling what one believes to be the truth, without deceiving oneself or others (Stitzlein, 2023, Para. 8).

Honesty is comprehensive; it includes all matters related to teaching or dealing with and treating learners in the right way. All students are equal—no discrimination, or whatsoever that leads to negative effects on the side of students.” Teachers pay special attention to learners who require care and protection and do not, under any circumstances, tolerate bullying or the abuse of other people” (OAJ, (n.d), Para. 11).

In general, teachers are life-makers; they should care about their students and do their best to prepare them to be successful individuals in the society, some of them might become public figures and famous leaders. All of that is due to honest teachers who work hard in doing their work properly. “Teachers’ work also includes teaching learners to co-operate and to become good members of society. Building up confidence and good relationships is part of teachers’ work “(OAJ, (n.d), Para. 12).

True democracy means honest behavior and faithfulness in applying the rules and instructions that lead to responsibility in considering and respecting the humans’ rights and interests. “Teachers represent, above all, learners’ rights and interests – even critically, if necessary. In their work, they also teach learners to become responsible members of a democratic society (OAJ, (n.d), Para. 16).

Teachers should set a good example to their students, colleagues, coworkers, etc.-- no lying, no gossiping, and no bad reactions, harassment and comments on others’ behavior. Moreover, old hands should cooperate with, guide and assist fresh teachers, parents, and administrators in an honest way. Positive attitudes lead to truthfulness and open mindset.

Teachers should always avoid gossip of any kind, including false comments about coworkers or students. Part of the code of ethics requires teachers to cooperate with fellow teachers, parents, and administrators to create an atmosphere that fosters learning and growth. Educators might be called upon to train student teachers who wish to serve as educators, so having the right mindset and attitude can make a positive difference (PGUI, 2020, Para.7).

One kind of teachers’ honesty is related to their qualifications and documentations when applying for a teaching job. In light of finding some fake diplomas of teachers teaching at academic institutions, serious actions should be taken against them such as sacking and paying

back the amounts of money they had received, or sent to court. That really is dishonesty and against the code of ethics.

Educators must commit wholly to the teaching profession itself. A classroom should promote safety, security, and acceptance, and should always avoid bullying, hostility, neglect, dishonesty or offensive conduct. Teachers must accurately describe their qualifications, licenses, and credentials to education boards or administration offices that look to hire them (PGUI, 2020, Para.4).

Teaching is different than many professions; it never ends in the classroom. Teachers normally take home most of their duties such as marking, preparation, and more. But the most important thing for teachers is keeping up with what supports and promotes their academic level. Attending symposia, workshops, conferences, searching new teaching methods are so essential for teachers.

Teachers must spend time researching new teaching methods, attend classes to maintain their certifications, consult colleagues for professional advice, stay informed on technical advancements for the classroom, and participate in curriculum improvements. A teacher must ensure that their teaching methods are relevant and comprehensive for all students. Teachers must engage in educational research to continuously improve their strategies in the classroom (PGUI, 2020, Para.8).

Teaching process is triangular; syllabus, teacher, and student. All are important, but the student has the ultimate priority without whom nothing is done or gained. Honesty here means 'Commitment to Students' and doing the best to teach, respect, and draw their attention to stay focused in the classroom. "The Ethical Standards for the Teaching Profession represent a vision of professional practice. At the heart of a strong and effective teaching profession is a commitment to students and their learning" (Ontario College of Teachers, (n.d), Para. 1). Care is also a sign of responsibility, truthfulness, and honesty regarding dealing with students in the classroom. "The ethical standard of Care includes compassion, acceptance, interest and insight for developing students' potential. Members express their commitment to students' well-being and learning through positive influence, professional judgment and empathy in practice" (Ontario College of Teachers, (n.d), Para. 4).

Fairness, openness, trust, and honesty do count for a successful academic atmosphere. Fairness is so important an element in the ethical code of the teaching process. "The ethical standard of Trust embodies fairness, openness and honesty. Members' professional relationships with students, colleagues, parents, guardians and the public are based on trust" (Ontario College of Teachers, (n.d), Para. 6).

Learners, especially children, whether in kindergarten or elementary phases are great imitators; they follow their teachers' steps. They seldom get affected by abstract words or theoretical examples. They are mostly affected by tangible and vivid behavior.

Remember, children are concrete thinkers. Abstract words describing character traits are ambiguous and confusing to young children. Instead, tell your child specifically how to behave in a given situation. For example, at a recital or theater production, say, "The performers have worked hard to make something special for us. We will sit quietly and clap at the end to show them we liked the performance (Horizons, 2020, Para. 3).

On the side of parents, children should be guided in a positive educational way; parents should know their children's peers and friends, what they watch on the Social Media, and encourage them to choose honest friends. They should be taught morals early. "Moral values are important components of any individual's character and they should be taught right from childhood. The importance of teaching values to children is that it helps them to choose the right way" (GIIS Communications System, 2023, Para. 3). "Teaching morals and values in the classroom and at home such as helping others, appreciating others, showing gratitude for the good things, cheering others, sharing experiences with them etc." (GIIS Communications System, 2023, Para. 17). Controlling anger and dealing with others, especially the old, is recommended in bringing up children. "The Importance of teaching values through minute things ... makes difference for e.g.: - talking politely, controlling anger, having patience etc." (GIIS Communications System, 2023, Para. 28).

As children enter the elementary and middle school years, they begin to focus more on peer relations. For better or worse, the influence of peers and media increases. Set logical and safe boundaries about media for your child. Get to know your child's friends. Encourage him to choose friends who are honest, kind, and uplifting. It's okay to say "We are friendly to everyone, but we choose our best friends carefully" (Horizons, 2020, Para. 5).

Methodology

In order to get complete and accurate results on honesty, the researchers distributed a survey among (20) male and female Foundation Year (FY) students at University of Technology and Applied Sciences in Oman. All students are Local: Omani, with a small number of expats in the light of cultural cooperation with some countries. Students' first language is Arabic, but the language of instruction is English.

Participants

All (20) male and female students in the Preparatory Studies Centre at University of Technology and Applied Sciences were randomly selected to participate in the questionnaire. They come from diverse regions in the Sultanate of Oman. They were all briefed about the questionnaire and told that it is voluntary, and there is no need for mentioning their names.

Nature of Questionnaire

The questionnaire consists of (10) questions: (5) Yes/No, and (5) Agree/ Disagree. This is shown in the appendix page.

Findings and Discussion

Table 1

1- Academic honesty could be applied well if there is mutual trust between students and their teachers.
25 responses

	Yes	No
1. Academic honesty could be applied well if there is mutual trust between students and their teachers.	25	-
	100%	100%

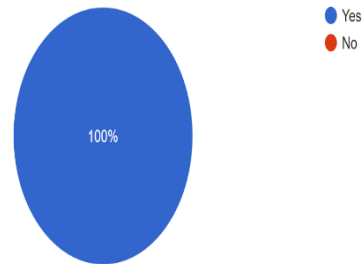


Table 1 illustrates that 100% of participants agree that academic honesty could be applied well if there is mutual trust between students and their teachers. This is a good indicator of the extent to which the participants believe student-teacher relationships are essential to academic honesty in academic institutions.

	Yes	No
3. children, whether in kindergarten or elementary phases are great imitators; they follow their teachers' steps.	20	5
	80%	20%

3-children, whether in kindergarten or elementary phases are great imitators; they follow their teachers' steps.
25 responses

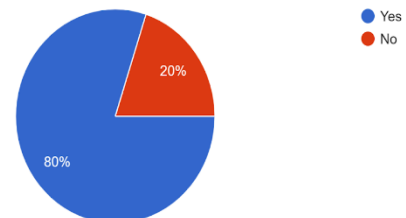


Table 2

The findings indicate that most participants, (80%) believe that children, whether in kindergarten or elementary phases are great imitators; they follow their teachers’ steps. Based on this result, teachers must ensure that students understand the importance of honesty.

9-There is no excuse for not applying the true rules of honesty and words of honor.	Agree	Disagree
	19	6
	76%	24%

Table 3

9-There is no excuse for not applying the true rules of honesty and words of honor.
25 responses

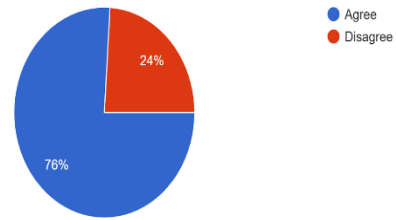


Table 3 shows that the largest group of participants- (76%) -agree that there is no excuse for not applying the true rules of honesty and words of honor.

Table 4

10- In the academic atmosphere, however, some institutions do care about the value of honesty, while some others do not: still follow the “Soft Marking “policy.	Agree	Disagree
	21	4
	84%	16%

10- In the academic atmosphere, however, some institutions do care about the value of honesty, while some others do not: still follow the “Soft Marking “policy.
25 responses

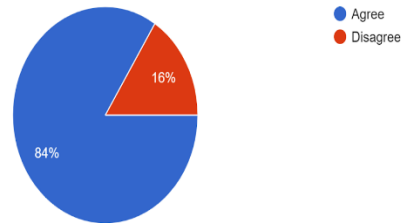


Table 4 shows that most of the participants -(84%)- agree that in the academic atmosphere, however, some institutions do care about the value of honesty, while some others do not: still follow the “Soft Marking “policy.

Recommendations

- children should be guided and instructed from the early days how to practice honesty.
- teachers should be fair and honest in evaluating students’ work; exams, presentations, assignments, etc.
- parents are asked to have a say and a role in shaping up their children’s characters.

- teachers should be professional and work in light of the code of ethics: no gossiping, no false comments on their colleagues' speeches or conversations.
- children are strong thinkers and imitators, as well. Teachers should be careful when doing or saying things before them.
- teachers should cooperate with their fellow teachers: assisting them, giving them a hand, advising them, etc.
- when applying for a job, teachers should be frank and honest in submitting their right qualifications and experience letters.
- teachers should keep researching so as to keep updated in teaching.
- teachers should remember that by teaching children, they are preparing them as the future of the country; one might be president, king, emperor, queen, etc.
- soft marking is unethical, and those who do it should be punished.

Acknowledgement

The researchers would like to thank all (FY) participants without whom things would not have come this way.

Conclusion

In this article, we-researchers- have highlighted and described some problematic issues related to Honesty and its applications at the level of family, schools, colleges, universities, and society. Things were clarified in depth regarding the role of honesty in having a prosperous society, especially in working out true democracy, whether in class or the whole country. Moreover, in the recommendation part, many useful things were recommended for students, teachers, parents, and decision takers and makers.

Normally, moral ethics of any society in any part of the world comes through Honesty. The ideal society is the one that seriously practices Honesty in a serious way, avoiding any corruption or immorality. What is concerned here is applying the value and essence of Honesty in the academic institutions.

According to what the participants in the questionnaire have said, honesty is the main element of prosperity and success of humanity in all fields, not only in education.

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*Appendices**Questionnaire*

Dear participants,

The purpose of this questionnaire is to collect information for an article titled “The Value of Honesty in the Academic Institutions. This information will not be misused and you will not be identified.

Part One*Yes/ No questions*

1. Academic honesty could be applied well if there is mutual trust between students and their teachers.

(A)Yes

(B)No

2. moral ethics of any society in any part of the world comes through Honesty.

(A)Yes

(B)No

3. children, whether in kindergarten or elementary phases are great imitators; they follow their teachers’ steps.

(A)Yes

(B)No

4. Fairness, openness, trust, and honesty do count for a successful academic atmosphere.

(A)Yes

(B)No

5. In light of finding some false diplomas of teachers teaching at academic institutions, serious actions should be taken against them such as sacking and paying back the amounts of money they had received, or sent to court.

(A)Yes

(B)No

Part Two**Agree / Disagree**

6. dedicated teachers should work objectively and have a word of honor while performing their job.

(A) Agree

(B) Disagree

7. teachers are life makers; they do care about their students and do their best to prepare them to be successful individuals in the society, some of them might be public figures and famous leaders

(A) Agree

(B) Disagree

8. honesty is a sign of politeness and high level of good manners and education, especially for students, whether they are taught by their families or teachers.

(A) Agree

(B) Disagree

9. There is no excuse for not applying the true rules of honesty and words of honor.

(A) Agree

(B) Disagree

10. In the academic atmosphere, however, some institutions do care about the value of honesty, while some others do not: still follow the “Soft Marking “policy.

(A) Agree

(B) Disagree

About the Researchers

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