

# **A Comprehensive Approach to Solve “Distance Cheating” In Secondary Schools in Daraga, Albay: An Exploratory Study**

**IMELDA L. AREOLA**

<https://orcid.org/0000-0003-0748-2738>

[imeldaareola2023@gmail.com](mailto:imeldaareola2023@gmail.com)

Bicol College

Daraga, Albay, Philippines

**ARNEL M. BONGANAY**

[arnelmb.pcc@gmail.com](mailto:arnelmb.pcc@gmail.com)

<https://orcid.org/0009-0007-8906-0307>

Bicol College

Daraga, Albay, Philippines

**GERAND O. BUENAOBRA**

[gerandbuenaobra8@gmail.com](mailto:gerandbuenaobra8@gmail.com)

<https://orcid.org/0009-0007-1286-223X>

Bicol College

Daraga, Albay, Philippines

**CHRISTINE A. ARMARIO**

[christineaguilararmario062715@gmail.com](mailto:christineaguilararmario062715@gmail.com)

<https://orcid.org/0009-0002-5538-5713>

Bicol College

Daraga, Albay, Philippines

**MA. ZENIA M. CANCISIO**

[zencancisio@gmail.com](mailto:zencancisio@gmail.com) ORCID No.

<https://orcid.org/0009-0002-4738-741X>

Bicol College

Daraga, Albay, Philippines

**FATIMA N. DOLLISON**

fatima.dollison1993@gmail.com

<https://orcid.org/0009-0000-5213-3081>

Bicol College

Daraga, Albay, Philippines

**LEIZEL N. ESPINELI**

leizespineli2015@gmail.com

<https://orcid.org/0009-0003-4300-8539>

Bicol College

Daraga, Albay, Philippines

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## ABSTRACT

This is an exploratory study on the issue of “distance cheating” to propose a comprehensive approach to solving it. A survey conducted among high school students shows more than 64% ask help from parents to work on the modules, more than 56% ask others to work on the performance tasks, and more than 86% share answers with their classmates. The foundations of education were considered to analyze the results in a comprehensive way. Considering the psychology of digital natives, this may mean changing the grading system, teaching strategies, and forms of assessment. The usual tests that stress memorization may no longer be the best way to evaluate learners since information is available on the internet. It is important to integrate lessons and encourage authentic interdisciplinary assessments to respond to actual issues and challenges they experience in their family, community, society, and the world. To minimize or disable the possibility of cheating, students may be given a choice to do it individually or in a group, propose the best way to express what they have learned in a lesson, with the endorsement of parents/guardians and the approval of the teacher. The rubric for performance tasks may be used for self-evaluation, peer evaluation, parent/guardian evaluation, and teacher evaluation.

**Keywords** — Education, evaluation, assessment, distance learning, curriculum, exploratory, Philippines

## INTRODUCTION

Due to the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic, educational institutions worldwide, from kindergartens to universities, were forced to close. To mitigate the spread of COVID-19 among students, teachers, and parents through social contact, a blended or distance learning system was adopted. Teachers and students had trouble coping with the new modality of learning as many students did not have access to the internet and the necessary gadgets. Moreover, there were errors in the learning modules. The country was not fully prepared to respond to the pandemic, especially in the educational system. Despite this, the Department of Education was all-out to make blended and distance learning a success in continuing the education of Filipino learners.

The sudden transition to a non-face-to-face learning system raised concerns not only about its educational quality and impact on students' well-being but also its impact on academic integrity and academic performance. With the prevalence of virtual and distance learning, the great challenge to the teachers was how to make a course where the teaching-learning process was as close to a face-to-face course as possible. The greater challenge was how to ensure that students adhere to academic honesty and that the mission of the Department of Education to provide quality education is served.

In academic ethics, issues such as plagiarism, cheating on exams, downloading papers from the internet, and submitting others' papers are only a few of the many issues being tackled (Emerald Publishing, n.d.). In the study by Alvarez (2022), the results showed that students usually cheat assignments, exams, and quizzes mainly due to stress and worry.

Academic dishonesty is most prevalent among senior high school and college students. Most people who offer services to students' academic requirements, called academic servers, are teachers, earning between PhP1,500.00 and PhP20,000.00 on a weekly basis from their clients, who pay an average of PhP500.00 per work. As a result, there was the low quality of education and poor integrity due to academic dishonesty questioning the effectiveness of online learning during the COVID-19 pandemic in the Philippines (Aguilar, 2021).

Academic dishonesty has been a challenge in education, whether in a traditional classroom setting or distance learning in many academic institutions.

To achieve quality education, we need to study the issue of “distance cheating” or academic dishonesty in distance education so we can understand it considering the essence of education in the 21st century. Thus, we can explore a comprehensive approach to ensure that the required competencies are achieved in distance learning, blended learning, or education in all settings.

## **OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY**

The study aimed to understand the issue of “distance cheating” or academic dishonesty in distance learning based on the result of a survey on moral integrity and academic performance of high school students and explore an approach involving the teachers, parents, and students to resolve the issue.

## **METHODOLOGY**

### **Research Design**

This study used the quantitative data from a survey on moral integrity and academic performance designed to explore the issue of “distance cheating” brought about by distance learning during the years of the covid pandemic. The items directly related to a possible “distance cheating” (falsely submitting an assignment completed by someone else) were chosen from the survey.

### **Participants**

The respondents to the study were fifty-three (53) junior and senior high school students (Grades 7, 9, 10, 11, 12) from Kilicao High School and Rapu-Rapu National High School in Albay who were selected through convenience sampling based on availability and willingness to take part.

### **Instrumentation**

The researcher constructed a survey questionnaire on moral integrity and academic performance to investigate the issue of possible “distance cheating” brought about by distance learning due to the COVID-19 pandemic situation. Google Form Survey was used to gather and tabulate the pertinent data. The statistical treatment and graphs were auto-generated by Google Forms. This present research article used only the items relevant to a possible “distance cheating” based on the degree of independence and self-reliance in accomplishing tasks as well as sharing answers with others.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results show that 30.2% very often, 13.2 % sometimes, 18.9 % rarely, and 1.9% always ask their parents to answer the modules, while 35.8% never ask their parents to answer them.

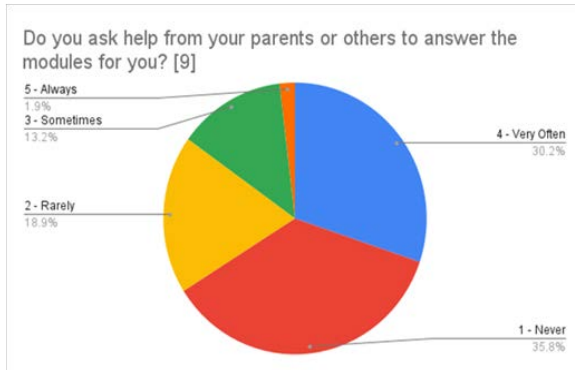


Figure 1. Degree of Independence in Answering Modules

There is nothing wrong with asking for help from parents to answer the modules if, in the process, the students learned the lesson. What can be considered cheating is if the parents themselves are the ones answering the modules, so the students did not learn the lesson.

Figure 2 shows that 34% very often ask others to do the required performance task for them, 11.3% rarely, 9.4% sometimes, and 3.8% always ask others to work on the required tasks for them.

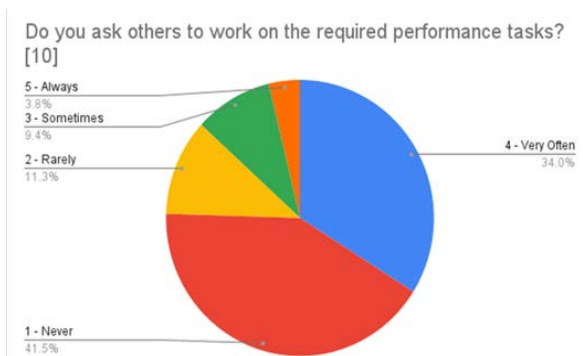


Figure 2. Degree of Self-Reliance in Performance Tasks

More than 58% ask others to work on the required performance tasks in varying frequencies, but most of them are very often. Submitting a performance task done by others as one's own is considered cheating. A performance task is supposed to show what the students learned, i.e., they would be able to perform the task by going through the process of studying the module, demonstrating at the same time how much was learned.

Figure 3 shows that 3.8% share their answers with classmates/friends, 35.8% very often, 17% sometimes, 30.2% rarely, and only 13.2% never share their answers with others.



Figure 3. Degree of Sharing Answers in Written Exam/Assessment

More than 86% share answers with their classmates. Sharing answers during an exam in a face-to-face classroom is considered “cheating.” A proctor is usually assigned to ensure students do not cheat by sharing answers, looking at their notes or books, or searching for answers online. The written exam is an individual assessment of the student’s learning.

To analyze the results in a comprehensive way, the researcher analyzed them from the perspective of the foundations of education: Philosophy, psychology, and Sociology. The etymology of education is two Latin words: educare (to draw out) and educere (to lead forth). Education, based on the philosophy of St. Thomas Aquinas, is defined as the process of drawing out (educare) and leading forth (educere) a human person to the perfect state of a human person as a human being, the state of virtue (Areola, 2021). The cultural and social changes brought

about by the advances in information technology also changed young people's learning styles and values. There is a need to study the psychology of learning of Gen Z (born between the years 1995-2010) to discover new ways of teaching and learning that would develop in them the knowledge, skills, and character qualities necessary to face the challenges of the 21st century.

Sociology is another basic force that influences the content and organization of the curriculum. With the social and cultural changes brought about by the information age, it is necessary to adapt the curriculum to prepare the students for the challenges of the 21st century. In other words, we need to know 21<sup>st</sup>-century learning and teaching. A report to UNESCO of the International Commission on Education for the twenty-first century entitled **Learning: The Treasure Within** identified the four pillars of education: learning to know, learning to do, learning to live together, and learning to be (UNESCO, 1996).

Authentic assessments allowing them to apply what they learned in their personal, family, and social life would be better. Education should help learners to be attentive to their or other people's needs and problems and use their knowledge, skills, and values to respond.

In his book *The Educational Imagination*, Eisner (1994) enumerated the features of new assessment in education; the tasks used to assess what students know and can do need to reflect the tasks they will encounter in the world outside of schools, not merely limited to the schools themselves; the tasks used to assess students should reveal how students go about solving a problem, not only the solutions they formulated; assessment tasks should reflect the values of the intellectual community from which these tasks are derived; assessment tasks need not be limited to solo performance. Many of the most important tasks we undertake require group effort; new assessment tasks should make possible more than one acceptable solution to a problem and more than one acceptable answer to a question; assessment tasks should have curricular relevance but not be limited to the curriculum as taught; assessment tasks should require students to display a sensitivity to configuration or wholes, not simply to discrete elements; assessment tasks should permit the students to select a form of representation he or she chooses to use to display what has been learned.

It is also important to assess learning in context, use multiple measures with sensitivity to individual differences, and apply assessment for the student's benefit (Gardner, 2006).

The psychology of learners, which includes their learning styles and values, is a determinant of the content and organization of the curriculum. For education

to be relevant and effective, there is a need to know the learning styles, traits, attitudes, and values of the present generation.

The learning styles of Gen Z are the following: social, mobile, global, digital, and visual. This means that they learn not just in the classroom; since they are connected to social media and the World Wide Web, thus they need digital skills. They learn best through what they see in pictures and images (visual).

Whether in face-to-face classes or distance learning, there are students who cheat in exams, plagiarize, or submit the output of performance tasks done by someone else. However, the conditions created by distance learning make cheating easier and more rampant.

What could be the reason for cheating? Lack of time, procrastination, lack of comprehension, lack of study habits, having a job, low self-esteem, and having the desire to get better marks were the reasons why students committed academic misconduct (San Jose, 2022). According to a recent graduate of K-12, students cheat because of their desire to get a high grade due to pressure from parents or pressure they impose on themselves. Their goal is to get high grades whether they learn or not.

What made the students think that grades matter more than actual learning? This is an important question to be reflected on by curriculum developers and educators. There may be a need to revisit the Philosophy of Education to understand the root of the problem so that an appropriate solution can be discovered.

The curriculum is supposed to be a means to draw out all the good potential of a human person by providing the right conditions in an educational environment for each student to discover his or her unique talents and qualities. This then enables students to develop with passion for becoming the best version of themselves and, in the process, maximize their contribution to improving the society and the world we live in, fulfilling their mission in life (Areola, 2021).

What are grades for? Parents, teachers, and students need to understand what grades are for so as not to be grade conscious or give the impression that the value of the learner depends on their academic grades. Grades give information on whether the student achieved the objectives of the lessons or not or the degree of learning the lessons. What matters is that the students learn what is required and even beyond. If they got a low grade or failed, it means intervention is needed for them to cope with academic requirements. What should not be done is to put so much emphasis on the grades rather than on actual learning.



## CONCLUSION

The sociocultural changes brought about by Information Age require rethinking the present system in distance education. What has been considered as “cheating” in the traditional classroom setting (asking others for help in answering worksheets, asking others to work on a performance task, sharing answers with classmates during the exam) may not necessarily be considered academic dishonesty considering the specific situations or circumstances in distance learning. The usual forms of assessment in a traditional classroom setting may no longer be effective in evaluating the competencies of the students in distance learning in the 21st century.

There is also a need to check whether the present system facilitates authentic education. It seems that getting a high grade for its sake is valued more than what a high grade represents. What could have led to this attitude of valuing high grades more than learning is that grades are used for comparison by ranking students and giving academic awards. Grades are also used as the basis for qualifications to enter a university or hire for a job.

Since each human person is unique and endowed with specific talents, traits, and qualities needed for a particular purpose or mission in life, there is no room for comparison and competition. This is a fundamental principle to be considered in the curriculum. A human person is a unique individual; therefore, an educator would need to consider this reality by providing personalized education and differentiated instruction as much as possible. A one-size-fits-all curriculum leads to practices that expect every learner to meet the same objectives, outcomes, or standards overlooking the uniqueness of each one. As a result, education could dehumanize instead of liberate and hinder instead of facilitate each learner’s flourishing.

Parents as primary educators and teachers as secondary educators have the responsibility to help learners discover their unique gifts and nurture them so those unique gifts would be developed to optimize their use to fulfill their mission in life. In this case, everyone should treat each person with unconditional positive regard, recognize the potential, and appreciate each one’s contribution through their gifts with gratitude and love.

This kind of educational environment will encourage each one to learn with a sense of discovery. They will study with curiosity, adventure, and fulfillment in their achievements while helping others to do the same. A spirit of collaboration instead of comparison and competition is the 21st-century skill that would be

developed, enabling them to face the present and future challenges in society and the world.

If it is clear to stakeholders that the learner is the protagonist of learning and the role of parents and teachers is to facilitate the learner to discover the unique gifts and support to develop them so that they would be able to fulfill the specific purpose or mission in life, the learner would have an intrinsic motivation to learn with joy. In this condition, cheating would make no sense.

## **RECOMMENDATION**

This may mean changing not only the grading system but also the teaching strategies and forms of assessment. After one academic year of distance learning, we can learn from our experience.

The usual exams or tests that stress the skill of memorization may no longer be the best way to evaluate learners, who have long questioned the need to remember a large amount of information to pass tests. With the advancement in information technology, a vast amount of information is available to them on the internet to solve many of the problems they can encounter in real-life situations. It would be better to give authentic assessments which allow them to apply what they learned in their personal, family, and social life. The curriculum should be such that the learners are educated to be attentive to their or other people's needs and problems and use their knowledge, skills, and values to respond effectively. It is important to integrate lessons from the different subjects and encourage interdisciplinary assessments applying what they have learned to respond to actual problems and challenges they experience in their family, community, society, and the world. The study recommended further research on the production of distance cheating using mixed methods.

## **TRANSLATIONAL RESEARCH**

Curriculum developers and module writers can use a comprehensive approach to prevent "distance cheating" or academic dishonesty in 21st-century education, considering the foundations of education: Philosophy, Psychology, and Sociology. The assessments can be designed in such a way that the possibility of cheating is disabled or minimized. This can be achieved through authentic assessments that provide opportunities to apply learning to real life.

Employing differentiated instruction to personalize education, students may be given a choice to do it individually or in a group. They may also be

given a chance to propose the best way to apply and express what they have learned in a lesson, with the endorsement of parents/guardians and the approval of the teacher. The students will acquire the skills needed to thrive in the 21st century: critical thinking, communication, collaboration, and creativity. A rubric for performance tasks may be used for self-evaluation, peer evaluation, parent/guardian evaluation, and teacher evaluation. The corroborated evaluation of all persons involved will provide an authentic assessment of the knowledge, skills, and values for the required competencies.

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