

Reducing the prevalence of plagiarism: A model for staff, students and universities

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The incidence of plagiarism, according to the literature, is increasing. But why do students plagiarise and why the increase? Is it due to laziness, opportunity, ignorance, fear or ambivalence? Or do they know that there is little chance of any significant penalty? The literature suggests that all of these apply. Given this, are universities and, by implication, staff, rather than students culpable for such attitudes and are they guilty for the “soft” consequences? This paper addresses the question of student *and staff* attitudes towards plagiarism and suggests that if the teaching faculty view plagiarism as a serious problem, they have an obligation to actively change student attitudes by demanding system wide support. The authors argue that exhorting students not to plagiarise and appealing to their moral compass are not sufficient to reduce the frequency of plagiarism and neither are these enough to change their attitudes. Instead, active education is required leading to a situation whereby students are taught, in the most practical sense, the skills expected of them when submitting academic writing. Equally, staff need adequate understanding of what might be happening when plagiarism occurs, and to be able to address the issue consistently in a supported, non-threatening institutional environment. To achieve this, a gradual release model is proposed as a path to a convergent approach to plagiarism.

Introduction

At the heart of the plagiarism debate is the notion of the core values of academic integrity; part of the bigger picture of personal integrity. Students have been found not to perceive a link between their values and plagiarism (Flint, Clegg & Macdonald, 2006). If, as the literature suggests, plagiarism is an ever-increasing issue (Hayes & Introna, 2005; Hrasky & Kronenburg, 2011), academic staff should have a vested interest in being part of the process to halt the increase and the attempts to reduce it. The usual approach to plagiarism has been to hold students, rather than academic staff, accountable for solving the problem (Macdonald & Carroll, 2006).

That plagiarism exists is not in doubt; rather, it is a matter of why students plagiarise and what can be done. As some of the higher profile cases have demonstrated, poor management decisions and elements of self-interest can lead to disastrous consequences (Holloway, Joseph & Vuori, 2005). Undoubtedly, many academics in similar situations have thought, “That could have been me.” Beyond a call for better governance of plagiarism, this paper also considers how staff and students conceptualise plagiarism. As will be argued, only when *all* parties have a mutual understanding of what it means to plagiarise will universities be in a better position to reduce its prevalence.

Prevalence of plagiarism

Beyond the anecdotal evidence regarding an increase in the amount of plagiarism, empirical data on the extent of plagiarism depends on who is asked and in what context. Student data, for example, differs from that of academic staff, and cheating is considered as either synonymous with, or separate to, plagiarism. In the United States, in a sample of 5,331 postgraduate students, 56% reported plagiarising some of their material (Owunwanne, Rustagi & Dada, 2010), while in a survey of almost 50,000 undergraduates, 40% of students admitted plagiarising (Redfern & Barnwell, 2009). In the broader context of plagiarism as cheating, East (2010) reported that evidence from several large-scale enquiries conducted across North America showed that over 70% of students admitted cheating, as distinct from plagiarism, while another study (Bruwelheide, 2010) reported that 77% of undergraduates did not see plagiarism as cheating, viewing them as discrete activities. In the United Kingdom, when staff at one university were asked about the prevalence of plagiarism, 90.7% of staff reported some experience (Dordoy, 2002) while in a broader study, academics felt that 10% of students were guilty of plagiarising (Macdonald & Carroll, 2006).

Australian evidence on the prevalence of plagiarism is somewhat limited. Institutions are often reluctant to provide data on numbers of students caught plagiarising. Research has tended to have a particular focus and to be confined to one or two cohorts. Curtis and Popal (2011) using a self-report approach found declining levels of plagiarism between 2004 (81%) and 2009 (74%), although these were still alarmingly high. Investigations by the State Ombudsman in Victoria found some academics were reporting international students as more likely to plagiarise, but did not offer any figures, and further reported a contradictory view from other staff that “it is easier to detect amongst students from a non-English speaking background” (Taylor, 2011, p. 49).

Generally, studies investigating plagiarism report increases, and identify patterns. Bennett, Behrendt and Boothby (2011), for example, reported that many studies show male students as being more likely to plagiarise than female students. Ready access to information technology has also been cited as accompanying an increase in plagiarism (Ashworth, Freewood & Macdonald, 2003; Owunwanne, Rustagi & Dada, 2010). Finally, factors such as bigger class sizes, lack of personal contact, financial pressure (East, 2010) and new approaches to course delivery which stress collaborative learning (Ashworth et al., 2003) have also been cited as contributing to an increase in plagiarism.

Student understanding of plagiarism as a concept

Most students entering university do not yet possess the skills demanded of academic writing (Clarke & Aiello, 2006; Fersten & Reda, 2011), or, as described by Clarke and Aiello (2006), they are novices having to learn the rules of the game; they are “unfinished learners” (Power, 2009). Thus their first encounter with the notion of plagiarism is when teaching staff expound the possible consequences of failing to acknowledge all sources and what reference format to follow. Even though some institutions have well established plagiarism policies and practices in place, in the absence of a standardised approach, a

student studying, for example, four units may be delivered the plagiarism message from four perspectives, with four different sets of expectations. Even in institutions with well developed policies, application of the policy can vary widely from staff member to staff member. Students may also be introduced to a definition of plagiarism like that in *The Macquarie Dictionary* (2012): “the appropriation or imitation of another's ideas and manner of expressing them, as in art, literature, etc., to be passed off as one's own/something appropriated and passed off as one's own in this manner.” Beyond this, respective unit guides contain statements such as:

... University encourages its students and staff to pursue the highest standards of integrity in all academic activity. Academic integrity involves behaving ethically and honestly in all scholarship and relies on respect for others' ideas through proper acknowledgement and referencing of publications. (Murdoch University, 2012)

Unit outlines also direct students to various online links to find out more about how to reference and how to avoid plagiarism (Ashworth & Freewood, 2003), the underlying assumption being that students will avail themselves of the advice. While the intent is clear, students, especially undergraduates, do not necessarily understand the meaning of plagiarism (Gullifer & Tyson, 2010), nor do they see plagiarism as relating to the core values of academia (Flint, Clegg & Macdonald, 2006). Some see plagiarism as “otherness” – not in the sociological sense – but in the sense that it is an issue affecting others and does not, therefore, include them (Power, 2009). Elander, Pittam, Lusher, Fox and Payne (2010) argue that most plagiarism, at least in the early stages of a student's academic life, is unintentional; although some students regard skilful plagiarising as evidence of good scholarship (Hayes & Introna, 2005). Research relating to understandings of cheating and plagiarism has illustrated that students do not necessarily view these as synonymous: institutions seem to be aware of this and do not tend to define other forms of cheating to new students with the same force (East, 2010; Youmans, 2011).

The dilemma here is that in the absence of a formal compulsory program on the subject, plagiarism is dealt with on an ad hoc basis. For instance, some lecturers adopt a punitive approach which is characteristic of the deficit model of education which views the student as the problem, relegating the environment and instructional practices to minor roles (Macdonald & Carroll, 2006; Park, 2003, Power, 2009). In contrast, others take a more tolerant, proactive and supportive approach. Indeed, more recent literature suggests the only viable solutions are inextricably linked to holistic practices (Hrasky & Kronenburg, 2011; Macdonald & Carroll, 2006). In the meantime, because of inconsistencies in the delivery of the plagiarism message, responses and punitive measures continue to vary (Youmans, 2011). There is evidence that when undergraduates plagiarise, they usually do so because they are unaware of the formalities demanded of academic writing. For example, they do not regard unskilled paraphrasing as plagiarism (Bruwelheide, 2010; Gannon-Leary, 2009; Park, 2003) – a situation exacerbated by their ignorance of referencing conventions (Gullifer & Tyson, 2010).

Student reasons for intentional plagiarising

Student plagiarism is a complex issue that requires complex solutions (Macdonald & Carroll, 2006; Park, 2003). Other than not understanding the formalities of academic writing, students also report problems with lecturer expectations about plagiarism – a situation not helped by inconsistent application of penalties (Park, 2003; Power, 2009). Park (2003), drawing on the work of a range of authors, provided the following reasons.

- To save time.
- To gain a better mark.
- Personal values/attitudes – better marks enhance self-esteem or because short cuts are a sign of cleverness.
- Defiance – where plagiarism is a means of expressing dissent and anti-authority feelings. It is a tangible way of showing dissent and expressing a lack of respect for authority.
- Assessments are seen as neither important nor challenging.
- Some students deny to themselves that they are cheating and/or find ways of legitimising it by passing the blame on to others.
- Temptation and opportunity.
- A lack of deterrence where the benefits of plagiarising outweigh the risks.

In contrast, Power (2009) reported that students made a deliberate attempt not to plagiarise because they feared getting caught; found it easier to do the actual assignment; respect the instructor; enjoy writing papers; feel guilty if they plagiarise; cannot afford to buy papers online; find online papers not specific enough; or have a sense of morality. Of these, fear was the greatest deterrent.

Culture may also play a part (Hayes & Introna, 2005; Redfern & Barnwell, 2009). Hayes and Introna (2005), for example, explained that because students from China and other Asian nations learned by focusing on textbook content in their formative schooling, upon enrolling in a Western university, they find it difficult to critically analyse others' work and to state their own opinions. While the cultural understandings of plagiarism are beyond the scope of this paper, the following points from Hayes and Introna (2005) are worth noting:

- For Chinese students, using another author's words is a form of respect (Pennycook cited in Hayes & Introna, 2005) and employing the words of the guru is acknowledging that status. Many students find it hard to change this embedded practice.
- When English is a second language, the student is under increased pressure because of the time it takes to write a paper. Park (2003) also drew attention to this.
- Fear of failure is strong, especially if the family has worked hard to fund the student.
- Some overseas students feel they cannot "improve" on the original text; failing to recognise that rewording and reiterating the concept to demonstrate understanding is more important for assessment purposes.

- Because some countries still rely exclusively on examinations, students are unused to writing essays and so plagiarise both intentionally and unintentionally, perhaps with limited understanding that this is a form of plagiarism.

Contrary to the view of Hayes and Introna (2005), however, East (2010, p. 72) pointed out, "... there is little quantifiable evidence demonstrating they [i.e., international students] are more likely to cheat." Maxwell, Curtis and Vardenga (2008, p. 32) found that "Asian students' perceptions of plagiarism are similar to local students', when studying in Australia". Further, Martin (2012, p. 270), offered evidence which suggests that "Asians do not plagiarise more than Caucasians", and it may be that the challenges of adjustment to new systems and environments can lead to "a reliance on tactics that might be accepted by their home culture, but not their host culture" (p. 271). Power (2009) also made the point that students do not see plagiarism at university as big an issue as plagiarism in the "real world", where money, status and career might depend on academic honesty.

Staff perceptions and understandings of plagiarism, policy and detection

Like students, staff also interpret and accept plagiarism in different ways, including within and between disciplines (Flint et al., 2006; Hrasky & Kronenburg, 2011). This is further blurred when plagiarism is considered in conjunction with cheating (Hayes & Introna, 2005; Hunt, 2002). Flint et al. (2006) explored staff perceptions of the relationship between plagiarism and cheating and derived four views exhibited by staff.

1. Cheating and plagiarism are synonymous.
2. Cheating and plagiarism are discrete activities.
3. Whilst there are some differences, there is a degree of overlap.
4. Plagiarism is a subset of cheating.

Recent work on staff perceptions has shown some level of agreement that a range of behaviours, all sharing the common concept of the student claiming credit for work not their own, as forms of plagiarism. These behaviours are identified as:

Submitting an assignment completed by another student; downloading information from the web without a proper citation; using direct quotes without a proper citation; changing only a few words from a direct quote without including quotation marks, paraphrasing material without a proper citation; and copying from others while working in a group. (Bennett et al., 2011, p. 33)

One area of disagreement is in the consideration as to whether borrowing from one assignment for another is plagiarism (Bennett et al., 2011); this is an area requiring further investigation, especially in light of the view that staff borrow from one piece of writing for inclusion in another for publishing purposes. Bennett et al. (2011) found that (US) instructors routinely reported recycling parts of manuscripts, raising the questions as to whether we should, therefore, treat students harshly when they adopt the same practice.

Despite the varying views, academic staff regard what they consider to be cheating as more serious than plagiarism (Flint, et al., 2006). These varied views confirm the complexity of the decision making faced by staff when they encounter what they believe to be plagiarism. According to Sims (1995), the propensity for a student to plagiarise will diminish with time and experience. Thus, as a student establishes his or her authorial identity, a second year undergraduate will be less likely to plagiarise than a first year and a third year even less so. Inherent in this notion is that academic writing is a skill that improves with practice and that instances of plagiarism should be treated more leniently at the beginning of the study program. This is at least an expectation if not a reality, with university policies and sanctions distinguishing between levels of seriousness not only in terms of the level of plagiarism in the piece of work, but also in the level of the student. The University of Western Australia, for example, in its policy and guidelines to staff refers to “break points” in levels of seriousness, namely, less than 10 per cent of a work as minor, 10-25 per cent as moderate and greater than 25 per cent as major (University of Western Australia, 2012). The same policy also distinguishes between what is acceptable at first year level is not acceptable at honours level. This approach, and that of other universities, is reflected in a survey of staff attitudes to plagiarism by Flint et al. (2006) who state:

Staff used their judgement to decide when the students had actually crossed the line into plagiarism. Many talked about intention, extent and scale of the offence being linked to the severity of the punishment, and for some the incorporation of a ‘small amount of others’ work was acceptable. (p. 149)

This illustrates the fluidity of the plagiarism boundary and the inconsistency of approaches when dealing with it. The statement also highlights the conflict between using professional judgement on how to deal with plagiarism and centralised policy. In fact, when staff had to decide between a centralised, formal approach and their preferred informal approach, they chose the latter (Flint, et al., 2006). Flint et al. (2006) also observed that because each staff member has an internalised concept of plagiarism, responses vary in terms of education and penalties.

It has been identified that “the costs for faculty of dealing with plagiarism are high relative to the benefits for faculty of achieving a low incidence of plagiarism” (Liebler, 2009, p. 719). The costs, according to Keith-Spiegel, Tabachnick, Whitley and Washburn (1998), include:

- The emotional stress of pursuing plagiarism.
- The difficulty in terms of time and effort.
- The fear of reprisals.
- The sentiment that action is not necessary.

And neither are staff members immune from the malaise of plagiarism; from this perspective Elliott, Marquis and Neal (2013) argue that policies and standards that apply to students vis-à-vis plagiarism should apply to staff. In sum, the negative consequences for a staff member of pursuing plagiarism deter them from doing so. When students learn

that plagiarism, if detected, has limited and/or ineffectual consequences, they will have little reason to treat it as a matter of concern. The only mitigating factor here is the extent of each student's academic integrity.

Countering plagiarism

Flint et al. (2006) argued that “staff, student and institutional perspectives on plagiarism should not be seen as three alternative and mutually exclusive categories” (p. 147), which suggests that if universities are serious about reducing plagiarism, they will have to invest in creating a common understanding amongst all with a vested interest in doing so. According to Elander et al. (2010), plagiarism prevention strategies fall into one of three broad categories: systematic software detection methods such as *Turnitin*; so-called honour codes or academic integrity codes that appeal to ethical values; and instructional initiatives to improve student writing skills.

Systematic software detection approaches

One systematic approach to reducing plagiarism involves the use of plagiarism detection software. By this approach, all student work is scrutinised and compared to a growing database of electronically available material to determine matches. As part of this strategy, students need to be taught how to use the software and staff must inform students that plagiarism checking software will be used. The intent of such software is thus twofold: (a) as a tool for staff who suspect work has been plagiarised, and (b) as a tool for students to use to check for possible plagiarism. The latter point suggests that as students become skilled in the use of plagiarism detection software, they will become familiar with what plagiarism looks like and, thus, how to reduce its prevalence. Plagiarism detection software, however, is not a “silver bullet” (Youmans, 2011) because serial and serious cheats can negate it (Gannon-Leary, 2009) leading to a situation where “... we are in danger of identifying and punishing the lower level cases while allowing the most serious offences to slip through undetected” (Heather, 2010). Research (Heather, 2010) and anecdotal evidence (Fearn, 2011) suggests that for some, it is less about the act of avoiding plagiarism, and more about beating the software. Thus, as individuals seek more sophisticated methods of negating plagiarism detection software, software vendors need to continually tighten up their tools.

An element in need of further investigation in the employment of systematic plagiarism software detection approaches is staff use of the software. Research on the use of plagiarism detection software tends to focus on the perceptions of staff and students on the effectiveness of the software itself, rather than on the skills of staff employing it. Atkinson and Yeoh (2008), for example, highlight the workload impost on staff associated with the employment of the software, while Morris (2008) and Hraskey and Kronenburg (2011) focus on the need for holistic institutional approaches which emphasise explicit policies and procedures, improved assessment methods, and opportunities for students to develop their skills. If holistic approaches are to be adopted, one element must be the consistent and skilled employment of the software across institutions by staff.

Codes and policies

Plagiarism tends to be one of a series of elements of types of academic misconduct which are captured by codes and policies. Their strength in preventing plagiarism is in part associated with the norming processes of establishing accepted behaviours, but is also due to their role in communicating sanctions for misconduct. Nonetheless, policies and codes are not a panacea because, as Blum (2009) noted, the effectiveness of such codes is diminished by other factors such as friendship and student solidarity which can divert an individual's moral compass. Ashworth et al. (2003) dwell on the "friendship" aspect in the context of students' notions of cheating. It has been speculated that there appears to be a link between "high stakes" assessments and the temptation to cheat (Park, 2003). Despite this, there is some evidence that honour codes and integrity policies can result in significantly lower occurrences of cheating, plagiarism and academic dishonesty (Bretag et al., 2011; Elander et al., 2010) but such codes or policies alone are insufficient to eliminate cheating and plagiarism.

One aspect of honour codes and integrity policies in need of further investigation is the level of staff understanding of their value, employment and import. There is little evidence in the extant literature on staff understanding of academic integrity policies, or how they use them with their students. This is an area worthy of future investigation.

Instructional approaches

Instructional approaches to countering plagiarism fall into two categories: (a) plagiarism education and (b) assessment considerations.

Education

Plagiarism education has tended to refer to a focus on academic integrity by acculturating students through a process akin to an apprenticeship (Gullifer & Tyson, 2010). This accords with the conclusion drawn by Bennett et al. (2011) that academic staff should incorporate "lessons on ethical writing, and paraphrasing in particular" (p. 34) into their programs. Lea and Street (1998) argue for adoption of a model that moves the student from the deficit model to the desired competency of academic literacy; included in this is development of authorial identity, that is, the sense they have of themselves as an author and the textual identity they construct in their writing. In order to develop authorial identity in students, Elander et al. (2010) designed and implemented a successful five module instructional initiative to reduce paraphrasing and thus improve authorial identity. They observed:

One focus group participant commented that although students already knew what plagiarism was, the intervention and the examples given were more interesting than past experiences of just being told what plagiarism is and not to do it, and others commented that the intervention was a useful reminder to help students avoid making common mistakes. (Elander et al., 2010, p. 165)

The education approach has resulted in the introduction of such tools as workshops and online modules of instruction designed to educate the student in correct referencing

formats, paraphrasing, and construction of original work, as well as instruct them on the various forms of academic misconduct. These tools include language and literacy staff running specialist programs, online compulsory modules and embedded elements in discipline based units. Where skill building is based on a compulsory online module, it will be necessary for staff involved in assessment and plagiarism detection to be familiar with the content of those modules to the extent that they can assess their application. Where the skill building is part of specialist workshops conducted by language and literacy staff, the same principles apply. In the event that skill building is embedded in discipline-based instruction, discipline staff will need to be familiar with the content and application of the skills taught, and trained in teaching the skills themselves. Key to the successful implementation of these approaches is the skill level of the staff tasked with the development and/or the delivery of these tools. Once again, however, consistency of application and the attitudes and approaches of staff will play a role in the success of education options.

Assessment

Park (2003) argued that “high stakes”, summative assessments foment cheating and plagiarism. Macdonald and Carroll (2006) pursued this line and proposed that to counter plagiarism, academics should utilise “low stakes” assessments, because they provide a more supportive learning environment via constructive feedback. As an example of a “low stakes” assessment, Blum (2009) suggested setting papers that cannot easily be completed by others, such as reflecting on a course. Greater use of online discussions between students, portfolios and course diaries are other potential options. In the development of assessment, academics have to find an appropriate balance between the supportive learning environment, and the need for an appropriate and rigorous assessment of learning.

Staff perceptions on the reasons students plagiarise are likely to influence their thinking when setting and marking assessments. As Bretag et al. (2011) observed, staff also need support in developing their understanding of plagiarism. The decision making process inherent in setting and marking assessment is thus a further arena for inconsistencies between staff, both in terms of opinion and application; once again an avenue for investigation.

The role of staff skill and perception in countering plagiarism

As has been demonstrated, there are a number of areas needing further investigation vis à vis the role of staff in countering plagiarism. It is apparent that skills of staff in a range of related areas need attention. These include cultural understandings (Gu & Brooks, 2011). As posited by Rust, O'Donovan and Price (2005, p. 231) “a significant reason for lack of reliability in marking is that tutors have (and apply) different implicit criteria, as well as applying different weightings to, and different interpretations of, the explicit criteria”; a notion which would apply equally to the assessment and evaluation of instances of suspected plagiarism. Staff skill and perception are integral to the amelioration of plagiarism by students.

The gradual release model

Because beginning students have a muddled notion of plagiarism, they are frequently and unwittingly guilty of same. Studies also show that the incidence of plagiarism diminishes with time (Sims, 1995), but even when aware of the formalities of academic writing and the consequences of plagiarising, other factors (e.g., a lack of time, money pressure and peer pressure) can prompt the decision to plagiarise. The situation for both staff and students is sometimes exacerbated by inconsistent institutional responses, both between different staff exercising their judgement and when plagiarism concerns are referred to management.

Drawing on the work of Pearson and Gallagher (1983), who worked in the field of early literacy, the *Plagiarism Understanding Gradual Release Model* (Figure 1) addresses these matters by proposing that plagiarism education for all parties will mitigate the prevalence of plagiarism. Fundamental to the original Pearson and Gallagher approach, and incorporated in this model, is the notion of planned obsolescence whereby the student gradually accepts total responsibility for the task, including responsibility for determining whether or not the desired strategy is being applied appropriately.

This gradual release model begins from the perspective that commencing students lack the knowledge and power to counter plagiarism in a meaningful manner (Gaynor, 2011). In the context of the model, as students acquire increasing knowledge about plagiarism, their power to control the situation also increases. In this sense, power for students is embodied in the notion of them having the moral strength to decide whether or not to plagiarise. This, perhaps, is where honour codes or academic integrity policies, might have a role. Staff possess considerable power – the power to educate and the power to penalise. Staff power is also derived from their having the authority and systemic support to determine when an act constitutes plagiarism and how to deal with it. Further, because staff possess the power, it is they, rather than students, who have the initial and prime responsibility for changing the status quo. For some staff, this will mean it is necessary to acquire knowledge, not about plagiarism *per se*, but, in particular about how and why students plagiarise, and also about how to educate students and provide them with the appropriate skills to avoid plagiarism.

The situation where one party possesses greater power than another is typical of a deficit model. According to the model, this imbalance represents a divergent position, whereas what is desired is a convergent position, with both parties equally responsible for minimising the prevalence of plagiarism. As the model shows, through education, staff will gradually relinquish their position of greater power, and students will be endowed with increasing responsibility and accountability; convergence will eventually result. The model proposes that a proactive formal intervention at the beginning of a course will diminish the prevalence of plagiarism sooner.

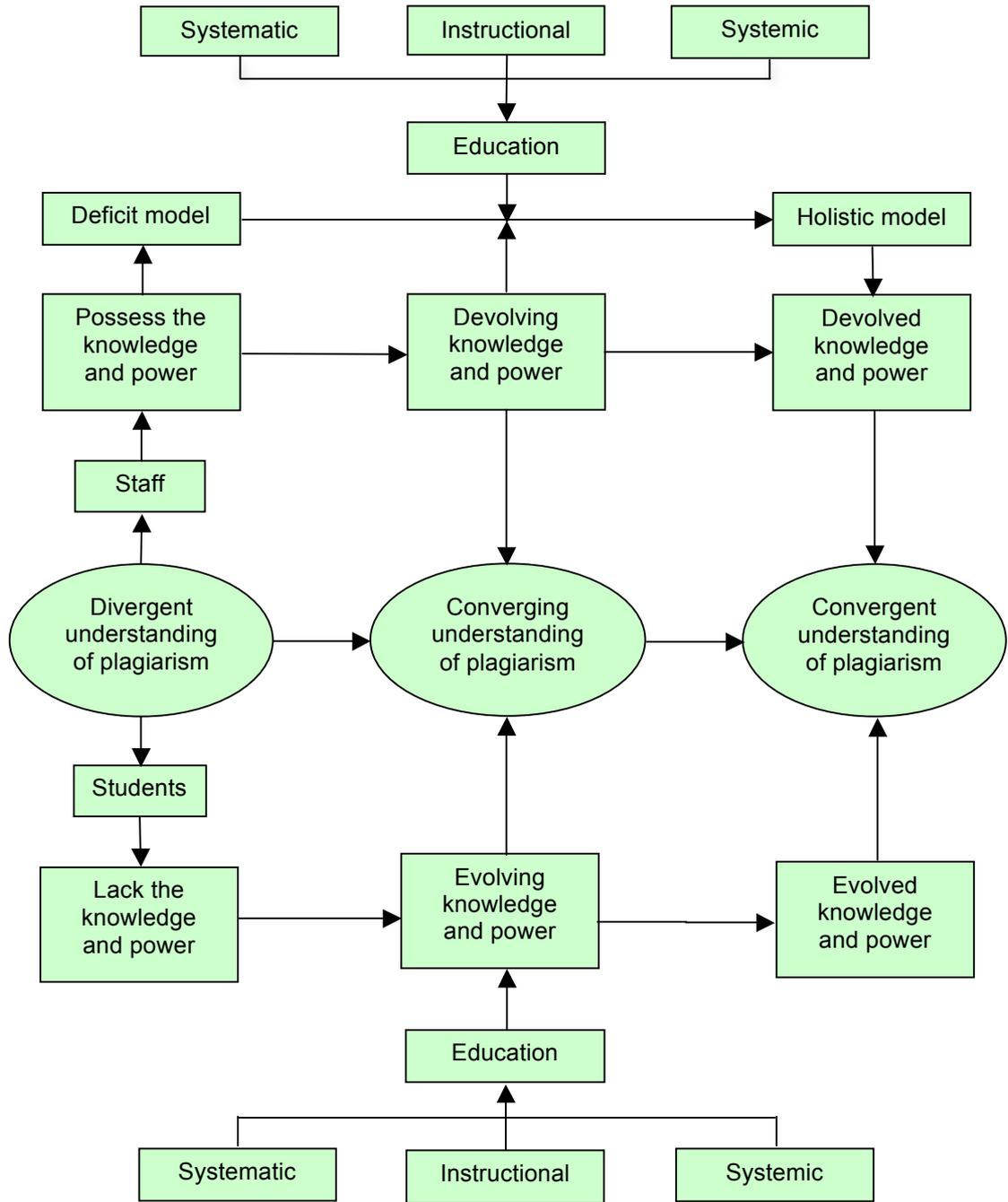


Figure 1: Plagiarism understanding gradual release model

This approach accords with the underlying principles of the gradual release model. First, students participate in focus lessons that establish the desired outcomes; second, guided instruction occurs, that is, students are led through tasks designed to increase their understanding of plagiarism; third, collaborative learning occurs during which time students practise the requisite skills, apply them and interact with their peers; and fourth and finally, the information is synthesised and applied. Integral to the four steps is the notion of vertical alignment, which is not only an outcome but also a process that results in an outcome that provides learners with a coherent sequence of content (Fisher & Frey, 2008). Equally, the four stages also apply to staff. The emphasis, however, will not be on plagiarism per se; instead, the emphasis will be on the model's devolution process and the processes staff must undergo with the outcome being a common understanding of plagiarism not only between staff and students, but also between staff. For both staff and students, plagiarism education comprises three facets: systematic, instructional and systemic.

1. Systematic education reflects the need to continually inform and educate both parties about plagiarism detection software; that is, what is available, what will be used and, most importantly, how to interpret the data generated.
2. For students, instructional education is envisaged as a formal, assessable component in a student's first semester. What form this takes and how it is delivered is a matter for each institution, but given that many universities offer such a module or course, reshaping it should not be difficult. For staff, instructional education via professional development will include debating what plagiarism means and coming to a common understanding; developing understanding of how students perceive plagiarism and what to do about it; and their role, and its importance, in the transition from the deficit model to the holistic model. A key focus will be reviewing assessment practices.
3. Systemic education is about apprising staff and students about their rights and responsibilities. Students need to know what will happen if they are suspected of plagiarism and staff need to know, and comply with, university policy. If the process is transparent, all parties will have the confidence to make appropriate decisions. It is likely that some students will seek advantage or fail to pay attention, and some staff will overlook due process; strong governance will be required to ensure that a level of consistency is maintained across the system.

These three elements provide a framework for the development and embedding of practices reinforcing the notions of integrity which are, or should be, included in institutional aspirations for graduates.

Conclusion

Universities are aware of the damage that plagiarism incidents can do to reputations, qualifications and the learning experience (Flint, et al., 2006; Park, 2003). While plagiarism will never be eliminated, if they wish to attack the problem with more than words and penalties, good governance is a beginning. To this end, Elliott et al. (2013) suggested that

universities should establish a culture of academic honesty, beginning with the development of an ethical culture amongst staff. Governance, including consistent management, cohesive policies, guidance, processes and decision-rights, is a broad canvas, but given willpower and resources, there is no reason it cannot work. At the heart of the debate, is the requirement for management, staff and students to have a shared understanding of plagiarism, its role in cheating, and the consequences – at the individual and institutional levels in terms of learning, and the value of the degrees conferred by an institution.

Given the extensive literature on plagiarism, a major lacuna appears to be research into the continued divergence of perceptions and attitudes on the part of students and staff. What is needed is convergence, or a common understanding of plagiarism and its importance. The extant literature is single-minded in its call for universities to address plagiarism. Within this framework, several strategies are universally recommended:

- Education of staff including cultural awareness
- Education of students
- Both staff and students knowing how to use and interpret plagiarism checking software
- A review of current assessment methods
- Adherence to policy via good governance.

In particular, with respect to plagiarism education, if the holistic approach is taken to its logical conclusion, information on plagiarism needs to be specifically covered in a compulsory, assessable form (Gullifer & Tyson, 2010); a practice in place across many of our universities. Given the wide variation in staff perceptions of, and reactions to, plagiarism, a case may be made for staff to complete compulsory training. This will go a long way toward creating the desired common understanding of plagiarism, that is, a convergent approach rather than the present divergent or inconsistent approach.

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