Academic Integrity Policy and Instruction in K-12 Schools in Australia, Canada, England and the United States

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Introduction

It is necessary to instill honesty, trust, and integrity in students at a young age, and the K-12 education years can be a significant part of this process. To achieve this, a robust policy is just as important as providing holistic instruction to promote academic integrity at all levels commencing from K-12 settings. A clear, contemplative and comprehensive academic integrity policy (AIP) provides a solid foundation for instruction and helps create cultures of integrity in schools at all levels (Bretag et al., 2014). However, the literature highlighted the significant gaps in policy and instruction relating to academic integrity in K-12 (Hossain, 2020; Menéndez & Valle, 2018; Stoesz, 2022, Tauginiene & Gaižauskaitė, 2019; Vieyra & Weaver, 2016). In Hossain's (2022) study, 431 first-year university students representing 75 countries were surveyed, and he found that only 1 in 10 middle schools, and 1 in 5 high school students received academic integrity literacy (AIL) education during their K-12 years. A comprehensive study conducted by Johansen et al. (2022) of 1654 upper secondary students across 51 institutions located in six European countries found that students' understanding of core elements of academic integrity was inadequate. Stoesz's (2022) study reported that only one province and one territory in Canada have academic integrity policies out of its 10 provinces and three (3) territories. Australia, however, is in a better condition,

with 77.5 % of senior secondary schools having AIPs in place, although most primary schools have not yet implemented AIPs (Hossain, 2022).

The research also shows that qualified school library professionals (SLPs) can contribute significantly to the education and promotion of information literacy and AIL at schools, through policy development or instructional efforts (Farmer & Phamle, 2021; Hossain, 2020; Menéndez & Valle, 2018; Merga, 2022; Tauginienė & Gaižauskaitė, 2018; Tilke, 2016, Tilke & Barrett, 2021; Valenza et al., 2022; Wrenn & Kohl, 2012). Within this context, this global study sought to explore the current state of AIP development and AIL instruction at K-12 schools through the lens of SLPs.

Literature Review

In a global, networked information society academic integrity or the ethical use of information has become an essential competence for students. Anwar et al. (2020) stated that "When the principles of integrity are embraced and put into practice, they become the cornerstones of a strong community and a demonstration of global citizenship" (para. 4). There is a growing body of research that discusses the value of early academic integrity instruction (Campbell, 2019; Harding et al., 2004; Hossain, 2022; Khan & Mulani, 2021) and policy development in K-12 (Burbidge & Hamer, 2020, Hossain, 2020; International Baccalaureate Organization [IB], 2019). For an AIP to be effective, it must be integral to the school curriculum and instruction (IB, 2019). Hossain (2022) and Stoesz (2022) proposed that an effective AIP should involve all the key stakeholders including students, teachers, parents and SLPs, and be embedded in the curriculum, rather than simply providing a list of rules and penalties or simply meeting a curriculum or accreditation standards.

The literature also confirms that SLPs traditionally collaborate with teachers and offer instructional support on information searching, evaluation, copyright, academic integrity, citation, referencing and plagiarism awareness within the information literacy or library skills spectrum (Farmer & Phamle, 2021; Hossain, 2020; Tilke & Barrett, 2021; Vieyra & Weaver, 2016; Wagg & McKinney, 2020). Valenza et al. (2022) recent study reported that high school students from schools with certified librarians, performed better in terms of understanding and using research strategies and tools and felt better prepared for academic research. A few studies such as Tilke and Barrett (2021), Hossain (2020), Yashwante (2020) and Menéndez and Valle (2018) reported that in schools that follow the IB curriculum, SLPs lead the school's AIP development and academic integrity instruction. In their research, Tilke and Barrett (2020) suggested that school librarians can also engage in educating beyond the student body, by developing and providing workshops to teachers and parents on academic integrity. The McKeever et al. (2017) study revealed that collaboration between teachers and

SLPs positively affects teachers' instructional practice, including information literacy and academic integrity.

Conversely, studies also claimed that in many K-12 schools, there is no formal policy on the ethical use of information (Hossain, 2020; Stoesz, 2022). Based on a study conducted by Hossain et al. (2022) with 126 schools in 30 European countries, 74% of Primary, 51% of Middle, and 33% of High Schools do not have AIPs in place. A number of studies, including Beaudry (2019), Benjes-Small et al. (2008), and Hossain (2020 & 2022), have also found that no one is assigned the responsibility of teaching students' academic integrity, including how specific actions may affect copyright and ethical behavior. Despite the importance and clear implications of academic integrity education (AIE) in K-12, among other shortcomings, there is a paucity of literature that addresses the status of AIP and AIE in K-12 schools both in developed and developing countries. In light of this caveat, this study was formulated to explore the current status of academic integrity policy and instruction in K-12 schools, particularly in developed English-speaking countries.

Methodology

As part of a global study, this study used an online survey to collect data from qualified SLPs between March 2021 and May 2022. Google Forms was used to prepare the survey questionnaire, which included closed, semi-open (using a 5-point Likert scale), and open-ended questions. The survey questionnaires were distributed using a variety of means and platforms, including the International Association of School Librarianship (IASL) and IFLA School Libraries Section listservs, national/state and provincial school library/librarian associations e.g., AASL, SLA, OSLA, SLAV, and social media channels, such as Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn. Numerous personal emails/tweets/posts were also sent/posted within the authors' network. A total of 559 responses were received from 81 countries of which 222 SLPs indicated their location as being Australia, Canada, England, and the US. Among the selected 222 survey participants, 38 are from Australia, 29 are from Canada, 12 are from England, and 143 are from the United States. We consider and analyze data obtained from these four countries in this study.

Findings

The data reveals that in participating countries, 45.7% of public schools and 40.6% of private schools offer academic integrity education at the primary level. Figure 1 shows at which grade AIL education starts. According to the data, private schools perform better than public schools at the high school level (33.3% versus 19.9%). In terms of AIL instruction, 44.6% of

SLPs reported having dedicated lessons, with the USA having the highest percentage (61.6%) followed by Australia (55%). More than half of SLPs, however, reported rarely having the opportunity to teach academic integrity, with some not teaching it at all.

Figure 1. At which Grade does Academic Integrity Education (AIE) start?
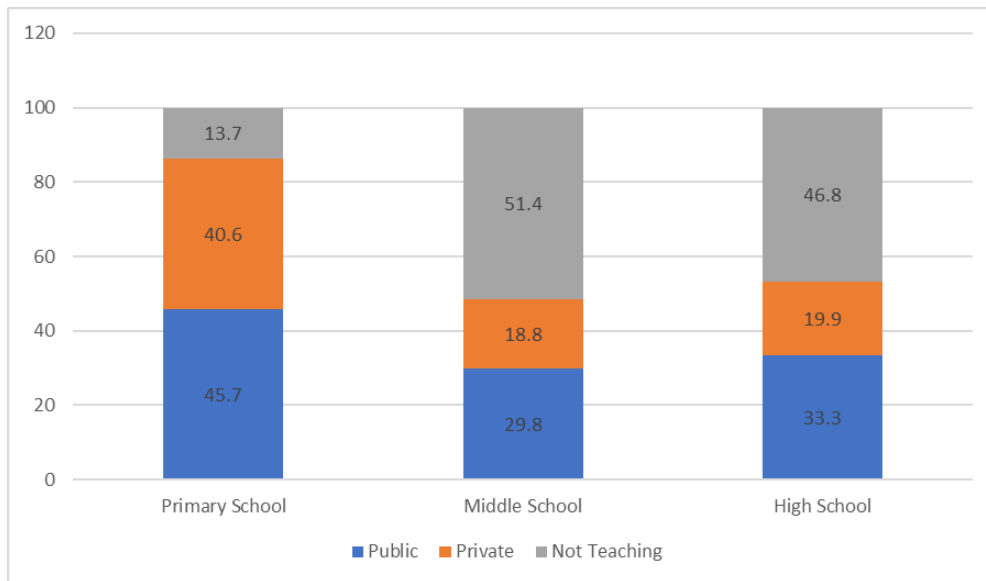
According to the data, we found that 27.9% of primary, 45.9% of middle, and 70.3% of high schools have AIPs. Over half of these policies include an honor code agreement for students, 32.9% for teachers, and 10.8% for parents, demonstrating the depth and strength of these policies. Participants also indicate that their school districts/education departments/state/provincial education authorities have an AIP that their schools adhere to. AIP status among participating SLPs schools is shown in Figure 2.

Figure 2. At which Grades do Schools have an Academic Integrity Policy (AIP)?
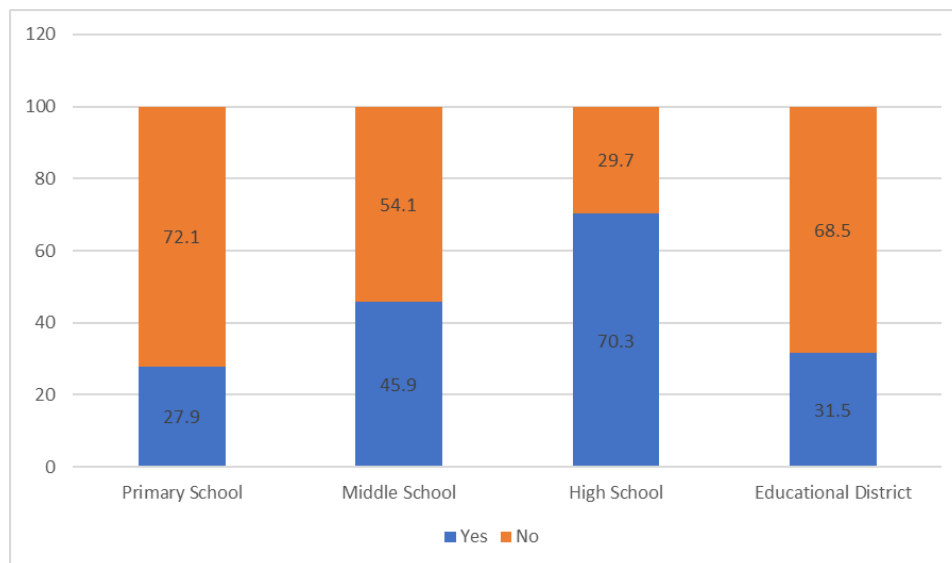
Further analysis of the data revealed that 60.1% of SLPs agree that their school's principal values academic integrity, 57.5% believe teachers value academic integrity, and 57.9% think program coordinators value academic integrity. As part of the survey, we asked the survey participants if academic integrity information sessions are offered at their school - if so, to whom and by whom. Participants reported having dedicated information sessions for students, teachers and parents of which 57.7% of student sessions, 27.1% of teacher sessions and 5.4% of parent sessions are conducted by SLPs and the remaining by the program coordinators or section/grade-level leaders.

Discussion

The study reveals that not all schools in Australia, Canada, England, and the United States are compliant with AIE and AIP despite their importance and clear implications. If the status of AIE and AIP in developed countries' K-12 schools is lacking, then the situation appears to be much inferior elsewhere. Participating SLPs indicated there are a number of reasons for this, including - a lack of support from school principals or from program coordinators; teachers put little emphasis on information literacy and AIL skills integration into core subjects; there is no clear policy on AIL instruction; and, SLPs do not have a dedicated lesson or no school/district-wide AIL scope and sequence documents to teach academic integrity, or have limited opportunity/time to collaborate. SLPs have the skills and experience to work with both students and teachers, and school administrators need to create opportunities for them to engage in co-curricular planning and co-teaching.

Implications and Conclusions

Based on the study results, the authors recommend that schools promote AIE within their own institutions through policy development and instructional integration. School administrators should have clear instruction and support from the district, state, or provincial education authorities on the implementation and promotion of AIE and policy development. It is imperative that current and incoming teachers are trained in academic integrity and related concepts, as well as instruction skills, during pre-service training and while in service. SLPs should also proactively reach out to teaching colleagues for possible collaboration. Finally, the authors believe that it is essential for K-12 schools to consider the comprehensive nature of college readiness by adapting a transdisciplinary transition literacy curriculum/program that integrates information literacy with the AIL, copyright, research and media literacy skills that, in many schools, are not often taught/included in core subjects. With these pieces established, we believe that students will be better prepared for higher education with strong information literacy skills and academic integrity values.

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