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## **Integrity: An ethical perspective of a leader for social improvement**

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Title	Integrity: An ethical perspective of a leader for social improvement
Publisher	British Council
Publication date	2025
Download date	2026-03-05 10:55:48
Link to Item	<a href="https://hdl.handle.net/20.500.14069/1191">https://hdl.handle.net/20.500.14069/1191</a>

British Council  
Partner Schools

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# Integrity: An ethical perspective of a leader for social improvement

Sadia Fareed, Pakistan

# Integrity: An ethical perspective of a leader for social improvement

## School context

Our school is situated in the economic hub of Pakistan, Karachi, which is the biggest and largest city, with a vast range of educational institutes, from public to private organisations.

My school is **Bai Virbaiji Soparivala Parsi High School**, which was formed in 1859 by the Parsi community of the sub-continent (undivided India). Initially, it was built for the Parsi community, but after independence in 1947, upon the request of Quad-e-Azam Mohammad Ali Jinnah, it opened its doors for non-Parsi as well.

Currently, it is one of the leading institutes of Karachi, providing both Cambridge International Education and local boards at the same time to more than 3,000 students (boys only). We produce some excellent results every year.

We have numerous societies, including Science, Social Spirit, Music, Chess and Scrabble, which enhance our students' inner ability and interest accordingly.

Since the school is a private organisation that believes in the development and growth of its employees, we upgrade our teaching and learning skills through different workshops and courses.

## About the author



My name is **Sadia Fareed**. I hold an MPhil degree in Management Sciences and I'm a certified Cambridge teacher with vast experience of teaching since I've been in this noble field for the past 12 years.

I started my career teaching Social Studies and Statistics and currently I'm teaching global perspectives to secondary classes.

I always call myself a facilitator and an active listener, as teaching teenagers is not an easy task. I try my level best to understand them and accept them as who they are, since this age is quite sensitive. At this stage, they can be funny, rude and lethargic at the same time.

I believe learning is a continuous process that can never be stopped. Therefore, I applied for the Action Research course.

## Key findings

- **To establish a robust and effective academic integrity policy, it is crucial to prioritise fairness, consistency, clear communication and student involvement.**
- **Actions are significantly influenced by beliefs and academic dishonesty. After implementing the policy, institutions often observe a reduced incidence of academic dishonesty, increased reporting by faculty and staff, and improved student understanding of what constitutes academic dishonesty.**
- **Institutions shift from a punitive to a preventative approach, focusing on educating students and providing resources to prevent academic dishonesty. This leads to increased faculty–student dialogue and the development of an academic integrity culture that values honesty and ethical behaviour.**



Following are my exploratory research questions based upon the theme of integrity with an aim to develop an honest and responsible sense among not only the students but teachers as well.

**Research questions:**

1. In what ways do students demonstrate the courage to acknowledge their mistakes?
2. How do teachers balance maintaining integrity with the pressures of meeting institutional expectations or goals?
3. How do my actions as a leader align with the values I advocate?

**Action research rationale**

The reason behind selecting integrity as my theme of research is a strong belief that I have regarding my field. I strongly believe that without a strong set of moral and ethical values, no job can be done and no aim can be achieved. In my field, it is equally important for both teachers and students to practise integrity, regardless of whether it is difficult to perform or is criticised by many. If it is right, then one must stand with it.

Students are our future leaders, and if teachers – their current leaders – practise integrity, this will boost students’ confidence and enable them to think creatively to combine their thinking ability with integrity.

I believe that maintaining a high level of integrity by the educational institutions will create a positive impact on the social structure.

**Data collection tools**

**Methodology**

To address my exploratory research questions, I have planned to use the following data collection tools.

Since my first question revolves around the students, to explore it more I will use a questionnaire with ten well-structured questions for a focus group of 15 students. The reflection report will be followed by that. A consent form will be signed by both parents and students for transparency.

**Tool:** questionnaire  
**Number of participants:** 15 to 20 students

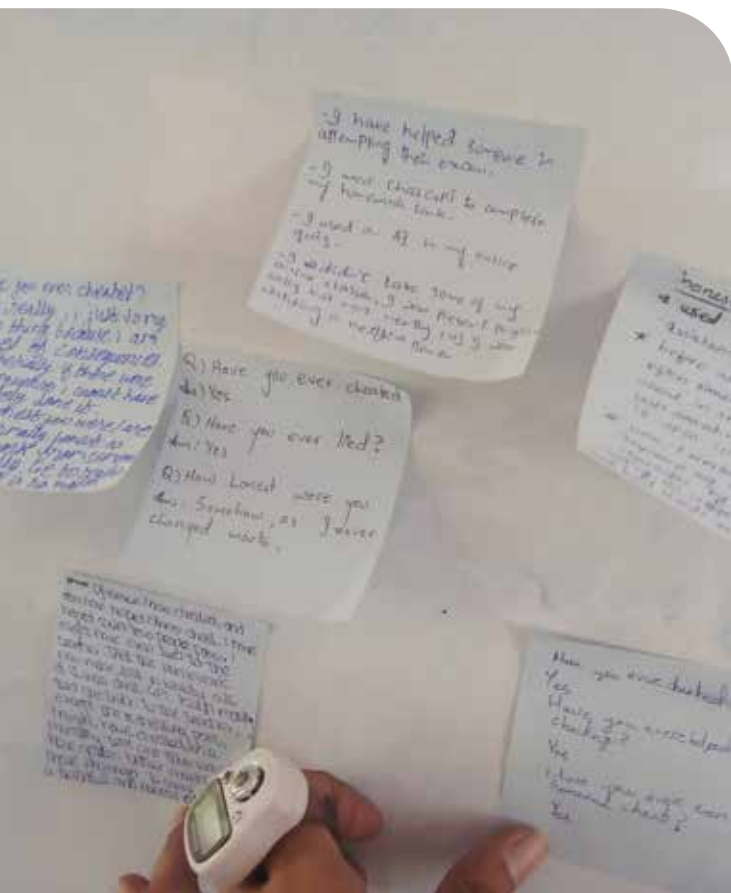
For the second question, I will use a semi-structured interview based upon personal observation of teachers, followed by a reflection report.

**Tool:** discussion/observation and reflection  
**Number of participants:** six teachers

The third question enables me to gather insights into past experiences of integrity from the section heads during an interview. I am planning to structure the form to focus on specific scenarios and behaviours that demonstrate integrity in their professional life. They will shed light upon their roles as leaders for that interview with five to six well-structured questions.

**Tool:** interview/questionnaire  
**Number of participants:** three section heads

This structure helps ensure that my audience understands both the technical and practical aspects of the data tools I am using in my research.



**‘By emphasising academic honesty, we’re not only promoting integrity but also fostering a growth mindset, critical thinking and creativity in our students.’**

**Teacher Interviewee, Academic Honesty Policy Implementation Team**

## Data analysis for the exploration stage

The purpose of this data collection was to find out the importance of integrity among three different focus groups comprising:

### A – Section heads (three)

In order to understand their roles and responsibilities in maintaining the organisation's integrity, I conducted interviews with three department heads. The aim was to find out more about how each leader maintains moral standards, promotes accountability and manages integrity-related concerns inside their divisions. They acknowledged that sharing their challenging experiences in resolving conflicts and disciplinary matters without prejudice was their strength and that setting an example and actively upholding these values are essential for creating an integrity-based culture within the company.

### B – Teachers (six)

Teachers participated in a six-question survey that is well-structured and includes both qualitative and quantitative inquiries. They all agreed that the management must strictly monitor and balance academic integrity, and that prompt action is necessary to not only resolve the problem but also set an example.

### C – Students (30)

Students participated in three sessions, the first of which covered integrity to learn about their viewpoints.

Second, they were given a sticky note and asked to confess if they had ever engaged in academic dishonesty or malpractice at any level. The sticky notes were then posted on the board, and a gallery walk was undertaken. Following that, a seven-question Likert scale (strongly disagree, disagree, neutral, agree, highly agree) survey was distributed.

Question E has the highest level of responses, which indicates students will not bear cheating in their classroom and will immediately report it, followed by question D, which shows they strongly believe in fair collaboration in teamwork.

## Action Research

### Action plan

My research plan was in two parts:

#### 1. Designing and delivering a training programme for students to educate them about the importance of academic honesty.

- Clarification on academic dishonesty.
  - a. Different forms of dishonesty in academia, like cheating, plagiarism, duplicate submission, misrepresentation, fabrication, etc.
  - b. Importance of academic honesty.
- Consequences of academic dishonesty, like grade penalties, course failure.
- Academic probation, suspension and expulsion.
- Reporting incidents.
- Investigating process.
- Around two to three sessions of 30 minutes.
- Participation of 30 students.

#### 2. Policy development

- Objective of policy.
- Mission and vision of the organisation (to identify goals and principles).
- Policy statement.
- Guidelines for students and teachers on addressing academic malpractice.
- Stakeholders' involvement and approval.



## Action plan evaluation tools

In order to evaluate the impact of my action plan more comprehensively, the focus will be the effectiveness, efficiency and reliability of the goals, along with their alignment with the organisation's goals. Different case studies will be taken into consideration, and thorough research into existing academic policies will be carried out.

To evaluate the impact and efficacy of action plans, a variety of approaches can be used such as:

- surveys
- tests
- metrics, and statistics to gauge results and monitor advancement
- focus groups, interviews, case studies and observations can be effectively used for collaboration
- frameworks and models for logic, such as the Kirkpatrick Model which enables the reaction, learning, behaviour and results of the training
- dashboards and infographics are examples of data visualisation technologies that make real-time data analysis easier by software platforms, such as survey software and data analytics tools
- systematic evaluation is ensured by evaluation templates and checklists, which are similar to evaluation plans and data collecting templates
- other resources, such as fishbone to analyse the causes, SWOT and root cause analysis for further evaluation.

The above tools can be used to thoroughly examine the efficacy of action plans.

**'Academic honesty is not just about avoiding plagiarism, it's about taking ownership of our learning and producing work that truly represents our understanding and ideas.'**

Student participant, focus group discussion



## Action plan implementation

Academic honesty policy formulation was not an easy task despite its good intentions. Our school's prior academic honesty policy lacked the specifics and clarity needed to successfully foster an honest and ethical culture. Our ability to create an atmosphere that promotes academic performance and innovative work was hampered by a lack of clear rules for parents, instructors and students. As a result, we realised that a thorough and specific academic honesty policy that explains standards, processes and penalties was necessary. A strong framework for encouraging academic integrity, combating academic dishonesty and guaranteeing that every student has the chance to thrive in a setting that values truthfulness, equity and respect is the goal of this new policy.

Our school administration, teachers, students and parents were all enthusiastic about the policy and recognised its importance in promoting academic integrity. The administration and section heads provided unwavering support, allocating necessary resources and personnel to ensure the policy's successful implementation. Teachers were eager to integrate the policy into their teaching practices, and most importantly my students were receptive to the idea of maintaining academic honesty, and the way they showed their support and the ideas they shared were highly appreciated. They stayed connected throughout this journey with me.

## Key findings

Following are the key findings of the immense support and commitment received from all the stakeholders, from students, parents and colleagues to heads and management.

The stakeholders of this policy were management, section heads, teachers, students and parents.

To establish a robust and effective academic integrity policy, it is crucial to prioritise fairness, consistency, clear communication and student involvement. Fairness ensures that all students are treated equally and without bias when addressing academic integrity violations, with consistent consequences and culturally sensitive considerations. Consistency is also key, with standardised procedures and clear guidelines for faculty and staff to report and address academic integrity violations. Clear communication is vital, with transparent policies, regular reminders and multiple communication channels to reach students and faculty. Finally, student involvement is essential, with student representation on academic integrity committees, soliciting student feedback and providing regular education and awareness programmes to promote a culture of integrity and academic excellence. By emphasising these factors, institutions can create a comprehensive and effective academic integrity policy that fosters a culture of integrity, trust and academic success.

Actions are significantly influenced by beliefs and academic dishonesty.

Since all the stakeholders were fully aware of this policy and were involved right from the beginning, and almost every step taken in this regard was clearly and concisely put forward, behaviour has not changed much. Teachers are now more vigilant since we all took an oath to fully implement the essence of this policy. The same goes for our students, who understand the policy and refrain from any acts that would violate the clauses of this policy. After implementing the policy, institutions often observe a reduced incidence of academic dishonesty, increased reporting by faculty and staff, and improved student understanding of what constitutes academic dishonesty. Furthermore, institutions shift from a punitive to a preventative approach, focusing on educating students and providing resources to prevent academic dishonesty. This leads to increased faculty–student dialogue and the development of an academic integrity culture that values honesty and ethical behaviour.

## Future actions

**The action research on academic honesty policy yielded several conclusions, including an improved understanding and awareness of academic honesty among students, teachers and parents, a reduction in plagiarism instances and an enhancement in critical-thinking and creativity skills. These conclusions have a significant impact on our setting, contributing to a positive school culture that promotes intellectual integrity and authenticity, and preparing students for higher education and the global workforce, where intellectual property and authenticity are paramount. The findings of this research also have implications for learning and the global context, emphasising the importance of academic honesty in preparing students for global citizenship and maintaining the integrity of knowledge and ideas in an increasingly interconnected world. To further enhance academic honesty and integrity, possible enhancements in the school development cycle include regular policy reviews, student ambassadors, parental engagement, technology integration and inter-school collaboration.**

## Conclusions

The action research on academic honesty policy yielded significant conclusions, notably an improved understanding of academic honesty among students, teachers and parents. The implementation of plagiarism detection tools and workshops on proper citation led to a 30 per cent decrease in plagiarism instances, while students demonstrated a notable improvement in submitting original work, fostering critical thinking and creativity. Moreover, the emphasis on academic honesty contributed to a positive school culture, encouraging students to take pride in their authentic work. This, in turn, prepares students for higher education and a global context where intellectual property and authenticity are increasingly important.

The impact of this research on the school setting and learning has been profound, promoting a culture of trust and honesty, and instilling values that will benefit students in their future academic and professional pursuits. To further enhance the academic honesty policy, regular policy reviews, student ambassadors, parental engagement, technology integration and inter-school collaboration are recommended. By implementing these measures, the school can continue to promote academic honesty, fostering a culture of integrity, creativity and critical thinking. Ultimately, this research highlights the importance of academic honesty in educational settings and its far-reaching implications for students' future success.

## Acknowledgements

I would like to extend my sincere gratitude to the following individuals and entities for their support and guidance throughout my research journey.

### School administration

**Mrs Mehernaz Bharucha (Principal):** For providing valuable insights and administrative support.

**Mrs Sofia Nasir (Department Head):** For offering expert advice and facilitating access to resources.

### Colleagues and peers

**Ms Uzma Shoaib:** For sharing their expertise and providing constructive feedback.

**Ms Shahnaz Farooq, Mr Sajid and Ms Sana:** For engaging in thought-provoking discussions and contributing to the development of my ideas.

### Technical support

**Meta AI:** For providing language processing and suggestions that enhanced the clarity and coherence of my writing.

**Grammarly:** For assisting with grammar, syntax and style checks, which helped refine my writing and ensure accuracy.

I appreciate the contributions of these individuals and entities, which have enriched my research and helped me produce a high-quality outcome.

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