

Review

Creating the ethical academy: A systems approach to understanding misconduct and empowering change in higher education

Tricia Bertram Gallant (Ed.).(2011)
New York: Routledge

Tracey Bretag

School of Management, University of South Australia

tracey.bretag@unisa.edu.au

Tricia Bertram Gallant is a prolific writer and passionate advocate for the importance of academic integrity in higher education. In addition to her numerous journal articles, conference and seminar papers, readers will be familiar with her previous books including: *Academic integrity in the twenty-first century* (ASHE, 2008) and *Cheating in schools: What we know and what we can do* (with Stephen Davis and Patrick Drinan, Wiley 2009). For a review of the latter, please see IJEI Volume 5(1), 2009.

In keeping with Bertram Gallant's earlier works, this latest edited volume, *Creating the ethical academy: A systems approach to understanding misconduct and empowering change in higher education*, provides researchers and practitioners with a means of quickly grasping the key issues, in a comprehensive and accessible format. But this book goes much further than offering resources and strategies for good practice. *Creating the ethical academy* focuses on the development of a theoretical framework from which to view academic integrity. Bertram Gallant offers a long overdue break from the many texts on student plagiarism and moral corruption, by examining academic integrity using a systems approach.

'Part 1: Opening the door' (Chapters 1-3) provides an overview of the literature on corruption in higher education and counterbalances this with a vision for 'the ethical academy'. In Chapter 3 Tricia Bertram Gallant and Michael Kalichman set the agenda for the rest of the book by proposing an approach premised on the understanding that "individual misconduct or ethical agency is actually a systemic issue, shaped by individual, organisational, educational/academy, and other societal factors" (p. 36).

Such a premise resonates with the philosophy of the *Asia Pacific Forum on Educational Integrity* (APFEI). Rather than viewing academic integrity as a moral issue for which students are individually responsible, APFEI states that "academic integrity is multi-dimensional and is enabled by all those in the educational enterprise, from students to teachers, librarians, advisors, research colleagues and administrators. It is for this reason that APFEI prefaces 'integrity' with 'educational' rather than the more conventional 'academic'" (APFEI, 2011).

Recent research on academic integrity policies at Australian universities (Bretag et al., 2011, forthcoming) has found that while students are overwhelmingly held to account for upholding academic integrity policy, in many cases there is not a commensurate responsibility attributed to staff, and even less to the university itself.

The International Journal for Educational Integrity is available online at:
<http://www.ojs.unisa.edu.au/journals/index.php/IJEI>

In 21% of policies students were the sole stakeholder identified as having responsibility for academic integrity. In light of this research in the Australian context, Bertram Gallant's book becomes even more important.

'Part 2: Understanding ethical misconduct in key areas of higher education', provides insights on a range of academic areas that potentially fall short of ethical standards. Bertram Gallant herself addresses issues of integrity in standardised testing and admissions by looking at the flawed academic selection process. John Braxton explores improprieties in teaching and learning, while internationally renowned Melissa Anderson shares her team's extensive research on misconduct and misbehaviour in scientific research. J. Douglas Toma and Mark Kavanaugh describe the ethical challenges of fundraising and spectator sports in the North American context, while Nathan Harris and Michael Bastedo boldly examine corrupt governance in college and university administration.

The beauty of this volume is that readers are not left feeling overwhelmed by the levels and complexities of ethical breaches in academia. As promised, Bertram Gallant responds to the negative assessment in Part 2 with an ambitious but achievable model in Part 3 for how the ethical academy can be achieved. The contributing authors in this section use theory from other contexts to provide the tools for 'empowering change' within each of the systems levels, from individual decision-making through to global accountability systems. Bertram Gallant and her co-author from *Cheating in schools* (2009), Patrick Drinan, draw the contributions together with a reminder that ethical challenges should not be "ignored or downplayed as issues of individual dysfunctionality" (p. 216). It is this sophisticated understanding of the academic integrity agenda coupled with an impassioned plea for ethics to become an "intentional strategic priority for higher education" that makes *Creating the ethical academy* essential reading for anyone interested in reinvigorating higher education.

References

- Asia Pacific Forum on Educational Integrity, *What is educational integrity?* Retrieved June 7, 2011, from <http://www.apfei.edu.au/about/educational-integrity.html>
- Bretag, T., Mahmud, S., East, J., Green, M., James, C., McGowan, U., Partridge, L., Walker, R., & Wallace, M. (2011 forthcoming). Academic integrity standards: A preliminary analysis of the academic integrity policies at Australian universities. Refereed paper to be presented at the *Australian Universities Quality Forum*, 29 June-1 July, Melbourne, Australia.