A FEW WORDS ABOUT THE WAYS
OF DOING AND PASSING TESTS BY STUDENTS

ABSTRACT

The stuff left by students in the classroom after their exams were investigated. There were mainly crib sheets among these things. The analysis of these crib sheets revealed that students make them usually with their mobile phone built-in digital camera, especially when the same test is done in a few classes or the repeat exam. The software for doing the tests, which construction prevents students from cheating by memorizing the sequence of questions and answers was presented. The multiple choice questions are drawn from the database and the order of answers in that questions is set at random.

KEYWORDS: didactics, teaching software

The analysis of garbage, remnants left after social events, meetings, tests or exams can be valuable source of information. Analysis of such stuff left by students in the classroom after their exams has not been done so far.

Just after ETI students had written their tests in chemistry all paper sheets left in the classroom were assembled. The leaves of paper were assembled both these, left on tables, on floor and these, thrown into trash-can.

Gathered materials were divided into two groups. All materials that were supposed to be usable during the test or colloquium in order to give the evidence of the suitable state of knowledge have been assigned to the first group. The second group was consisted with all other gathered things. The first group was thoroughly analyzed and two kinds of crib sheets were distinguished - classic ones, however very sophisticated, as well as the ones just ready to swap.

Some crib sheets were prepared with computer and then hard copied. They mainly included a notions and their short descriptions. The analysis of the content showed that the crib sheets were prepared very carefully, without content-related errors and with agreement with references. The person who made the crib sheets went through the recommended literature. It found out that all the crib sheets were prepared by one person and the rest of the

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students photocopied them. Such conclusion comes from identical content, the same layout and the size as well.

Another crib sheets had a lot of mistakes, often very significant, in their content. These crib sheets were likely prepared by a group of students - one of them said a notion and the rest of the group prepared the contents - without searching through recommended literature. Next, the crib sheet was duplicated with photocopier. The analysis reveals that only few persons work in order to prepare a shortened material for colloquium and the others use their work. Such situation is not a novelty since it lasts several years. The appearance only have changed - thank to the development of IT the crib sheets are very miniaturized and hand written ones are very rare nowadays.

Second group of crib sheets consists of materials just ready to swap during the exam and is called “gotowce”. Such a crib sheet has prepared answers the exact questions. They are popular in the secondary school as well as at the university level. In favorable conditions the examination sheet is swapped for earlier prepared paper. In order to prepare the crib sheet the knowledge what questions will be given during the test is necessary. In recent years, for many reasons, the multiple choice tests are chosen the most often as a form of the exam. “Gotowce” that are going to be swapped have to be handwritten, however, those that are going to be copied out during the exam can be prepared with any technique.

Among the crib sheets found the ones contained detailed answers were very rare, because the size of such a crib sheet must have been as large as classic crib sheet, moreover the comparison of the answers with the test would have been required. Therefore “gotowce” for the multiple choice test contain the numbers of questions and letter demonstrative correct answer. In order to get positive opinion it suffices to execute cancellations with possessed miniature instruction, which fits in a hand.

In the face of above mentioned question sets what is the way students can get not only questions to test but complete test? To be able to write a key possessing the questions only is not sufficient - students have to know answers in order to select the correct one.

Present technique supports the students. The mobile phones with built-in function of digital camera are generally accessible. Taking a picture of test sheet is not very difficult. These pictures are not of high-quality, but they are good enough to be able to read the text in it. The fact that this type of crib sheets does not appear on the first colloquium, however they can be easily found when next groups had written tests, as well as when students who did not pass colloquia write them again gives the evidence of such way of getting tests.

Every new discovery can be used to elevated aims and also in blameworthy workings and sometimes outright criminal. Invention of dynamite mattered huge in peaceful utilization, but also found quickly uses in military workings. Possibly the similar situation can be met also with mobile phones. They help us in instant communicating as well as in quick transfer of image we look at. On the other hand they can be used in order do get a good mark in dishonest way.

If a student is allowed to use cellular phone during the exams and colloquia he can copy all the work, “solve” problems not having any idea what he is writing down. It is enough to send SMS with a question and wait for another SMS with the answer. Such dishonest actions are commonly used. Once upon a time such test ended for a student with failure, because he forgot to disconnect the sound signalizing the SMS arrival.

It is a common habit, that on examinations and colloquia’s cellular phones should be switched off and put aside so it is not possible to use them in this time. Delivery this information it is not equivalent with realization this recommendation by all students. Often the pretext to use cellular phone in time of colloquium or examination is the using it as calculator when students have very simple calculations, which can be easily executed “in memory”.

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The problem of trying to get the credit without suitable knowledge is rather old in Poland, however, a few years ago the technical conditions reigning in Poland were forcing students to intellectual work, such us handwriting crib sheets or divert teacher’s attention from the person who wanted to crib. Currently, the development of IT makes efforts of getting favorable mark mechanical only. Moreover usually the person passing the exam in such a way do not even have to look through the material and recommended literature. In recent years, in the end of XX century the groups of people formed who were selling their knowledge to those who wanted to show the suitable skills but did not want to get them by themselves. Not coming into deep analysis it can be said that this phenomenon rose extensive with informative technologies. A lot of advertisements with an offer of preparing credit works (for example: “do not waste your precious time, we will collect all material required to your master thesis and we will do the rest”) can easily be found at university buildings and student’s houses as well. Recently in a newspaper there was an interview with a person who prepares PhD theses. The question comes into mind if it is possible to prevent such practice. It seems, that so, however, that requires much larger contribution of work and devotion the more time on the part of questioning and checking the tests.

One possible solution of the problem is using one test only once but unfortunately it takes some disadvantages, such as preparing new tests, new pattern with correct answers and finally increases the utilization of paper. The best solution would be the talk with the person who is going to do the exam but the number of groups do not allow to execute this type of examining. At present groups doubled in comparison with the same groups six years ago.

In order to prevent from cheating during the tests the computer software for testing students’ knowledge have been prepared [1]. This program have been tested for two years on students of biology. Its advantages became fully confirmed.

This software is based on multiple choice questions. In the time student is resolving the test the program records the question and the answer selected, questions are divided into thematic sections and the number of sections seems to be unlimited.

The teacher who is arranging the test sets how many questions to draw from each section. After that he sets how many points the student has to score for each mark and also the timer that is counting down the time remaining to the end of the test. Questions and answers can be put into the program either as plain text or html text and as pictures as well. Usage of html text enables more advanced text formatting, such as font attributes (type, size, style) and also enables to use superscripts and subscripts. These parameters can be set independently for every letter.

After launching the software student enters his name and the program draws section order and then draws questions from each section. Every section can contain much more questions than program draws. This is not the end of drawing. Next, the software draws the order of answers in each question separately. This multiple choice test enables also to set the number of possible answers from which the student chooses the correct one (for each question independently). During the test the student can read in small windows how much time is remaining to the end and how many points he scored. After the time limit expires or the student solved all problems given he gets the mark that is displayed on a screen.

Such triple drawing mechanism completely secures the test against thoughtless memorization of questions and correct answers. The test can be easily done in the computer classroom and the number of students who do the test simultaneously is only limited with the number of computers available.

REFERENCES