

Perceptions and Concerns on Plagiarism and its Implications for Teacher Education: A Case Study of a South African University

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ABSTRACT The study, which was conducted in July 2010, sought to survey perceptions, concerns and means of deterrent employed at the campus of a comprehensive South African university which includes a teacher education faculty. Researcher-constructed questionnaires, which were modified through feedback from a pilot study, served as the data-collection instrument. These were distributed to 50 purposively-selected academics (teaching staff) and academic administrators. The data were analysed, and frequencies and percentages were translated into tables to facilitate interpretation. The main findings, amongst others, based on responses from the majority of respondents, revealed that most of the respondents had received pre-service training on referencing and ways of avoiding plagiarism. The levels at which they themselves had received training, as well as how they trained their students on plagiarism, and the time allotted for such training were not uniform; plagiarism occurred at all qualification levels and in all kinds of work submitted by students. Most of the respondents were confident of their ability to detect plagiarism and took either one or a combination of steps to deter the incidences. Several factors served as constraints into policing plagiarism: punishing students without first having provided training in referencing and on avoiding plagiarism was unfair. Despite stated limitations, the results and conclusions may stimulate further research at this and other universities within South Africa and elsewhere.

INTRODUCTION

As pointed out by Patrick Scanlon's (2003) review over a forty-year period, plagiarism is not a new phenomenon and in modern universities it is extremely common. There is a general perception in academia that plagiarism is on the rise and this, in turn, has led to a rise in the number of papers, studies and debates in academic circles on the topic (Zobel and Hamilton 2002; Lindsay 2008; Williams et al. 2010). Clegg and Flint (2006) also aptly capture the disquiet about academic cheating. On the rise also are definitions, and attempts to curb the practice. Definitions of what constitutes plagiarism abound, the consensus being that it is the inclusion of someone else's work in academic writing without acknowledging the authorship. The discussion of this paper is based mainly on the results of the research survey carried out during July 2010 at one of the campuses of a comprehensive university in South Africa, which included the views of academics and academic administrators such as the Dean, Deputy Dean, and School Director from its teacher education faculty.

Clegg and Flint (2006: 373) characterize plagiarism as 'moral absolutism (that) entails judgemental relativism'. Issues of legal notions of authorship and ownership, copyright issues

and factors such as honesty and cheating, coupled with moral and ethical issues, come within the theoretical framework which underpins issues of plagiarism. A South Georgia College microbiology course programme authored by Rhoads provides this definition for its students, and subsumes the elements of the theoretical framework somewhat succinctly. It states that,

Plagiarism involves two kinds of wrongdoing. Using another person's ideas, information, or expressions without acknowledging that person's work constitutes intellectual theft. Passing off another person's ideas, information, or expressions as your own to get a better grade or gain some other advantage constitutes fraud. Plagiarism is sometimes a moral and ethical offence rather than a legal one since some instances of plagiarism fall outside the scope of copyright infringement, a legal offence. Plagiarism is almost always seen as a shameful act, and plagiarists are usually regarded with pity and scorn. They are pitied because they have demonstrated their inability to develop and express their own thoughts. They are scorned because of their dishonesty and their willingness to deceive others for personal gain ... The act and practice of plagiarism is not only sometimes criminally prosecutable and always dishonest and shameful but it is also intellectually

lazy and deprives the plagiarist of an education (Rhoads 2008: 1 - 2).

Complexities in Defining Plagiarism

Internationally, plagiarism has many definitions. Indiana University's School of Education (2005) defines plagiarism as presenting someone else's work, including the work of other students, as one's own, and states, "any ideas or materials taken from another source for either written or oral use must be fully acknowledged, unless the information is common knowledge" (Frick 2005: 2). Furthermore, the same author clarifies that what is considered 'common knowledge' may differ from course to course. Rhoades (2008) subscribes to the view that plagiarism is the false assumption of authorship: the wrongful act of taking the product of another person's mind, and presenting it as one's own. Within South Africa, definitions vary among different universities. For example, plagiarism policies at Rhodes University and the University of the Witwatersrand differ in their definitions although they convey some similar factors. Rhodes University's definition of plagiarism is "taking and using ideas, writings, works or inventions of another, from any textual or internet-based source, as if they were one's own" (Rhodes University 2003: 3). The University of Witwatersrand's definition is informed by its legal office, that is, "The unjustified taking of the ideas, thoughts and writings contained in a particular source and submitting it as if the ideas, thoughts and writings are your own, whereas in fact they are not" (University of Witwatersrand n.d.: 7).

Considering the varied elements found in various definitions, for the purpose of this paper the researchers put forward this definition: plagiarism is 'the inclusion of another's or others' ideas, writings, works, discoveries and inventions from any source in an assignment or research output without the due, correct and appropriate acknowledgement to the author(s) or source(s); in breach of the values, conventions, ethics and norms of the various professional academic and research disciplines; it includes unacknowledged copying from intra- and/or Internet and peers or fellow students'.

The foregoing discussion, and in particular, citations from Indiana University (2005) and South Georgia College (Rhoades 2008) allude to the following instances, amongst others, as demonstrable cases which constitute plagiarism:

- unacknowledged copying of a single sentence from another author or source;
- use of direct words of another without using quotation marks or indenting in the case of long passages, despite referencing;
- word-to-word copying from lecture notes or text books without due and appropriate acknowledgement;
- different students' making use of the same quotations unless engaged in a group assignment;
- copying, in full, another's assignment/research output or from the intra or internet with, or without, the author's permission.

Concerns around Plagiarism

Martin (1984) noted almost three decades ago that plagiarism was more prevalent in academia than normally acknowledged, and that academics including administrators, were ill-equipped to investigate allegations of plagiarism. Because plagiarism is a long-standing and common challenge in modern universities, several scholars have tried to address and redress the concern (for example, Martin 1994; Ryan 1998; Culwin and Lancaster 2001; Briggs 2003; Devlin 2006; Sutherland-Smith 2008; Song-Turner 2008). Concerns about plagiarism are also raised on the higher education systems and processes used to detect and/or manage plagiarism (Culwin and Lancaster 2001; McGowan 2005). The practice cuts across all subjects, from information systems to creative writing (see for instance, Martin 1984; Stearns 1992; Chadha 2002; Sutherland-Smith 2005; Song-Turner 2008). Plagiarism is not only complex but a hard-to-pin-down phenomenon (Pennycook 1996), in its practices and definitions. Over the years, the ability to track and manage plagiarism cases may be improving (see, for example, Glatt and Haertel 1982; Tenpenny et al. 1998; Brown and Howell 2001; Zobel and Hamilton 2002) but, according to Sutherland-Smith (2005: 83) "...reluctance by academic members of staff to discuss student plagiarism openly may contribute to the often untenable situations we, as teachers, face when dealing with student plagiarism issues."

Dichtl (2003) cites a study by Duke University's centre for academic integrity in the early years of the 20th century which reported that seventy-four per cent of high school pupils

admitted to “one or more instances of serious test cheating” and more than seventy-five per cent of college students admitted to “some cheating”. The report also indicated that more than half of the high school students reported that they had engaged in some level of plagiarism on written assignments using the internet. Citing studies by Schab (1972) and Dant (1986), Martin (1994) states that learners are taught in high school to copy from sources without acknowledgement and the problem persists in higher education.

Australia also faces its plagiarism turmoil and in 2001, plagiarism surfaced as an issue to be urgently addressed (Pyvis 2002). A sensational article in 2001 by a leading newspaper in Australia, based on a story related to events at one of their universities, highlighted major challenges for the institution’s academic integrity. Reports on studies in Australia detail that a university of technology, recorded 362 counts of plagiarism in 2005, while another recorded 134. It was estimated that almost 3500 students had been caught plagiarising or cheating across eight Australian universities since 2001. There were claims that plagiarism was fully embedded within a social, political, and cultural matrix that could not be meaningfully separated from its interpretation. Unlike Australia that has been upfront and gone public in reporting such cases, many institutions shy away from reporting plagiarism. According to Song-Turner (2008), different universities have taken different approaches in dealing with this issue.

Lindsay (2008) considers plagiarism part of indiscipline and of breaking of university rules. To him, dishonest academic behaviour, which includes plagiarism, causes a ‘decline in academic standards’ in higher education. He reported statistics revealing exam cheating at 41% of survey respondents; plagiarism at 81%; and falsification of records or dishonest excuses at 25%. He identified the following as reasons, amongst others, for plagiarism becoming a systemic problem: pressures and desire to improve grades; student inexperience and/or an instrumental approach to education; assessment of the less likelihood of detection; staff reluctance to engage with the issue; lack of institutional support and/or the high staff workload.

This state of affairs raises concerns around issues of assessment, especially for a faculty that prepares pre-service teachers to deal with similar cases at high school level. Preoccupation with

plagiarism has recently led some scholars, for example, Williams et al. (2010) to claim having established the existence of a unique association between psychopathy and scholastic cheating.

Devlin (2006) observes that policy and other responses to the plagiarism issue focus on punitive, rather than on educative measures. Zobel and Hamilton (2002) observe that plagiarism is treated with neglect, and calls for tracking and punishing of plagiarism. Staff members have been daunted by the likely burden of (a) having to manage the plagiarists and (b) inflexible or burdensome procedures; these make policing of plagiarism a difficult task. The procedures are factors seen as potential additional obstacles to persuading staff to deal with plagiarism. There are also other arguments, such as the view that detection of plagiarism simply is not part of an academic’s job description. Some staff may not be willing to pursue plagiarism. Others may pursue it, but inconsistently; and in some cases, there is no action taken because of a poor understanding of the problem staff are trying to solve.

Many students cheat believing that this is acceptable because they see cheats ‘getting away with it’. From the study on which the researchers report, similar sentiments were evident. Thus, a major cause of cheating has been a lack of effective deterrence (Zobel and Hamilton 2002).

In view of the concerns and anxieties stated in the foregoing discussion, it was found necessary to conduct a study which would gather basic data on plagiarism perceptions held by staff at the studied institution. A research project of this nature had never been conducted at this university. The institution drew up a Plagiarism Policy as a working document in order to provide guidelines. It was crucial for our institution training teachers, to gauge ethical standards of the staff regarding students’ behaviour, and to understand awareness levels, in order ultimately to determine how pre-service and in-service student teachers could be better prepared to prevent, as well as to identify academic dishonesty.

Assigning Responsibilities to Assist Students to Avoid Plagiarism

Literature indicates that in order to slow down incidences of plagiarism and to arrest

plagiarism, responsibilities need to be assigned to stakeholders (Zobel and Hamilton 2002; Pyvis 2002; Briggs 2003).

Responsibilities of academic administrators include: planning and implementing necessary materials and procedures to accompany course or module guidelines; and to offer appropriate training for every student who enrolls at the institution for the first time; monitoring conformity with the plagiarism policy, with appropriate and justifiable deviation where necessary to meet the various disciplinary needs.

Academic staff or supervisors and co-supervisors should, before giving the first academic or research assignment:

- devote a session to familiarize students with the contents of the institution's plagiarism policy;
- train students in the norms and conventions in referencing styles in the respective discipline; and implore students to avoid the habit of plagiarism;
- make the type of sanctions or penalty for non-conformity clear to students; such as awarding a 'zero' score or a percentage reduction of the mark, depending on the type or mode and level of plagiarism appropriate for the level of study and type of academic or research assignment;
- insist that every assignment or research report be accompanied by a plagiarism declaration.

Academics ought continuously to remind students about the danger of engaging in plagiarism. Sutherland-Smith (2008) calls for adopting teaching and learning approaches that will deter plagiarism, and recommends transformative teaching as the preferred teaching approach. Responsibilities of students, amongst others, include:

- familiarizing oneself with the university plagiarism policy and the relevant departmental plagiarism policy where required;
- acknowledging that plagiarism is wrong;
- being creative and proud to present one's original work for assessment;
- following the norms, conventions, referencing style and practices of the discipline in which assessment is sought, subject to the relevant academic staff member's advice;
- not allowing anyone to copy one's own work and submitting it as their own;
- not hesitating to ask advice from the relevant academic staff member when in

doubt about whether a particular entry will constitute plagiarism.

Consequences of Plagiarism for Students

A disciplinary course of action and/or one or more of the following would serve as deterrents:

- A score of zero for the plagiarized work or a proportional reduction of the mark linked to the degree of size and shade of plagiarism. For example, a subsidiary of the South Georgia College website (see Rhoades 2008) states, "plagiarism will not be tolerated. Any student caught in the act of plagiarism will receive a "0" for the course and will be reported to the subdivision
- in serious cases of both alleged plagiarism and deliberate dishonesty or cheating, such as continuous engagement in plagiarism (despite training and warnings), the student may be expelled from the university and his or her academic transcripts may be endorsed accordingly.

Nonetheless, there are additional factors, amongst others, that need to be considered when dealing with plagiarism, such as:

- the level of the qualification and the intensity of training given to a student on sanctioning or penalizing the student;
- conventions in the specific disciplines owing to various types of information required in different referencing styles;
- training on referencing conventions may not necessarily constitute training to avoid plagiarism.

Academic Writing Centres play critical and empowering roles in the prevention of plagiarism and so, academic staff members and staff at writing centres at universities need to pay special attention to familiarizing academics and students with plagiarism-detection types of software (for example, Turnitin.com, Glatt Plagiarism services, plagiserve.com).

METHODOLOGY

The study was a survey-type research design which was descriptive and quantitative in nature. The respondents were members of staff that had recently, that is, at least in less than a year, had a direct link with students, either as teachers, mentors or examiners of pre-service and/or in-service student teachers. Of particular inter-

est was the respondents' own training with regard to avoiding plagiarism, in-text referencing and creating a reference list. They also had to respond to procedures in training their students, and their perceptions of plagiarism. Questions posed to the respondents also sought to establish steps normally taken to identify plagiarism, what the frequency of cheating incidents were, at what level they were widespread, and strategies they would suggest to curb the practice.

Respondents and Setting

Researcher-designed questionnaires were distributed to 50 academics and academic administrators; 19 questionnaires were returned with a signed 'informed consent' declaration, giving an effective return rate of 38%. The respondents included academic administrators, including a Dean, Deputy Deans, School Directors, Heads of Academic Departments, Academic Programme Coordinators, and academics with no specifically-assigned academic administrative responsibilities.

The respondents were aged between 26 and 65 years, from all race groups except 'Coloureds,' no students belonging to this ethnic group participated in the study. The majority (53%) had doctoral qualifications and the rest had Master's degrees. Total teaching experience varied from 5 to more than 35 years. The data indicated that the respondents were duly qualified and sufficiently experienced for their university teaching jobs.

DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

Frequency counts were conducted manually and percentages were calculated with the help of an ordinary calculator. They were then translated into tables to facilitate interpretation and discussion.

The data in Table 1 indicates that although 79%, 84% and 89% of the respondents received training during their own education on in-text referencing, compiling a list of references and on avoiding plagiarism respectively, 21%, 16% and 11% respectively did not receive training on these aspects. Despite the percentages in the latter group being low, they raised the concern that there were academics not adequately prepared for dealing with referencing and plagia-

rism matters. On the other hand, it is surely a strength that the majority of respondents had the opportunity in their own academic careers to be equipped with an essential life skill for higher education which obviously ought to serve them well as those they educate.

Table 1: Training of respondents during their own education

<i>Item</i>	<i>Yes</i>	<i>No</i>
In-text referencing	15 (79%)	4 (21%)
Compiling a list of references	16 (84%)	3 (16%)
Avoiding plagiarism	17 (89%)	2 (11%)

* percentages are rounded off.

The data in Table 2 indicate that generally there has been no consistency in higher education on the qualification levels at which training on referencing and plagiarism issues occur. While some respondents began receiving training at undergraduate level and at each higher level, others did so only at one level. The data indicate the lack of importance attached to this important academic concern. Taking into consideration some respondents' mature ages, plagiarism may, during their training, for instance, not have been as topical and as grave a concern as is the case in contemporary times.

Table 2: Qualification levels at which respondents received training

<i>Qualification level</i>	<i>Number and % in the sample</i>
School or Diploma	0 (0%)
Undergraduate	4 (22%)
Honours	1 (5%)
Master's	3 (16%)
Doctorate	1 (5%)
Undergraduate and each level upward	5 (26%)
Not indicated	5 (26%)

* percentages are rounded off.

The data from Table 3 indicate that the levels at which academics train students on referencing styles and matters related to plagiarism, as well as duration of training are, again, not uniform. Most indicated that they spent at least one hour training their students in different skills.

Nevertheless, the indication that most training happens at post-graduate level could be either a pointer to plagiarism's being more frequent at this level than at undergraduate level

Table 3: Estimated annual time spent on training undergraduate and postgraduate students (Number of respondents in brackets)

<i>Qualification level</i>	<i>Inserting in-text reference</i>	<i>Hours</i>	<i>Compiling list of references</i>	<i>Hours (h)</i>
Diploma	(2)	10h (1)	(1)	20 (1)*
Undergraduate	(2)	4-5h (2)	(2)	4h (1); 15h(1)*
Honours	(6)	1h (1); 4h (2)	(4)	2-4h (4)
Master's	(7)	2-3 h(2); 4 h(2); 10 h(1)	(6)	3-4 h (4); 20h(1)*
Doctorate	(3)	3-4 h(3);	(5)	3-5h(4); 30h(1)*

*These responses appear to be exaggerated as they were supplied by only one respondent and are ignored.

or that academics focus more on such issues at this level. The myth that the avoidance of plagiarism and using the correct and appropriate conventions of the relevant academic discipline in both 'in-text referencing' and compiling a 'references list' is restricted only to postgraduate academic work and research outputs, needs to be eradicated. Simultaneously, the principle that training in correct referencing and avoidance of plagiarism applies to undergraduate academic work as well needs to be popularized. This is beneficial to student teachers who will later deal with school learners in the light of, for example, Martin's (1994) report that learners are taught in high school to copy from sources without acknowledgement. The problem persists in higher education and Dichtl's (2003) observation that more than half of the high school students reported engaging in plagiarism using the Internet.

One respondent gave exaggerated figures which were marked with a star symbol (*) in Table 3. This may indicate, on one hand, levels of untruthfulness, while on the other hand, this could be attributed to what Clegg and Flint (2006) refer to as a state of panic brought about by a requirement or request to deal with plagiarism.

Most respondents (84%) were confident enough to recognize incidences of plagiarism (Table 4). This finding indicates that related staff development is needed to instil confidence in the small percentage of academics that may still need assistance.

Read together, the data from Tables 5 and 6 indicate that plagiarism occurs at all qualifica-

tion levels of university education, including teacher education and in all kinds of work presented by students, also; the frequency of plagiarism is high. This finding is similar to those in universities from other countries (see for example, Martin 1984; Stearns 1992; Pennycook 1996; Chadha 2002; Sutherland-Smith 2008; Song-Turner 2008). As cited earlier, literature indicates that in order to slow down incidences of plagiarism and to arrest plagiarism, responsibilities must be assigned to stakeholders (Zobel and Hamilton 2002; Pyvis 2002; Briggs 2003). The high frequency of plagiarism is not healthy for a developing country such as South Africa.

Table 5: Respondents' experiences of detecting plagiarism (no. of respondents in brackets)

<i>Qualification level</i>	<i>Practical assignments</i>	<i>Academic/research assignments</i>
Diploma	(2)	(1)
Undergraduate	(7)	(5)
Hons.	(3)	(7)
Masters	(2)	(8)
Doctorate	(1)	(3)

* Because each respondent gave more than one response, the total number of responses does not equal the total number of respondents.

Zobel and Hamilton (2002) and Briggs (2003) point out that what counts as plagiarism varies from discipline to discipline. Since one faculty or school may subsume various disciplines, departmental plagiarism policies may be needed to initiate sanctions or to escalate conformity to higher levels. Departmental and subject level involvement (see Sutherland-Smith 2008), and professionalism such as interventions

Table 4: Respondents' confidence level in detecting plagiarism (No. of respondents in brackets)

<i>Response</i>	<i>Very confident</i>	<i>Adequately confident</i>	<i>Confident</i>	<i>Not confident</i>	<i>No response</i>
Number and %	10 (53%)	6 (32%)	0	1 (5%)	2 (11%)

(percentages are rounded off; collapsing 'very confident' and 'adequately confident' into one group, the overall percentage is 16/19 or 84%)

Table 6: Respondents' observation on the frequency of plagiarism

Qualification level	Very frequent	Frequent	Infrequent	Very infrequent
Diploma	1	2	1	0
Undergraduate	1	3	2	1
Honours	1	4	1	1
Master's	0	2	2	1
Doctorate	0	1	0	1

* Because each respondent gave more than one response, the total number of responses does not equal the total number of respondents

to use discipline-relevant conventions while acknowledging another's or others' intellectual property are pertinent. These foreground the need for relevant and suitable structures to be established within faculties and institutionally, to deal with plagiarism. As emphasized by Glatt and Haertel (1982), Pennycook (1996) and Cabral-Cardoso (2004), it is crucial to hold academics, academic administrators, supervisors, co-supervisors and students accountable.

Data from Table 7 indicate that most respondents were aware of corrective steps to be taken once plagiarism was recognized but varied in their approaches. Most academics take either one or a combination of steps when they detect plagiarism. This confirms that academics are cognizant of methods used to discourage plagiarism as was practiced in other countries (see for example, Chadha 2002; Sutherland-Smith 2005; Sutherland-Smith 2008; Song-Turner 2008).

Table 7: Steps taken to deter incidences of plagiarism

Deterrent strategies	Very frequently	Frequently	Infrequently	Very infrequently
Advise the student	(1)	(8)	(1)	0
Award zero mark	(0)	(2)	(1)	(2)
Reduce the mark	(4)	(1)	(2)	(1)
Train the student verbally	(4)	(3)	(2)	(1)

* Because each respondent gave more than one response, the total number of responses does not equal the total number of respondents

As data in Table 8 indicate, the respondents cited several factors as causes of their inability to police the problem of plagiarism and these are in the order of descending percentages of responses: high workload (79%), large class sizes (74%), time-consuming procedures (53%)

and inadequate administrative support (32%). These findings are similar to those from Australia as reported by Zobel and Hamilton (2002). However, some scholars, such as Cabral-Cardoso (2004), argue that daily actions of staff members reflect their ethical standards, and that it is only when such actions are regarded by students as being of 'high standard', that there will be 'buy in' of the ethical instructions.

Table 8: Factors academics cited as causes for not policing issues of plagiarism

Factor	High work-load	Time-consuming procedures	Large class sizes	Inadequate administrative support
Number and %	15 (79%)	10 (53%)	14 (74%)	6 (32%)

Data from Table 9 show that 95% of the respondents indicated that it was unfair to apply sanctions or to punish students if they had not already been trained on referencing styles and on avoiding plagiarism. Devlin (2006: 45) shares the concern by stating:

Countless cases of plagiarism are detected across the Australian higher education sector each year. Generally speaking, policy and other responses to the issue focus on punitive, rather than on educative measures. Recently, a subtle shift is discernable. As well as ensuring appropriate consequences for plagiarists, several universities are beginning to formalize the inclusion of learning and teaching strategies in anti-plagiarism-related policy and practice, as well as paying closer attention to the communication of unambiguous definitions of plagiarism.

Table 9: Responses to whether it is fair disciplining students not trained to avoid plagiarism

Fair	Unfair
1 (5%)	18 (95%)

One academic, from this study, stated that some students took time to learn to avoid plagiarism. Martin (1994) shares this view by stating that students are apprentices, and some of them learn the scholarly trade slowly. However, from this study, while one respondent expressed the opinion that plagiarism needed to be punished, irrespective of whether training was given or not by the institution, another indicated that

Table 10: Whether training on referencing need be given at entry to the institution, irrespective of qualification level

<i>Yes</i>	<i>Reason/justification</i>	<i>No</i>	<i>Reason/justification</i>
19(100%)	Difficult to know the type of and the depth of training received before coming to the institution; it is fair to train at the entry level to the institution. (Summary from responses)	0	None responded

the person's intent to steal another's ideas and formulate them as one's own needed to be proved before implementing sanctions or a penalty, and that adequate training was a pre-requisite before taking punitive action.

The respondents were generally unanimous in their opinion that, because it was difficult to know the type and depth of training which students had received before coming to the institution, it was fair to train them at the entry level of the institution (Table 10).

While the majority (84%) of the respondents were of the opinion that students may not be trained or may not know that they were engaging in plagiarism, hence leniency was appropriate on the first assignment, nonetheless, there was a minority (16%) who opined that students ought to know that they could not present others' work as their own (Table 11).

CONCLUSION

The low (38%) return rate of questionnaires, despite reminders, is a worrisome factor acknowledged by the researchers. It may point to, amongst other aspects, a lack of interest amongst academics at the campus to participate in research and the lack of significance they attach to research data thus reflecting a poor research culture. Some potential respondents' decisions to shun the research owing to plagiarism's being an uncomfortable subject also possibly led to the low return rate.

The results of the survey present interesting findings in relation to the way in which the academic staff view and manage plagiarism. The manner in which they responded to this academic dishonesty, although not entirely linked to their training, may be regarded as an indicator of the way in which student teachers under their mentorship are likely to manage plagiar-

ism in their own studies as well as with their school-based learners.

In summary, the main findings, amongst others, based on responses from the majority of respondents, were that: most of the respondents had received pre-service training on referencing and ways of avoiding plagiarism; the levels at which they themselves had received training as well as the levels at which they had trained their students on plagiarism, and the time allotted for such training were not uniform; plagiarism occurred at all qualification levels, and in all kinds of work presented by students; most of the respondents were confident of their ability to detect plagiarism, and took one or a combination of steps to minimize the incidences; several factors served as constraints to policing plagiarism; punishing students without having provided training on referencing and on avoiding plagiarism was unfair.

By consultative but decisive action, we argue that it is possible to minimize instances of a university's being publicly denigrated, as happened, for instance, to a university in Australia. The media may write sensational stories of rampant plagiarism; this affects the academic integrity of an institution. University staff, however, have a critical role to play, by, for example, categorically and lucidly defining, as well as communicating, what constitutes plagiarism (at the institution) for clarity, and to ensure a common understanding amongst the members of the senate, academic administrators, academic staff members, supervisors, co-supervisors and students.

RECOMMENDATIONS

We thus recommend that:

- A university plagiarism policy ought to include not only substantive but also

Table 11: Responses on lenience on first assignment

<i>Yes</i>	<i>Reason/justification</i>	<i>No</i>	<i>Reason/justification</i>
16 (84%)	Students may not be trained or may not know that they are engaging in plagiarism. (Summary of responses)	3(16%)	They ought to know that they cannot present other's work as their own

procedural provisions that are to be followed once plagiarism is recognized.

- The substantive provisions must include at least the following: purpose and scope of the policy; guiding principles and policy content, including the definition of plagiarism, the responsibilities of academics, students and academic administrators; declaration to accompany academic writing; consequences of engaging in plagiarism; administration of the policy; and the specific custodian of the policy. The procedural provisions must at least include a guide to the procedures, including provisions of appeal. An Appendix with a procedures flow-chart will assist to portray the procedure in text as a figure for quick reference to the procedural elements.
- It is imperative to instil the idea across the university academic community that the resolve to avoid plagiarism operates simultaneously with learning the correct and appropriate conventions of the relevant academic discipline, in both 'in-text referencing' and in compiling a 'references list'.
- The best response to cheating is to deal with plagiarism at a consistent, university-wide, standard level of response.
- Authorities acknowledge that the implementation of university-wide, monitoring and detection of plagiarism and the administration of sanctions and penalties for plagiarism, have posed many challenges both nationally and internationally, and several factors, as pointed out in the literature review in this paper, need to be considered when sanctions or punishments are implemented.

Perceptions and responses held by the respondents were indicative of a need for staff training on managing plagiarism. We submit that empowerment and training must become essential components of the strategies to deal with plagiarism, such as:

- Empower the members of staff and students, through training, on various shades and shapes of plagiarism to take preventive and remedial action to detect and avoid plagiarism;
- Warn students about the consequences right from their entry level to university.
- Follow procedures in the Plagiarism Policy once plagiarism is suspected, alleged or detected.

Cognizant of the limitations alluded to earlier, we are aware that findings of the study are neither exhaustive nor would they readily apply to the staff that did not participate in the survey. However, the study yields important lessons for the teacher-educators and the university at large, and may stimulate further research at this and other universities within South Africa and elsewhere.

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