

SUGGESTIONS FOR BEGINNING TEACHERS ON HANDLING
THE PROBLEM OF CHEATING

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

A civilization whose institutions are founded upon the assumption that men can trust one another raises honesty to the level equal to that of common prosperity.¹

The ideal of honesty has been defined by Barnhart as "a conception of something in its highest perfection."² As shown by Hartshorne and May,³ the ideal of honesty, in theory at least, has been developed on a basis of social-minded regard for the personalities and the rights of others.

The writer has held that the problem of cheating in public schools, although not alarming, should not be dismissed lightly from the minds of those in the teaching profession or society. Whether a student has had a good background or a poor background, it would seem that in some phase of his schooling, cheating would be encountered. The teacher, as an instructor, has had the major share in the responsibility of seeing that the student was provided with constructive opportunities in learning that would not encourage cheating. Cheating has never been justified and, although it has been always present, it has been dangerous in the classroom or in

¹Hartshorne, H., and May, M. A., Studies in Deceit, vol. 1, p. 19.

²Barnhart, C. L., The American College Dictionary, Random House, 1948, p. 580.

Hartshorne and May, op. cit., p. 20.

society. It was the desire to better understand cheating in order to minimize it that led to the selection of the problem of this study.

The Problem

The problem of cheating in semester examinations was presented to the writer as principal of a high school by a member of the teaching staff who raised the question, "What can be done to eliminate this situation?" Being unfamiliar with this type of problem, the writer could offer no definite solution without investigating the direct causes involved. It was believed that this was a major problem for college graduates who in their first year of teaching are confronted with a situation of this nature and that a study concerned with the finding of a solution or recommendations for solving this type of problem would be of general value.

A desire to answer questions on the causes of cheating and the methods that can be used to reduce cheating led to the selection of the topic of this study, "Suggestions for Beginning Teachers on Handling the Problem of Cheating." The average teacher in a small high school is not trained in psychology or sociology, therefore, this study was limited so that the concepts would be understood by the average teacher.

Procedure

The chief procedure in this study was to interview literature which has been used to determine:

- (1) the causes of cheating in high school,
- (2) methods for reducing cheating in high school,
- (3) suggestions for beginning teachers on handling the problem of cheating.

Limitations

The review of literature was confined to the library at Montana State College.

This study was not designed to delve into the psychological and sociological causes of cheating but to present general causes of cheating which could be understood by the average teacher.

The review of literature is presented in Chapter II.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The problem in this study has been to define the causes of cheating in high school, methods used to reduce cheating in high school, and suggestions for beginning teachers on handling the problem of cheating. The procedure used in this study has been to define the causes of cheating, determine the methods used to reduce cheating, and make available suggestions to beginning teachers on handling the problem of cheating.

The Causes of Cheating

Many authors have listed causes of cheating but only three authors are used in this study.

Crawford⁴ has classified the causes of cheating in thirteen categories. They were as follows:

1. The curriculum itself.
2. Unsound tests and examinations.
3. Unsound grading methods.
4. Competition for high grades.
5. Opportunities for serving in school offices.
6. Home Pressures.

⁴Crawford, C. C., "Why Children Cheat," National Parent-Teacher, January, 1952, pp. 24-26.

7. Dishonest homework.
8. Autocratic teachers.
9. Dishonest parents.
10. Participation in school athletics.
11. Class morale.
12. Improper motivation.
13. Subject matter.

Each of these thirteen categories has had its contribution to the causes of cheating in high school. These causes need to be explained somewhat to show the relationship between them and cheating.

The Curriculum Itself. The curriculum itself has caused cheating when it has been lacking in interest and vitality. The teaching of vital problems, or practical methods of doing things, has minimized cheating.⁵

Unsound Tests and Examinations. There has been evidence that the cheating problem was associated with the examination system. The use of unsound tests and examinations has resulted in the students' not meeting the school requirements but merely seeming to meet them.⁶

Unsound Grading Methods. Unsound grading methods have caused cheating. A student who knew that a few points difference changed

⁵Ibid., p. 25.

⁶Luke, Orral, "Can We Reduce Cheating in the Classroom?" Junior College Journal 24:171, November, 1953.

a grade has had a great temptation to cheat.⁷

Competition for Higher Grades. Competition for higher grades has put added pressure on students. Students with low intelligence (or those retarded in school) have been frustrated in their efforts to do as well as others and, as a result, resorted to cheating.⁸

Opportunities for Serving in School Offices. Many schools have required certain grade average in order to serve in various school offices. Students who wished to be recognized by their peer group sometimes cheated in order to maintain a grade average needed to serve in school offices.⁹

Home Pressures. Many parents have demanded high levels of attainment from their children. These pressures have pushed students toward cheating.¹⁰

Dishonest Homework. Many students have copied other student's homework because they have not been given the groundwork for home study by their teachers.¹¹

Autocratic Teachers. Teachers have been said to cause a great amount of cheating. More cheating takes place in cold, formal classrooms dominated by autocratic teachers.¹²

⁷Ibid., p. 172.

⁸Ibid., p. 173.

⁹Ibid., p. 174.

¹⁰Ibid., p. 174.

¹¹Ibid., p. 174.

¹²Crawford, op. cit., p. 26.

Dishonest Parents. Dishonest parents have been listed a cause of cheating. It has been the writer's experience as principal that too many parents have set bad examples by cheating in everyday life, others cooperate in mild forms of cheating in order to help their children "shine" at school.

Participation in School Athletics. In general high school leagues require a certain academic grade average from athletes in order to participate in sports.¹³ Athletes on the border line have usually cheated in order to stay eligible.

Class Morale. Class morale has been correlated with teacher preparation. Teachers who entered the classroom with subject matter poorly prepared have created poor class morale, and this has resulted in cheating.¹⁴

Improper Motivation. Students who were not properly motivated in courses, or were not interested in them but were required to take them, often have resorted to cheating in order to receive credit for graduation.¹⁵

Subject Matter. Many instructors have put too much importance on things that will never be used in later life. Students who did not

¹³"North Dakota High School League Rules and Regulations," Valley City, North Dakota, 1959-60, 21 pp.

¹⁴Luke, op. cit., p. 171.

¹⁵Ibid., p. 172.

see the utility in certain courses often have resorted to cheating.¹⁶

Laden's¹⁷ views on the causes of cheating were:

1. The most basic cause of cheating has been the American worship of marks.
2. Pupils have feared failure, so they resorted to cheating. They have been forced to cheat to meet impossible demands by the teachers.
3. If a child was exposed to parental cheating, he might reason that cheating at school was all right if he could get away with it.
4. Often parents were responsible for the intense pressures which caused children to cheat.

Stilwell¹⁸ pointed out that students cheated for these reasons:

1. The teacher acted as though he expected them to cheat.
2. The grade system was mostly foolishness, and the student knew it.
3. Required written examinations were a painful, pointless business.

¹⁶Ibid., p. 173.

¹⁷Laden, Lawrence, "What are the Facts on Classroom Cheating," Parents Magazine 27:42, October, 1952.

¹⁸Stilwell, Hart, "Why They Cheat," Nation, 173:133, August 18, 1951.

4. Cheating in school has been nothing more than a reflection of a way of life in the adult world.

Marks and grades, originally the measure of learning, have become a substitute for learning; students work for grades not knowledge. With so much emphasis on high grades, some students have done anything to achieve them, even cheat.¹⁹

Some authorities have developed detailed lists and some used short lists describing the causes of cheating. In general, their common findings on the fundamental causes of cheating can be grouped into four classes as follows:

1. Worship of marks.
2. Fear of failure.
3. Exposure to parental cheating.
4. Expectations of teachers that students will cheat.

Methods for Reducing Cheating

After the causes of cheating were summarized, a search was made to discover means of reducing or eliminating cheating. A variety of methods for reducing cheating were disclosed in the literature. These methods can be classified into four general areas: structuring of tests and examinations, school policies on cheating, talks on honesty, parental assistance.

¹⁹"How can Cheating be Stopped," Scholastic, 69:7-8, January 18, 1957.

Structuring of Tests and Examinations. The structuring of tests and examinations has been an effective method in reducing cheating in high school. Methods of structuring tests and examinations fell into three general categories as follows:

1. Tests and exercises should require thought and not just rote memory. If the questions on a test required thought, it would not be necessary to require the students to take the test with their books closed, a practice that should be discouraged if the purpose of the teaching is to encourage creative thinking.²⁰
2. The placing of students in alternate seats during examinations has reduced cheating. If the room was sufficiently large students have been placed in alternate seats or alternate rows. With this arrangement it has been much harder for students to cheat.²¹
3. Different forms of examinations were used to reduce cheating. If the room is crowded, a different form of examination could be used for every other row. Use of this method of examination has prevented students from looking over other student's papers to get an answer to

²⁰Wynn, Willard, "Man Thinking and Student Cheating," Bulletin of the American Association of University Professors, 37:657-64, Winter 1951-2.

²¹Weingarten, K. P., "Problem of Cheating During Examinations," California Journal of Secondary Education, 29:378-80, November, 1954.

a question. It separated students with the same test form farther away. This method of testing has reduced a great amount of cheating that takes place during examinations.²²

School Policies on Cheating. Published school policies on cheating, available to students at the beginning of the school year, have helped reduce cheating. These policies have included the following:

1. Students are dismissed from school for cheating. Students who are caught cheating have been dismissed from school. The fear of being dismissed from school has helped reduce cheating.²³
2. Cheating has been reduced by giving a failing grade in the course or lowering the grade in the course if the student is caught cheating. This has reduced a certain percentage of cheating because students do not wish to fail a course or have their grade lowered because of cheating. Students wish to have the same grades as their peer group.²⁴
3. Retesting students who cheat has helped reduce cheating.

²²Ibid., p. 378.

²³Ibid., p. 380.

²⁴Ibid., p. 378.

Students caught cheating must take a retest. Students have tried to avoid this because of the embarrassment involved.²⁵

4. Student council rules dealing with cheating in examinations. Rules drafted by student councils have helped reduce cheating because the rules are drafted by their own peer group. Students usually do not commit infractions against rules drafted by their own peer group.²⁶

Talks on Honesty. Talks on honesty have helped to reduce cheating in the high school.

1. Talks to groups of students on honesty have reduced cheating. Should a wave of cheating hit a school, the principal, teachers, and students should give talks on honesty and the place an honest person has in our society today. Students that have realized the place of honesty in society have helped to reduce cheating.²⁷
2. Private talks with students have helped limit the problem. A private talk between the teacher and the student may eliminate cheating in some situations. The teacher should emphasize to the students that getting credit for another student's work will be of questionable benefit. The student should be impressed by the fact

²⁵Ibid., p. 379.

²⁶Ibid., p. 380.

²⁷Ibid., p. 379.

that top marks have not been required in society in order to become a success.²⁸

Parental Assistance. Parental assistance to the child has been one of the most effective methods used to help reduce cheating.

1. Parents should be notified when their child chronically cheats in school. To have the child's parents know about the cheating that has taken place has resulted in embarrassment to the child, and cheating has been reduced when the student knows that his parents will be notified by the school should the student be involved in cheating.²⁹
2. Parents should help their children to acquire standards of honesty in the home. Parents that practiced dishonesty at home have influenced their children to practice dishonesty in the school.³⁰

Suggestions For Beginning Teachers on Handling the Problem of Cheating

Suggestions on handling the problem of cheating given by authorities can be typified in the reactions of three authors.

²⁸Ibid., p. 378.

²⁹Ibid., p. 379.

³⁰Lader, op. cit., p. 42.

Stilwell³¹ listed the following suggestions to beginning teachers on handling the problem of cheating:

1. Trust the pupil and show him that you trust him.
2. Reduce the reward for cheating by eliminating or drastically overhauling the grade system.
3. Eliminate written examinations as now given.

Ciernich³² offered the following suggestions to beginning teachers on handling the problem of cheating:

1. More emphasis should be placed on honor.
2. Teachers should watch carefully to prevent cheating.
3. More theme-type tests should be given.
4. Give ample warning to students when a test is to be given.
5. The philosophy that cheating is definitely wrong and undesirable should be emphasized.
6. School work should be interesting.
7. Students should be allowed to help decide the value which will be given to different kinds of marks for recitations, oral quizzes, maps, notes, and notebooks.
8. More oral work should be required of the students.

Mueller³³ made the following suggestions to beginning teachers on handling the problem:

³¹Stilwell, op. cit., p. 133.

³²Ciernich, Sylvia, "What can We do About Cheating," National Education Association Journal, 39:57, July, 1950.

³³Mueller, Kate, "Can Cheating be Killed," Personnel and Guidance Journal 31:465-8, April, 1953.

1. Frequent tests or exercises should be given.
2. Examination questions should be well fitted to the material covered in the course.
3. Important points should be stressed and questions made interesting.
4. Essay questions in general should be given.
5. Administrators should schedule small classes allowing more personal contact with the students.
6. The class period preceding an examination should be devoted to review or discussion of sample examination questions.
7. Mutual respect between the instructor and the student should be developed.

The consensus of these authors was that cheating can be reduced if these items are brought to the attention of beginning teachers.

Summary

In general, common finding on the fundamental causes of cheating as revealed in the review of the literature were summarized in four groups:

1. Worship of marks.
2. Fear of failure.
3. Exposure to parental cheating.

4. Expectations of teachers that students will cheat.

The review of literature revealed that a school should meet the problem of cheating immediately through the joint efforts of teachers, parents, and students.³⁴ Attempts to reduce the cheating problem have been made through the avenues of:

1. Structuring of tests and examinations.
2. School policies on cheating.
3. Talks on honesty.
4. Parental assistance.

The review of literature brought out the following major suggestions to beginning teachers on handling the problem of cheating:

1. Trust the pupil.
2. Overhaul the grade system.
3. Give more theme-type tests.
4. Watch carefully during an examination.
5. Place more emphasis on honor.
6. Allow students to help decide the value given to different kinds of marks.

The summary, conclusions, and recommendations are presented in Chapter III.

³⁴Ibid., p. 42.

CHAPTER III

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study was made to determine whether or not causes of cheating could be assessed, if there were methods to reduce cheating, and if there were suggestions for beginning teachers on handling the problem of cheating.

The chief procedure in this study was to interview literature which had been used to determine:

- (1) the causes of cheating in high school,
- (2) methods for reducing cheating in high school,
- (3) suggestions for beginning teachers on handling the problem of cheating.

Summary

In general, the common findings in the review of literature on the fundamental causes of cheating were summarized as:

1. Worship of marks.
2. Fear of failure.
3. Exposure to parental cheating.
4. Expectations of teachers that students will cheat.

The study showed that methods used to reduce the cheating problem have utilized the following general approaches:

1. Structuring of tests and examinations.
2. School policies on cheating.
3. Talks on honesty.

4. Parental assistance.

The review of literature brought out the following major suggestions to beginning teachers on handling the problem of cheating:

1. Trust the pupil.
2. Overhaul the grade system.
3. Give more theme-type tests.
4. Watch carefully during an examination.
5. Place more emphasis on honor.
6. Allow students to help decide the value given to different kinds of marks.

Conclusions

As a result of this study, it can be concluded that the problem of cheating is here to stay, but cheating can be reduced if alert teachers utilize the tools available to combat it.

Recommendations

It is recommended that beginning teachers recognize the causes of cheating and the methods used for reducing cheating as given in this study.

It is further recommended that beginning teachers be familiar with the following suggestions which are important in handling the problem of cheating:

1. Trust the pupil.

2. Overhaul the grade system.
3. Give more theme-type tests.
4. Watch carefully during an examination.
5. Place more emphasis on honor.
6. Allow students to help decide the value given to different kinds of marks.

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