

Relevant and suitable structures should be established within faculties and institutionally to deal with plagiarism. It is crucial to hold academics, academic administrators, supervisors, co-supervisors and students accountable.

Respondents cited several contributing factors for their inability to police the problem, including high workload, large class sizes, time-consuming procedures and inadequate administrative support.

Corrective steps

Data from Table 3 indicate that most respondents were aware of corrective steps to be taken once plagiarism was recognised, but they varied in their approaches. Most academics take either one or a combination of steps when they detect plagiarism.

Respondents cited several contributing factors for their inability to police the problem, including high workload (79%), large class sizes (74%), time consuming procedures (53%), and inadequate administrative support (32%). Some argued that the daily actions of staff members reflected their ethical standards, and that it was only when such actions were regarded by students as being of a high standard, that there would be buy-in to the ethical instructions.

On a question of whether it was fair to discipline students not trained to avoid plagiarism, 95% of the respondents thought it unfair to apply sanctions or to punish students in this instance and that training was a prerequisite before taking punitive action. There was general agreement that training should take place at the entry level of the institution.

Table 3: Steps 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.

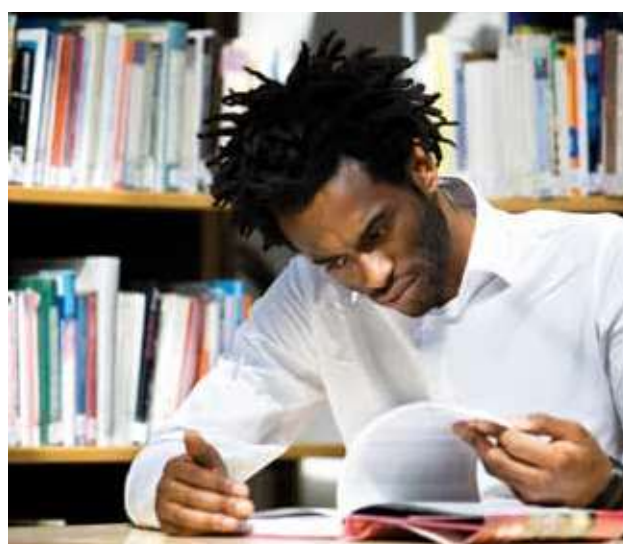
Conclusion

The low (38%) return rate of questionnaires, despite reminders, was a worrisome factor acknowledged by the researchers. It may point to, among other aspects, a lack of significance attached to research data, reflecting a poor research culture. Some potential respondents' decisions to shun the research owing to plagiarism 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 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 plagiarism in their own studies, as well as with their school-based learners.

By consultative but decisive action, we argue that it is possible to minimise instances of a university being publicly denigrated, affecting the academic integrity of an institution. University staff, however, has a critical role to play through categorically and lucidly defining, as well as communicating, what constitutes plagiarism and ensuring a common understanding among the members of the senate, academic administrators, academic staff members, supervisors, co-supervisors and students. ■

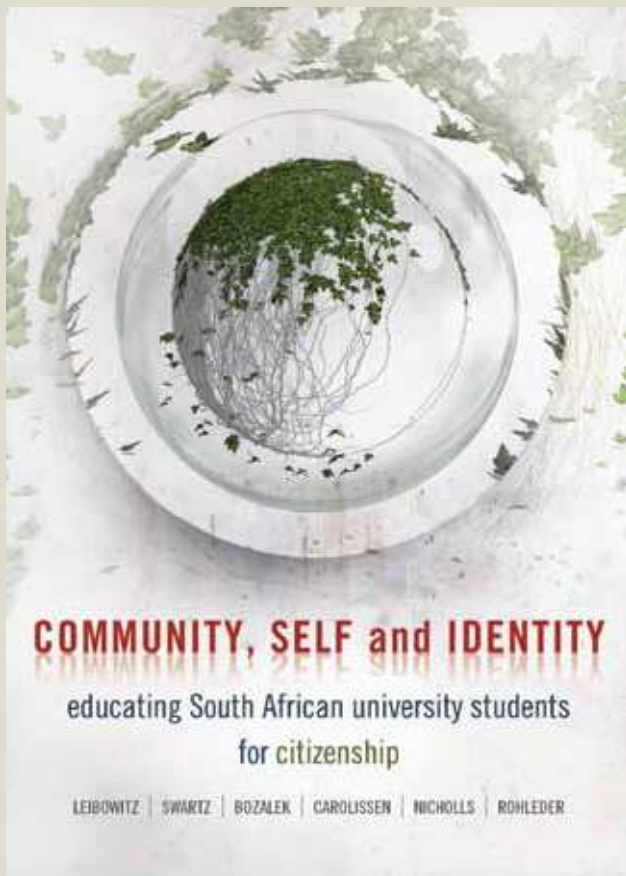
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This is an extract from Mammen, K.J. & Meyiwa, T. (2013) *Perceptions and concerns on plagiarism and its implications for teacher education: a case study of a South African university*. *International Journal of Educational Sciences*.



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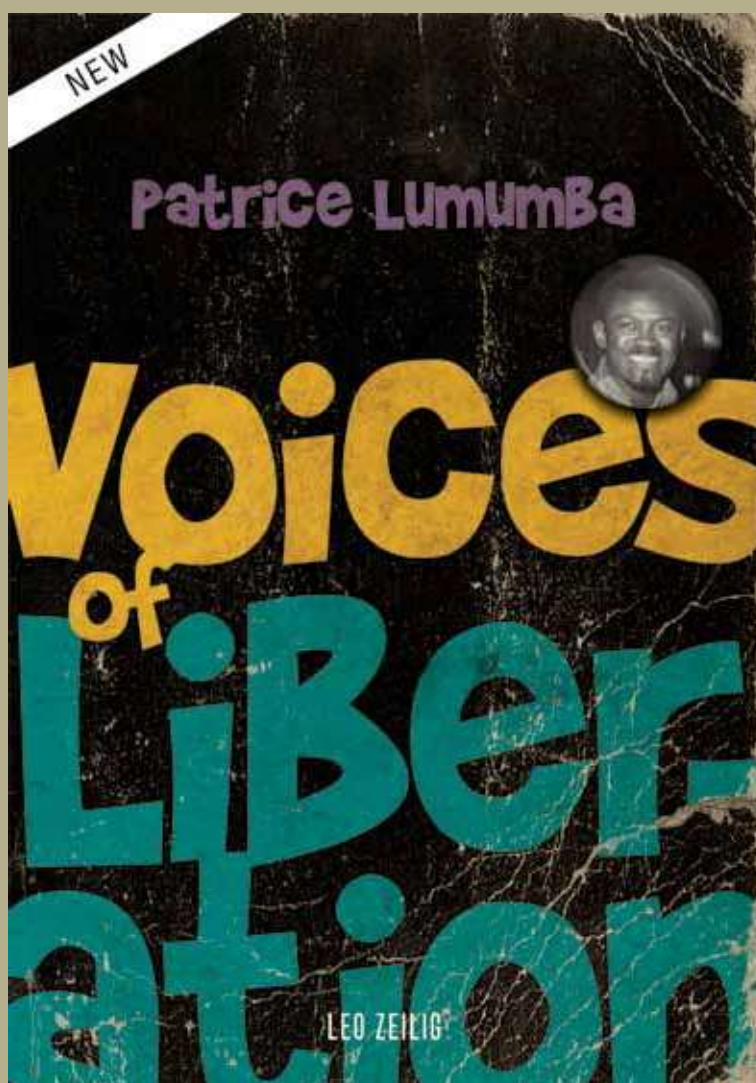
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