

# The Two and a Half Learning Model: A Consequence of Academic Dishonesty

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## Abstract

Academic dishonesty has been regarded as a problem but not a visible and declared one in every type of educational setting from elementary school to graduate level all over the world. Dishonesty or misconduct in the academic realm covers plagiarism, fabrication, deception, cheating, bribery, sabotage, professorial misconduct and impersonation. Whisper Campaign is another misconduct that is employed to spread rumors about someone in order to hurt that person's reputation or the systematic dissemination by word of mouth of derogatory rumors or charges especially against a candidate for public office. This paper presents how whisper campaigns run in the academic world with the help of the experiences the author himself has had. In other words, this paper exhibits the process and stages of experimental learning of an adult academician who has been exposed to a whisper campaign which leads to a model of learning under adult learning: *The two and a half learning model*. In this model, two and half colleagues design and start a whisper campaign that covers five stages: *Targeting, Rumor and gossip, Slander, Complaining and Enlightenment*.

**Keywords:** Academic misconduct, Adult learning, Two and a half learning model, Whisper campaign

## 1. Introduction

### 1.1. The framework of the problem

Despite the fact that students are generally in the scope of academic dishonesty, especially due to cheating and bullying actions, academic dishonesty has been documented focusing on plagiarism, fabrication, deception, cheating, bribery, sabotage, professorial misconduct and impersonation in every type of educational setting. This is not a recent event as this type of dishonesty has been met with varying degrees of approbation throughout history. Dishonesty or misconduct in the academic realm is generally a kind of cheating or deceiving related with the academic activities including plagiarism, fabrication, deception, cheating, bribery, sabotage, professorial misconduct and impersonation. Plagiarism is the adoption or reproduction of original creations of another author without acknowledgment. Fabrication is related with the falsification of data, information, or citations. Deception covers providing false information to an instructor by giving a false excuse for missing a deadline or falsely claiming to have submitted work. Cheating is related with the attempts to obtain assistance without due acknowledgment. Bribery or paid services covers giving assignment answers or test answers in return for money. Sabotage is related with the attempts to prevent others from completing their work by cutting pages out of library books or willfully disrupting the experiments of others, etc. Professorial misconduct is related with the professorial acts that are academically fraudulent equate to academic fraud and/or grade fraud. Finally, impersonation means to assume a student's identity with intent to provide an advantage for the student.

Whisper Campaign is another misconduct that has a history in parallel with the history of human being. It can be defined as an effort to spread rumors about someone in order to hurt that person's reputation or the systematic dissemination by word of mouth of derogatory rumors or charges especially against a candidate for public office. A person is supposed to be the target of a whispering campaign started by his or her rivals in politics, academia, business etc. Whisper Campaign covers gossip, slander and complaining. L. Anderson (2016) states that early religious texts stress the importance of the Control of the Tongue and "of all of the sins that these texts describe, those that are mentioned the most frequently are those relating to the need to control the tongue: gossip, slander, complaining, and idle talk." In the business or academic world, Whisper Campaign is employed as a method of persuasion in which damaging rumors or innuendo are spread about the target while the source of the rumors seeks to avoid being detected while spreading them. It is a black propaganda. It can be used in politics where a political campaign might distribute anonymous flyers attacking the other candidates. Considering the advances in communication technology, it is clear that the speed and anonymity of communication by modern technologies, like the internet, has increased, and thus, whisper campaigns are able to affect public awareness more deeply.

There have been whisper campaigns regarding alcohol and tobacco companies to promote their products as there have been blogs, forums etc. for this purpose. Whisper campaigns are generally used in political elections as a method of shaping the discussion. The best known whisper campaign is known to be in the United States based on a conflict in 1800 between John Adams and Thomas Jefferson for the presidential election. In

that whisper campaign, Adams' supporters accused Jefferson of having robbed a widow and her children of a trust fund and of having fathered numerous mulatto children by his own slave women. Again, U.S. President G. Cleveland was the target of a whisper campaign in 1884 and in that campaign Republicans claimed that Cleveland had fathered an illegitimate child while he was still governor of New York. In another whisper campaign, Senator John McCain was the target and he was accused of having fathered a black child out of wedlock despite the fact that McCain's adopted daughter is a dark-skinned child from Bangladesh.

Presently, in the business world or in the financial market, unfounded assertions and false rumors can be especially potent and undeniably dangerous as they lead to speculation and decision making in the financial attempts and enterprises. Especially with the emergence of the Internet and other new ICT, the spread of misinformation is faster. Thus, the managers in the business world, the leaders in the political world and the rectors or deans in the academic world should have a better understanding of the underlying factors that give rise to rumors and they should develop the most effective strategies in order to deal with them properly.

### *1.2. Experiential learning*

Experiential learning theory or experience based learning theory stresses experience as a central point in human learning and development. John Dewey, Kurt Lewin, Jean Piaget, William James, Carl Jung, Paulo Freire and Carl Rogers worked to develop a dynamic, holistic model of the process of learning from experience and a multi-linear model of adult development. Therefore, experiential learning is regarded as a holistic theory that defines learning as the major process of human adaptation involving the whole person. In this respect, experiential learning theory can be employed both in the formal education classroom and in all arenas of life as well. In other words, the process of learning from experience is present in human activity everywhere all the time and it operates at all levels of human society from the individual to the group, organizations and to society as a whole. According to Kolb (1984:38), "Learning is the process whereby knowledge is created through the transformation of experience." Effective learning is seen when a person progresses through a cycle of four stages: (1) having a concrete experience followed by (2) observation of and reflection on that experience which leads to (3) the formation of abstract concepts (analysis) and generalizations (conclusions) which are then (4) used to test hypothesis in future situations, resulting in new experiences. Kolb explains that different people naturally prefer a certain single different learning style and various factors influence a person's preferred style like social environment, educational experiences, or the basic cognitive structure of the individual (McLeod, 2013). Some other educators have determined that most adults, adolescents, and children learn best by experiencing a blend of activities that promote the three learning domains: cognitive, affective, and behavioral. It is remarkable that the common statement in these approaches is "to learn best by experiencing".

### *1.3. Adult learning*

It is generally accepted by educators that most adults, adolescents, and children learn best by experiencing a blend of activities that promote the three learning domains: cognitive, affective, and behavioral. In addition, there is no single theory of learning that can be applied to all adults. There have been various models, sets of assumptions and principles, theories, and explanations on adult learning. As far as adult learning is concerned, there are three subtitles under it: andragogy, self-directed learning, and transformational learning.

Malcolm S. Knowles (1913 – 1997) is known to be the pioneer of adult learning in education as he used the term Andragogy as synonymous to the adult education. Malcolm S. Knowles contributed many great works to the field of adult education and he is considered the "Father of Andragogy." According to Knowles, students should be self-directed learners. He also believed that his role in adult education was not one of being a "teacher," but rather one of being a "facilitator of learning." For Knowles, andragogy is the art and science of adult learning, thus andragogy refers to any form of adult learning (Kearsley, 2010). In 1980, Knowles made four assumptions about the characteristics of adult learners (andragogy) that are different from the assumptions about child learners (pedagogy). In 1984, Knowles added the fifth assumption. He argued that teaching and learning is a fundamentally different process with adults than it is with children. Thus, we need to create a climate conducive to learning ever mindful of the above traits of adult learners. Our assumption should be that the adult learner will actively participate in an informed and intentional way in their educational process. Malcolm Knowles introduced the term "andragogy," describing differences between children and adult learners (Knowles, Swanson, & Holton, 2005). Andragogy focuses on special needs of adult learners. Knowles identified five assumptions about adult learning: (1) need to know, (2) self-concept, (3) prior experience, (4) readiness to learn, and (5) learning orientation. The five assumptions by Knowles are as follows:

- The need to know: adult learners need to know why they need to learn something before undertaking to learn it.
- Learner self-concept: adults need to be responsible for their own decisions and to be treated as capable of self-direction.
- Role of learners' experience: adult learners have a variety of experiences of life which represent the

richest resource for learning. These experiences are however imbued with bias and presupposition.

- Readiness to learn: adults are ready to learn those things they need to know in order to cope effectively with life situations.
- Orientation to learning: adults are motivated to learn to the extent that they perceive that it will help them perform tasks they confront in their life situations.

Despite the fact that Knowles (1975) stated that students should be self-directed learners, self-directed learning is not a new concept. In fact, much has been written about it. However, it is a notion that has a variety of interpretations and applications. When discussing "self-directed learning," both the learners and the teachers have to be aware that this is a completely different process than what is considered "normal" in the classroom. Knowles (1975) describes "self-directed learning" to be, "a process in which individuals take the initiative, with or without the help of others, in diagnosing their learning needs, formulating their learning goals, identifying human and material resources for learning, choosing and implementing appropriate learning strategies, and evaluating learning outcomes". Essentially, Malcolm Knowles's definition is "In its broadest meaning, 'self-directed learning' describes a process by which individuals take the initiative, with or without the assistance of others, in diagnosing their learning needs, formulating learning goals, identify human and material resources for learning, choosing and implement appropriate learning strategies, and evaluating learning outcomes" (Knowles, 1975:18). Two principles are remarkable here: 1) the initiative to pursue a learning experience, and 2) the responsibility for completing their learning. However, self-direction does not mean that the learner learns alone or in isolation. That is, the learner is driving the total learning experience, beginning with recognizing a need to learn. In fact, approximately 70 percent of adult learning is self-directed (Cross, 1981) and about 90 percent of all adults conduct at least one self-directed learning project a year (Tough, 1971). Self-directed learning is a "process in which individuals take the initiative, without the help of others" in planning, carrying out, and evaluating their own learning experiences (Knowles, 1975). In short, self-directed learning is an informal process that primarily takes place outside the classroom. What makes it "self-directed" is the learner that makes decisions about content, methods, resources, and evaluation of the learning, and thus, the learner takes responsibility for his or her own learning process by determining the needs, setting goals, identifying resources, implementing a plan to meet the goals, and evaluating the outcomes (M.S. Knowles, 1975).

#### *1.4. The Transformative Learning Theory*

The Transformational Learning Theory, developed by Jack Mezirow, is described as being "constructivist, an orientation which holds that the way learners interpret and reinterpret their sense experience is, central to making meaning and hence learning" (Mezirow, 1991). The study of transformational learning emerged with the work of Jack Mezirow (1981, 1994, 1997). Transformational learning is defined as learning that induces more far-reaching change in the learner than other kinds of learning, especially learning experiences which shape the learner and produce a significant impact, or paradigm shift, which affects the learner's subsequent experiences (Clark, 1993). Mezirow (1997) emphasizes that transformative learning is rooted in the way human beings communicate, and does not link it exclusively with significant life events of the learner. Through this combination of reflection and discourse, the student is able to make shifts in his/her world view which produce a more inclusive world-view. The theory has two ways of learning: instrumental and communicative learning. While instrumental learning focuses on learning through task-oriented problem solving and determination of cause and effect relationships, communicative learning involves how individuals communicate their feelings, needs and desires. Critical reflection is the main tool to form meaning. Reflection is similar to problem solving and Mezirow (1991) talks about how we "reflect on the content of the problem, the process of problem-solving, or the premise of the problem". We are able to understand ourselves more and then understand our learning better through this reflection. Transformative learning is often described as learning that changes the way individuals think about themselves and their world, and that involves a shift of consciousness. For this, there are four ways: "by refining or elaborating our meaning schemes, learning new meaning schemes, transforming meaning schemes, and transforming meaning perspectives". To Mezirow (2000), transformational learning is a rational process based on often experiencing a shift in their frame of reference or world view. Individuals need to challenge each others' assumptions and encourage group members to consider various perspectives as well as being free from bias, and meeting in an environment of acceptance, empathy, and trust (Mezirow, 1997, 2000).

#### *1.5. The aim of the study*

This paper presents how whisper campaigns run in the academic organizations with the help of the experiences the author himself has had as an adult. In other words, this paper exhibits the process and stages of experimental learning of an adult academician who has been exposed to a whisper campaign by his two and half colleagues as the designers and whisperers of gossip, slander and complaining processes. As a result, the paper aims to form a model of experiential learning in connection with adult learning and transformational learning.

## 2. Method

Experience-based learning or experimental learning covers different types of learning and development processes for different purposes. It is generally accepted that traditional training and learning models are based mainly on knowledge/skills transfer and they do not address individual growth and potential particularly well. In addition, when lifelong learning concept is considered, learning is to address all living individuals. Adults are the main targets for such a learning approach. In this context, experiential learning is a powerful way to address individual growth and potential. In experiential learning theory, the stress is on learning based on experience as a central point in human learning and development. It is a holistic theory that defines learning as the major process of human adaptation involving the whole person. That is, the process of learning from experience is present in human activity everywhere all the time and it operates at all levels of human society from the individual to the group, organizations and to society as a whole. The process starts with having a concrete experience followed by observation of and reflection on that experience. In adult learning, the main argument is that teaching and learning is a fundamentally different process with adults than it is with children. Adult learning is analyzed with reference to andragogy, self-directed learning, and transformational learning.

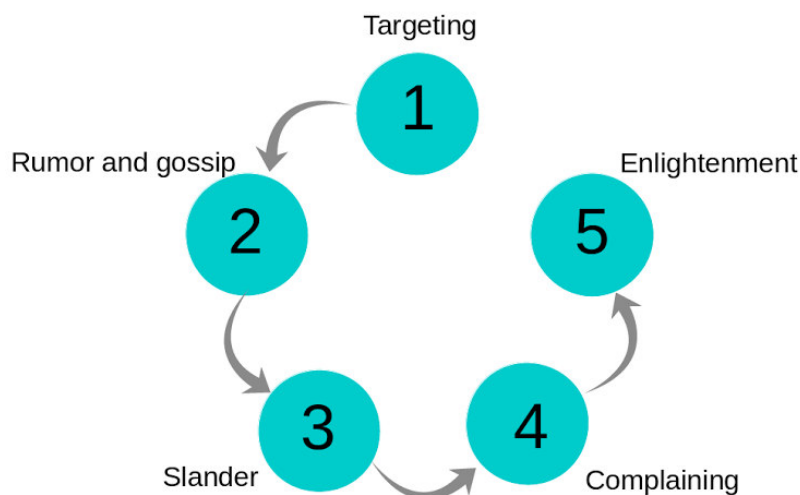
In these learning processes mentioned here the role of experience, problem solving ability, the critical thinking, the psychology of andragogy, self-directedness and transformation in the world view and values are the main points. *The two and a half model* is distinct from these points. This learning is based on the experience but it does not come in the normal flow. The finding of this research leads to a learning model which is based on the personal experiences. The experience starts with a whisper campaign by three female colleagues at the same work place and *the two and a half learning model* comes out as a learning model.

## 3. Result and Discussion

### 3.1. *The two and a half learning model*

In my case, it started with a whisper campaign started by three female colleagues at the same work place. As one of them is much shorter, I called this way of learning “two and a half” model of learning with another reference to the famous TV serial *Two and a Half Men*. As it is the nature of a whisper campaign, it had the process and stages of **Targeting, Rumor and gossip, Slander, Complaining and Enlightenment**.

### Stages of the two and a half learning model



#### 3.1.1. *Targeting Stage*

The first stage is to find a target that is expected to be a risk factor or a promising person in the field. The possible target is another promising academician that has the potential to quake the present state and lead to a novel and improved change. When the present state is just as they desire for their own interest, it must be kept and maintained for personal reasons. In my case, I was an academician for over 20 years at university and it was just at the time when I got my academic promotion as associate professor with the approval of the jury of professors, and it meant that I was about to apply to my university for the university position. The members of the whisper campaign were now at a lower level and I had the potential to wake the sleeping lion. There could be other reasons against the personal interests of them since I was determined as the rival and target.

#### 3.1.2. *Rumor and gossip stage*

Although there should be difference between rumor and gossip, as each appears to function differently in its pure state, in the theory, both will be taken as the components of this stage. Peterson and Gist (1951) found a great deal of snowballing or creative elaboration, rather than leveling or sharpening in the circulation of rumors.

Allport and Postman (1947) first identified three characteristics of rumor as they travel. First, rumors are leveled: this is the tendency of the rumor to become shorter and simpler. Second, they are sharpened: some details drop away and others are retained, and the total quantity of detail is reduced. Finally, the rumors are assimilated: new hearers, if motivated to re-share it, will make small changes, and sometimes big ones, that are consistent with their own interests and assumptions. In my case, in this stage, one of the colleagues formed a compilation of the words and acts that can be transformed into slanders. Cutting some words out of a full sentence, the target person's saying hello to another colleague with a smiling face, quoting some homophone words uttered during a meeting, having lunch with a stranger, etc. are the techniques used for the formation of gossiping data. After that, the original source starts to whisper her own productions including some data obtained for this purpose and other members are to whisper them as they are or more generally enriching them using their own imagination. In my case, the gossips were whispered to the other one and a half colleagues so that they could be spread more widely and have a larger audience. This audience is crucial as it will give clues to decide whether they could design and invent Slanders as the base of the third stage.

### 3.1.3. Slander Stage

This stage needs very strategic steps and creative minds in a very satanic way. In my case, the members of the campaign produced different variations of slanders depending on the world view of the audience. If the audience is sensitive to religion, the gossips are to be transformed into some religious events so that the target person can be excluded by the religious audience. For the academically sensitive audience, the gossips are to be changed into academic matters and quality so that such academicians should exclude and have bias to the targeted academician. The slanders are to be designed and generated considering the authorities that the complaints should be transferred to. In my case, the dean was a kind and religious professor and the slanders were generated considering his character and sensitivity. The second authority was the rector who would decide my position at my faculty. He was sensitive to moral values and the slanders designed for him were against accepted moral and academic values. The slanders created for the other high level heads of departments were based on the academic qualification expressing that I had the higher academic qualifications despite I lacked even the lowest academic knowledge and quality.

### 3.1.4. Complaining stage

This stage is directly related with the reasons of target choosing. The complaining is to be directed to the authorities that can serve the main reasons behind the whispering campaign. In my case, the complaining authorities were the dean, the rector and other heads of departments. In addition, the ones who are directly related with the unions or political groups can be the potential complaining authorities. In such cases, even the parents or partners can be the potential complaining authorities depending on the levels of serving to the aims.

### 3.1.5. Enlightenment stage

This stage is the final and crucial stage for the learning process. When the complaining stage works well in favor of the target or victim, the target person experiences a period of enlightenment depending on the level or skills of the complaining authority. In my case, for example, the dean listed to the slanders by the two and a half members of the campaign first one by one and then together. He noticed some important incoherent parts and he preferred to share these parts with one of my best friends. He was far from bias and impartially analyzed the statements and acts within the complaints. He had a meeting with vice deans and they worked on the case in a very detailed way. The only problem for them was how to keep this case secret from me in order not to cause an offence on my part. After some other investigation, the dean was convinced that all the complaints were invented, well-designed and well organized gossips and slanders. Then, he organized some meetings with the other authorities to make them aware of this whisper campaign. I was kindly invited to a civic meeting and there he explained all what happened just like giving a lecture. Only during that dinner did I know what had happened and it was a sudden but sad and deep enlightenment for me. Unlike the *Dilemma* stage of transformative learning, the enlightenment stage was with a harsh shock and disappointment as the final stage. I noticed I experienced a different learning type other than I know.

## 4. Conclusion and recommendations

*The two and a half learning model* is not independent of experiential learning and adult learning. It can be regarded as a third component of adult learning following andragogy and transformative learning. The main characteristic of the model is that the learner is not directly involved in the targeting, gossip and rumors, slanders and complaining stages. The learner is directly involved in the enlightenment stage, and thus, learning occurs just like a sudden lightening. The level of learning or whether learning occurs depends directly on the complaining stage. The role of complaining authorities determines the learning process. These authorities should have a general social orientation to skeptical-mindedness in the face of unverified rumors. Another factor is the ability of using social network analysis to explore how the structure of the network and the links among all the members. This capacity of the complaining authorities can determine the potency of whisper campaigns.

On the part of the targeted victim or learner, communication is the main instrument. It helps to develop

strategies and take precautions against the possible movements to be made against the movement towards future. However, the general assumption from the academic world is that democracy and human rights are to be the dominant factors both in teaching and learning. The academic members of the academic world primarily should adopt the key concepts of democracy in their life and actions. The academic activities should have the qualities like tolerance, acceptance, a wider view, global awareness, reflection and equal justice in the academic world.

Despite the lack of tolerance, acceptance, a wider view, global awareness, reflection and equal justice, *the two and a half model of learning* is a learning model that is faced but not so well pronounced in the educational environments. There should be further researches in order to portray the motives and psychological disorders behind designing such intrigue ways designed by such sick academicians.

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