

- The provision of family-friendly work environments, such as the provision of crèches at work for nursing mothers and flexible work schedules, will go a long way to keeping more women at work.
- More rigorous public campaigns to challenge gender stereotypes and the establishment of programmes to increase fathers' parenting roles are needed.
- Women need to be legally literate to ensure the proper implementation of legislation against discrimination.
- In view of the difficulty women have in entering leadership positions, alliance building and women's organisations can assist them to enter such positions, particularly in government and parastatal organisations. Organisations whose members often comprise women activists have been successful in campaigning for the appointment of women to key positions.
- Lastly, the implementation of affirmative action is especially important in helping to redress an imbalance of men and women at senior levels. Continuing discrimination and internalised ideas about male and female roles hamper women leaders-in-waiting and prevent their full participation in leadership.

Conclusion

Leadership is not only about what leaders do; it is also about who leaders are and the contexts in which they lead. Therefore, to significantly reduce and eventually eliminate the gender gap in leadership, one needs to address this issue at the individual and organisational levels.

At the individual level there is a need to consider how gender biases affect individuals' capacities for developing leadership identity, while at the organisational level, there is need to address the unconscious biases and workplace practices that constrain women's leadership opportunities and performance. Doing so is likely to enable women to access social, civil, political and institutional power that is necessary to get into and stay in leadership. ■

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Tackling plagiarism at university level

In a survey among teaching staff and academic administrators at a South African university, *Kuttickattu John Mammen* and *Thenjiwe Meyiwa* looked at steps to avoid plagiarism, training to detect academic cheating and perceptions on plagiarism among students.



There is a general perception that plagiarism – the practice of including someone else's work in academic writing without acknowledging the authorship – is on the rise, causing disquiet about academic cheating.

As stated in a South Georgia College microbiology course programme, authored by Dr Timothy L Rhoads:

'Plagiarism is sometimes a moral and ethical offence rather than a legal one... [it] 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... it is also intellectually lazy and deprives the plagiarist of an education.'

The overwhelming majority of respondents indicated that they had received training during their own education on in-text referencing, compiling a list of references, and on avoiding plagiarism.

Methods used

The study included questionnaires, which were distributed to 50 academics (teaching staff) and academic administrators that had a direct link with students in the past year – either as teachers, mentors or examiners of pre-service and/or in-service student teachers. Of these, 19 questionnaires were returned, giving an effective return rate of 38%.

Of particular interest for the study 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 provide their perceptions of plagiarism. The questions sought to establish steps normally taken to identify plagiarism, the frequency of cheating incidents, at which level they were widespread, and strategies they could suggest to curb the practice.

The respondents were aged between 26 and 65 years, and were drawn from all race groups except coloured students, who were not participating in the study. The majority (53%) had doctoral qualifications and the rest had master's degrees. Total teaching experience varied from five to more than 35 years.

Training in avoiding plagiarism

The overwhelming majority indicated that they had received training during their own education on in-text

referencing (compiling a list of references), and on avoiding plagiarism, but many did not (21%, 16% and 11% respectively), indicating that there were academics not adequately prepared for dealing with these matters.

The data showed some indifference to this important academic concern, and that plagiarism may not have been a topical and grave concern during their time as students. It also showed that there were no uniform levels at which academics train students on referencing styles and matters related to plagiarism, or of the duration of the training. Most respondents indicated that they spent at least one hour training their students in different skills, and that most training happened at post-graduate level.

This finding could either point to plagiarism being more frequent at this level than at undergraduate level, or that academics focus more on such issues at this level. Training in correct referencing and how to avoid plagiarism should be dealt with already in undergraduate work. Most respondents (84%) said they were confident enough to recognise incidences of plagiarism, but staff development was required to instil confidence in the small percentage of academics that may still need assistance.

Most respondents said they were confident enough to recognise incidences of plagiarism.

The frequency of plagiarism

If the data from Tables 1 and 2 are read together, it shows that plagiarism occurs at all qualification levels of university education, including teacher education, and in all kinds of work presented by students. The frequency of plagiarism is high. These findings are similar to those at universities from other countries.

Table 1: Respondents' experiences of detecting plagiarism (number of respondents in brackets).

Qualification level	Practical assignments	Academic/research assignments
Diploma	(2)	(1)
Undergraduate	(7)	(5)
Honours	(3)	(7)
Master's	(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.

Table 2: Respondents' observations 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.

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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