University Teachers Plagiarism - A Preliminary Review of Research

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Abstract

The purpose of this paper is to explore three different themes within university teacher plagiarism via the use of a systematic literature review: definition of concepts, the relationship between Information and Communication Technologies and university teacher plagiarism and the attitudes and perceptions regarding university teacher plagiarism. The motivation of the research is related to the fact that there is a very comprehensive literature on plagiarism in general, but rather limited literature on university teacher plagiarism. Teachers are role-models; hence, their actions and attitudes are often assumed by students. The data composing the present literature review were extracted from one of the databases very frequently used in Romania: Springer Link. A literature search in this database was performed using the following keywords: "teacher plagiarism" and "researcher plagiarism ". We found that the concept of university teacher plagiarism does not exist as such, and authors support a unique delimitation, irrespective of context. The least represented domain is that related to ICT and university teacher plagiarism, which urges for an immediate approach to this topic by means of empirical studies.

Keywords: Higher Education; Systematic Literature Review; Teacher Plagiarism.

1. Introduction

This study is part of a wider research project called "Factors influencing teachers' attitudes towards unethical information technology use in higher education". A natural step in our efforts is to conduct a review of one of the most known forms of academic misconduct, plagiarism. As indicated by the theme of the project, our interest is teacher misconduct, and in the case of this article teacher plagiarism. In this paper, the expressions 'university teacher' and 'higher education teacher' are used synonymously and interchangeably, as these expressions refer to assistant professors, associate professors, professors, supervisors from higher education, mentors, coordinators of master's or doctoral theses.

Academic dishonesty is not a new phenomenon, on the contrary, it proliferates, with increasingly insidious forms. A survey by Fanelli (2009) has found that 1.97% of scientists admitted to have fabricated, falsified or modified data or results at least once and up to 33.7% admitted to other questionable research practices. Plagiarism is qualitatively different from fabrication and falsification, but it is also very frequent all over the world. Mainly, 'internet cut and paste plagiarism' is growing (McCabe, 2003). As Bennett, Behrendt, & Boothby (2011, p. 30) argue, "…we have much to learn about how to improve academic integrity in higher education". The current research is an exploratory study using an inductive approach and incorporating a review of existing literature in relation to teacher plagiarism in higher education. This review focuses on three aspects of teacher plagiarism: 1. a conceptual delimitation of plagiarism from the perspective of a professor's professional roles, with an emphasis on teaching and research; 2. attitudes and perceptions about teacher plagiarism; 3. the role of the Internet and, in general, of technological factors in teacher plagiarism. The choices for the three themes reviewed are based on

the following reasons. First, we found little systematic reviews on teacher plagiarism. Most often than not, the definition and forms of plagiarism are approached in an abstract manner by resorting to concepts that are quite technical, such as cut and paste. Obviously, we do not question the necessity of relating to unitary criteria, which supports objectivity, but plagiarism has many national, cultural, socio-media, institutional, linguistic determinations, as demonstrated by numerous studies (Sowden, 2005; Leask, 2006; Vasconcelos et al., 2009). Plagiarism cannot be understood without reference to the numerous factors to which it relates. Our approach aims to highlight whether we can extract from studies those elements of defining plagiarism that are closely linked to the duties of a university teacher. There is no single form of plagiarism, but varied forms depending on intention, scale, awareness, purpose, forms that can relate to professional duties. Second, many reviews focus on student plagiarism and attitudes of teachers towards student plagiarism. In this review, the focus will be reversed. We shall attempt to synthesize the data from the studies that pursue teachers' attitudes and perceptions towards plagiarism in their own segment, that of trainers and not of students. Perception and attitude are critical topics because they can influence judgment and actions (Husain, Al-Shaibani & Mahfoodh, 2017). Teachers are role-models, they influence students through everything they do. A teacher who has plagiarized compromises his career irremediably. Perceptions influence how the teacher relates to the professional activities of writing scientific articles, teaching, etc. Third, the technological revolution of the past 30 years is a reality that has fundamentally changed the academic world. Higher education cannot evolve without Information and Communication Technologies (ICT), but the ways in which the rethinking of academic roles in relation to technology is not a matter of neglect, as it involves ethical risks. Teachers make full use of electronic information resources, therefore the relationship between professor and technology requires a double approach, both to benefits and disadvantages. The Internet seems to be one of the forces pushing to plagiarism. Fourth, all three topics (definition, perceptions and attitudes, ICT) will support the representatives of higher education institutions in better documenting their policies. Dealing effectively with plagiarism should be based on a framework of understanding shared by staff and students.

2. The relationship between Information and Communication Technologies and university teacher plagiarism

2.1. The university teaching profession today

Professionalism is defined as a group of attitudes, values, behaviours and relations by means of which the members of a profession relate to their public on a qualitative level. Ethical standards are required and mandatory in a profession, apart from stages of preparation, special skills and expertise. In the case of university teachers, work products are of several categories: daily activities products such as courses, seminars, projects, along with scripted products such as research papers, articles. Both can be studied from the perspective of plagiarism. Wilhelm von Humboldt has highlighted the two central values of university teachers, namely the 'unity of research and teaching' and 'academic freedom' (Teichler, Arimoto, & Cummings, 2013). As a result, university teacher fundamental roles have already been traced: teaching responsibilities and research responsibilities. The traditional didactic roles of teachers from higher education are: course designer, teacher, supervisor, assessor, evaluator and subject expert (Badley & Habeshaw, 1991). Along with teaching roles, university teachers also have many other roles: designers and implementers of research projects, project evaluators, managerial-administrative roles, etc. All of this adds to the "job description" sheet, resulting in extremely diverse and complex demands. But teachers have to move from these roles to others, appropriate to today's social context. First of all, they need to become managers of learning rather than dispensers of knowledge. As managers of learning teachers will also have to become more aware of how learners learn, to help students move from surface approaches (mere memorization) to deep approaches (problem-solving, argumentation, debate). In addition, we add three 'key challenges' that have recently gained prominence in the knowledge society (Kogan & Teichler, 2007): a. a higher expectation of relevance - from 'scholarship of discovery' to 'scholarship of application'; b. a growing

internationalisation; c. a substantially increased managerial power in higher education. Universities must not abandon their ethical and social mission, which is to cultivate ethical leadership and to form the values of citizenship.

2.2. Plagiarism – conceptual difficulties and causes

Defining plagiarism is a difficult enterprise because we are talking about a complex, multifaceted phenomenon related to various factors, including linguistic competence, academic literacy, culture, racism, academic integrity, media scandal and institutional governance (Carroll, 2003; Bretag 2005). In her doctoral thesis, Diane Pecorari (2002, p.60) has elaborated a definitional model of plagiarism, comprising six elements:

1. an object (language, words, text);
2. which has been taken (or borrowed, stolen etc.);
3. from a particular source (books, journals, Internet);
4. by an agent (student, person, academic);
5. without (adequate) acknowledgement;
6. and with or without intention to deceive.

This model provides a very clear general framework that can be used in any context, including the work of university teachers. For Helgesson and Eriksson (2015, p. 94) plagiarism should be understood as "an instance of someone using someone else's intellectual product (such as texts, ideas, or results), thereby implying that it is their own". Sonfield (2014) explicitly argues that plagiarism is often not a truly legal issue, but generally a professional and moral issue, governed by established academic ethical standards.

We have synthesized from the literature several causes that provide an explanation for teacher plagiarism. Firstly, we may report on the "publish or perish" syndrome, as defined since the 90's (McGrail, Rickard and Jones, 2006); Chunmei & Chuanjun, 2015). It is a feature of Western higher education, but it has gradually extended all over the world. To publish as much as possible in the best rated journals is a target for university teachers all over the world. Many higher education institutions require a minimum number of articles per year as a target for teachers. Now more than ever, it has become critical for teachers to publish their research, to demonstrate their academic skills and build prestige among colleagues. "This enormous pressure to continuously produce scientific papers to survive has become an unavoidable challenge to the academia worldwide to become more competitive in securing their jobs and grants" (Sandy & Shen, 2018, p.3). This competitive academic world enhances the temptation for teachers to commit all the forms of academic misconduct, including plagiarism (De Vries, Anderson & Martinson 2006; Fanelli 2009). Secondly, besides the "publish or perish" trend, there is also the "publish to earn incentives" phenomenon (Sandy and Shen, 2018). The research results are typically the main considerations in merit-pay frames, which is also a good reason for fraud. Thirdly, a possible macrostructural cause that affects the ethical climate in academic environments is higher education marketization. A series of research (Wangenge-Ouma, 2008) points out that marketization opens the gateway to plagiarism for students, so it is likely that this also influences the behaviour of teachers. Research in this direction would be particularly useful. Another reality related to market free higher education is the fact that scientific knowledge becomes more and more treated as a commodity or as a product that is for sale (Vermeir, 2013). Commodification is a broader phenomenon that does not just involve the influence of money on science or the scientific fraud, but engages several negative phenomena such as: diminishes intrinsic motivation, causes loss of autonomy, decreases trust (Vermeir, 2013).

2.3. Aims of the present study

Over time, an enormous literature on plagiarism has been elaborated. Some works focus on plagiarism in general, others focus on the attitudes of different actors of the academic world on this

phenomenon. In this study we will focus only on plagiarism of university teachers, viewed from several perspectives. We believe that teaching and research duties outline the understanding of plagiarism. The major objective of the present study are to explore the existing literature to distinguish among types of teacher plagiarism in higher education along three lines: concept definition, attitudes and perception on teacher plagiarism, and the relationship between Internet and teacher plagiarism. The research questions are: 1. Can we extract, based on the analysed studies, a definition of teacher plagiarism, in relation to the specific roles of teachers in higher education? 2. What are the attitudes and perceptions towards teacher plagiarism. We shall investigate two types of studies: studies that focus on the attitudes of teachers themselves and studies that target the attitudes towards teacher plagiarism of other categories, such as students. 3. What is the influence of the Internet and technological resources on teacher plagiarism, as shown by the studies? What are the main topics of discussion related to this topic?

3. Method

A literature qualitative review is the process to collect data, know, understand, analyse, synthetize and evaluate the group of scientific articles with the aim to create a state of the art for a certain topic of research (Levy and Ellis, 2006). There are a number of reasons why these methods should be undertaken by researchers: to summarise existing evidence concerning a domain, to identify the gaps in current research in order to determine where further investigation might be needed.

This systematic literature search began in June 2018 and was completed in September 2018. We used the following criteria: 1. population – university teachers (fixed term and tenured, employed both full-time and part-time, trainers, instructors, mentors), researchers; 2. interest - teacher plagiarism, researcher plagiarism, teacher cheating, teacher misconduct; 3. context - university, higher education, faculty, or an equivalent tertiary education institution. Exclusion criteria: population (students, children, high-school teachers, kindergarten teachers, non-teaching staff); interest (student plagiarism, student misconduct); context: pre-university institutions; language: non-English.

3.1. Searching data sources

The data composing the present literature review were extracted from one of the databases that is highly used in Romania: Springer Link. A literature search in this database was performed using the following keywords: “teacher plagiarism” and “researcher plagiarism”. The choice of these labels is motivated by the fact that teachers’ roles are not just teaching but also research. The total number of results was 347 (for keyword plagiarism teachers) and 341 (for keyword plagiarism researchers). The filters for searching were: content type: article, discipline: education; language: English; date published: 1990-2018. We also reviewed the references provided in all of the articles looking for other relevant studies or citations. We supplemented our search with a manual search using the Google Scholar and Science Direct collection, but not as a priority. We found some studies that had already been selected and, therefore, redundant. Other studies were available only in abstract form because not all articles have open access to the type of subscription that Romanian universities can access.

3.2. Selecting relevant studies

This stage was laborious enough, requiring a hand-reading of all articles that looked at one or more of the three themes: definitions of teacher plagiarism, teachers' attitudes and perceptions on plagiarism in their own profession, ICT involvement in teacher plagiarism. A lot of traps have been detected, especially related to the theme of attitudes and perceptions because many studies refer to teachers' attitudes toward student plagiarism or plagiarism in general but not explicitly to teacher plagiarism. This difficulty was almost impossible to overcome. Practically, there is a very limited number of studies on this issue, which has forced us to accept the inclusion of expanded criteria such as selecting four articles that investigate students' attitudes and perceptions towards teacher

plagiarism. We highlight several limitations of the selection process. Firstly, it is very difficult to know if the articles on researcher plagiarism are part of the sample of our research. Many researchers also teach, but not all. The articles do not explicitly state whether researchers are also teachers. Secondly, some articles investigate teacher misconduct, a wider phenomenon than teacher plagiarism. Both types of results were taken into account due to possible implications for the research topic. Articles accepted for initial review (N = 60). Among these studies only 44 met the eligibility criteria for full text evaluation. In these studies, 12 articles described issue 1 (defining teacher plagiarism), 26 articles described issue 2 (attitudes and perceptions about teacher plagiarism) and 6 articles described issue 3 (teacher plagiarism and ICT).

4. Results and Discussions

Issue 1: Defining teacher plagiarism

Among the sources examined, the paper by Helgesson and Eriksson (2015) was of particular interest to our study, as they establish several criteria for an adequate definition of plagiarism in general (2015, p. 92): *Fitting language use* - the definition should catch basic semantic intuitions and should be able to handle paradigmatic cases; *Precision:* the definition should settle whether a situation is a case of plagiarism or not; *Reliability (intersubjectivity):* the definition is reliable if different users of it pass the same judgment on specific cases; *Theoretical fruitfulness*: the definition is more theoretically fruitful if it is better at distinguishing things that may be important to keep apart; *Relevance for normative purposes*: the definition should as far as possible identify as plagiarism those events that one would like to single out as morally problematic in this regard. *Simplicity:* the general idea that it is preferable for a definition to be homogeneous and *ad hoc*-free.

Rosamond (2002) also synthesizes several lines of defining plagiarism: 1. from the plagiarist's perspective who, having poor specialized training, will bear the consequences of his act; 2. as practice that breaches formal ethical standards established by institutions and professions; 3. as infringement of informal practices of academic life that requires positive values to work; 4. as legalistic approach - a form of fraud of intellectual property of the original author.

The types of plagiarism, common for teachers and students are: direct plagiarism, mosaic or patchwork plagiarism, paraphrase plagiarism, word switch plagiarism, metaphor plagiarism, copy-paste plagiarism, self-plagiarism, auto plagiarism, cryptomnesia (Evans, 2000; Harris, 2001; Cabe, without year). Special attention is paid to self-plagiarism, more often found at experienced university teachers (Hodges et all. 2017; Bretag and Mahmud, 2009).

Several authors (Helgesson and Eriksson, 2015; Leask, 2006) raise a series of highly relevant questions regarding the issue of identifying and approaching cases of plagiarism. Are all forms of plagiarism equally bad? What are the aggravating circumstances? Why is plagiarism wrong? Rosamond (2002) identifies three criteria that we must take into account when we consider plagiarism. A first criterion is intention, from which plagiarism results deliberately or unintentionally, a second criterion is quantity, that is, how much of the text was stolen (a word, an entire text, an entire research methodology). A third criterion defines plagiarism in such a way as to include both copying and paraphrasing without appropriate citation. For Helgesson and Eriksson (2015) the following aspects are irrelevant in determining whether or not a certain act is an issue of plagiarism: the scientific merit to be gained from the publication; the form of product where plagiarism occurs - a published paper, a student essay, a doctoral thesis, or an oral presentation at a seminar; the author that is plagiarised (student, teacher, group report); the audience or purpose of the plagiarising work. For James, McInnes and Devlin (2002), "plagiarism varies in both intent and extent, ranging from deliberate fraud, to negligent or accidental failure to acknowledge sources of paraphrased material and misunderstandings about the conventions of authorship" (p. 5).

The first conclusion to be drawn from this section of our review is that based on the evidence presented, we cannot extract a definition of teacher plagiarism specifically. The concept of teacher plagiarism does not exist in itself, even if some authors give contextual arguments: what

constitutes plagiarism in a research report does not necessarily constitute plagiarism in an exam (Carroll, 2003, p.13). Specialists recommend a unique delimitation, whether it refers to teachers, students or other professional categories. Plagiarism is plagiarism, no matter the context in which it happens.

Table 1. Sample of evidences on definition and forms of teacher plagiarism

Author and date	Location	Data used in the study	Summary of conclusions
Eaton and Crossman, 2018	Canada	articles found with electronic search in five databases: Academic Search Complete; Education Research Complete; ERIC; Google Scholar; Pro- Quest Dissertations and Theses.	The aim of the research was to establish typologies of evidence that characterize the literature on self-plagiarism in scholarly and research journals, particularly in the social sciences.
Sonfield 2014	USA	a case study	The article deals with legal and moral aspects of an extreme and clear case of plagiarism.
Bretag and Mahmud, 2009	Australia	conceptual analysis	The study is an insight into how we define plagiarism and its forms.
Helgessonn and Eriksson 2014	Sweden	conceptual analysis	Authors explain the concept of "plagiarism" and define plagiarism in relation to research.
Leask, B. (2006).	Australia	conceptual analysis	The author proposes a change of the metaphor "war and battle" that now characterizes plagiarism with that of intercultural meeting.
Rosamond, 2002	United Kingdom	conceptual analysis	Solving the issue of plagiarism is a matter of pedagogy and academic socialisation.

Issue 2: Attitudes and perceptions about teacher plagiarism

Undoubtedly, perceiving the notion of plagiarism influences the professional conduct of higher education teachers. How teachers see cheating is a clue of how they see education (Bouville, 2010). Several conclusions that may be highlighted are: 1. Teachers do not have unitary views of what plagiarism means (Vasconcelos et al. 2009; Bennett et al., 2011; Kraemer Diaz, Spears Johnson and Arcury, 2015). For example, Bennet et al. (2011) found disparities among teachers on regarding the recycled work of someone as plagiarism. 2. The incidence of academic misconduct in different surveys in the world of researchers is around 25% (Honig and Bedi, 2012) and 33% (Anderson, 2008) which is not encouraging at all. 3. Institutional responses to plagiarism in research are most often silence, apathy, laxity, even though there are serious written commitments to cultivate academic integrity (Luke and Kearins, 2012; Sonfield 2014).

By far, this section contains most studies, being also the most heterogeneous, with different approaches depending on the goals of the researchers. There are four major themes that are typically the focus of articles in this section: perceptions and attitudes towards understanding the notion of plagiarism / academic misconduct, along with the appreciation of the severity of academic cheating behaviour; teacher perception of the incidence of academic misconduct / plagiarism in their own profession and at students; perceptions and attitudes towards severe cases of plagiarism; studying some variables that could influence academic plagiarism, such as years of study abroad.

Table 2. Sample of evidences on attitudes and perceptions about teacher plagiarism

Author and date	Location	Data used in the study	Summary of conclusions
Bennett, Behrendt and Boothby, 2011	USA (Missouri-Kansas)	Electronic questionnaire data from 158 instructors (from social sciences).	This article focuses on instructors' views on four themes: what constitutes plagiarism, personal experiences with plagiarism, detection strategies, response tendencies to instances of plagiarism. Most participants agreed that behaviours that claim credit for someone else's work constituted plagiarism. Respondents differed in their perceptions of whether ''recycling'' one's work was plagiarism.
Lei, and Hu 2015	China	Survey on 112 Chinese university English teachers divided into two groups (the overseas-trained teachers and home-trained teachers).	The participants as a group understood transgressive intertextuality differently from Anglo-American academia and the overseas-trained teachers had more fine-grained understandings of transgressive intertextuality than the home-trained teachers.
Hodges et all. 2017	Qatar	Quantitative study, using the Turnitin software and textual analysis of 763 abstracts submitted in four different years at a conference.	A total of 88 abstracts were categorized as containing some form of plagiarism. Faculty writers in non-Western contexts did not plagiarise more than those in Western contexts; the academic rank is important, senior faculty authors had a tendency to self-plagiarize
Poon and Ainuddin 2011	Malaysia	Survey data obtained from a sample of 102 business students from five universities in Malaysia.	Practices such as fabrication, manipulation, and distortion of data are considered to be ethically unacceptable, and these behaviours were reported to be least prevalent. In contrast, the practice of misapplying statistical techniques was considered ethically acceptable and reported to be quite prevalent.
Hyytinen and Löfström 2016	Finland	Qualitative multi-method approach, including think-aloud and interview data	Academics' views on the responsibility for teaching research integrity, the methods employed to teach it and the necessity of intervening demonstrate variation.
Tiong, et all. 2018	Malaysia	Mixed qualitative and quantitative approaches, self-administered questionnaire for 141 university teachers	Approximately half of all respondents reported having personally encountered at least one case of academic dishonesty involving their peers. The results signals prevalence of various forms of academic misconduct among healthcare academics compared to their non-healthcare counterparts.
Luke and Kearins 2012	Australia New Zealand	Case study	Although universities show interest in high ethical values in the world of research and publishing, silence and complicity are frequent attitudes.

Issue 3: Teacher plagiarism and ICT

Evidence that establishes a link between student cheating and Internet use has accumulated over time (Stricherz, 2001; Szabo and Underwood, J. 2004; Ma et al., 2008; Eret and Ok, 2014).

Much less can be said about the relationship between university teachers cheating and technological resources. Even though many studies are triggering alarm signals, the relationship between university teachers' plagiarism and ICT is not present in empirical research. The phenomenon is approached rather globally, from the perspective of academic misconduct, or from the perspective of some side agents: PhD students, undergraduates. Even if there are few studies, we may highlight several tendencies. For example, papers on the relation between the Internet and cheating provide contrasting conclusions. Analysing the influence of the Internet on plagiarism among doctoral dissertations, Ison (2015) found that the Internet may not be significantly impacting the prevalence of plagiarism in advanced levels of higher education. Research conducted by Akdemir, Vural and Çolakoglu (2015) revealed that prospective teachers are more likely to perform unethical behaviours in the virtual environment than in real life.

The main topics related to technology and cheating approached in the studies are: digital cheating (conceptual approach), plagiarism detection methods, Internet plagiarism among students. The conclusion that can be drawn from this review section is that the relationship between university teachers' plagiarism and ICT is undoubtedly the least represented in empirical research.

Table 3. Sample of evidence on teacher plagiarism in relation to ICT

Authors	Location	Data used in the study	Summary of conclusions
Ison, 2015	USA	A sample of 384 dissertations were analysed by Turnitin plagiarism detection software.	The Internet may not be significantly impacting the prevalence of plagiarism in doctoral dissertations.
Akdemir, Vural, and Çolakoglu, 2015	Turkey	The cross-sectional survey design with a sample of 352 prospective teachers.	Prospective teachers are more likely to perform unethical behaviours in the virtual environment than real life. Men are more likely to perform unethical behaviours in the virtual environment than women.

4. Conclusions

The aim of this review was to shed light on the concept of teacher plagiarism in literature with a focus on three themes: definition of teacher plagiarism, attitudes and perceptions about teacher plagiarism and the relationship between plagiarism and ICT. We found that the concept of teacher plagiarism does not stand alone, and the authors advocate for a unique delimitation, regardless of context. The least represented area is ICT and teacher plagiarism, which recommends an urgent approach to this field with empirical studies. Despite numerous studies, many aspects can still be investigated in relation to plagiarism.

Limitations of the study

Our research is a preliminary review. It has been restricted to articles/ papers searched in the Springer Link data base and Google Scholar with manual handling. Other deep searches to include other databases are necessary to understand the phenomenon more fully.

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