

## **Academic faculty conceptualisation and understanding of plagiarism – a Thai university exploratory study**

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Biographical notes

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## **Academic faculty conceptualisation and understanding of plagiarism – a Thai university exploratory study**

Plagiarism incidents within higher education have increased significantly in the last decade, and have persistently occupied academics and administrators in institutions world-wide. Research demonstrates that in many national contexts such behaviours are increasing or are significantly threatening the integrity of scholarship. In the country that is the subject of this research, Thailand, the nature and extent of plagiarism has been neither sufficiently researched nor understood. This study aimed to explore Thai academics' (n= 44) conceptualisation and awareness of plagiarism. Data sources included questionnaires and semi-structured interviews. The results revealed that the lecturers had both limited understanding and low awareness of plagiarism, and that their conceptualisation of plagiarism both as a problem of scholarship and of moral behaviour was unsophisticated at best and a matter of ambivalence at worst. The findings also revealed an institutional level of tolerance and ambiguity about the problem. As such, this research has implications for institutional and individual academic behaviour.

Keywords: Conceptualisation; faculty; plagiarism; plagiaristic behaviour; Thai academics

### **Introduction**

Research regarding plagiarism in higher education has focused on students' or faculty's perceptions of students' plagiarism, but academics' understanding and conceptualisation of plagiarism has been understudied and under-theorized. For such a critically important area of academics' work (Craig and Dalton, 2014; Gallant, 2017) that intersects with regulation, practice and policy, the field is arguably subject to multiple assumptions

about how and why academics think the way that they do about plagiarism, and so this study contributes original work. Various factors that influence students' plagiaristic behaviours have been found such as individuals' control over their behaviour, communal attitudes and subjective norms (Salleh et al., 2012; Tongsamsri & Promgird, 2017). The context of students' developing beliefs about plagiarism including their learning community attitudes toward it, has been found to be an important factor that influences students' plagiaristic behaviour and intentions (du Rocher, 2018; Hue et al., 2018; Kavita and Joshi, 2018).

In relation to minimising students' plagiarism, most previous studies have suggested pedagogic interventions aimed at discouraging specific behaviours in the early stages of programmes of study (e.g. Bunjounmanee, 2016; Fenster, 2016; Thienthong, 2018). However, to deal with students' plagiarism effectively, lecturers require a full understanding of plagiarism and adequate skills of academic writing in order to inform students what constitutes plagiarism at both conceptual and practical levels. This study contributes to furthering our knowledge about lecturers' awareness of this complex issue, and explored Thai lecturers' understanding and their conceptualisation of plagiarism at a university in Thailand, with the aim of exploring what conditions might motivate Thai universities to deal with lecturers' awareness and understanding of plagiarism appropriately.

### **Plagiarism and plagiaristic behaviour amongst students: a global view**

Plagiarism has been defined differently depending on the field of studies and the context in which plagiarism happens (Maneeratana & Phongtongjalearn, 2018; Sutherland-Smith, 2019). The concept of plagiarism can be defined in general as copying other's

people words, work or interventions and using them as one's own without appropriate citations or acknowledgement to the original sources whether it is intended to deceive (Bretag, 2013; du Rocher, 2018; Pecorari, 2019). Walker (1998, p. 103) classified plagiarism into seven types:

- Sham paraphrasing

Copying verbatim from an original source with in-text citation but no quotation marks.

- Illicit paraphrasing

Paraphrasing sentences from an original text without citing the source.

- Other plagiarism

Copying from another's student assignment with the knowledge of that student.

- Verbatim copying

Copying word-for-word from an original text without both in-text citation and quotation marks.

- Recycling

Reusing or resubmitting his/her own assignment or academic paper, which has been previously submitted in a different course or somewhere else.

- Ghost writing

Asking or hiring someone to write or do assignment and representing it as his/her own work.

- Purloining

Copying from another's student assignment or papers without the knowledge of that person.

These types of plagiarism are related to academic writing and using others' work in academic contexts. Previous studies have stated that "patchwriting"<sup>1</sup> (Bretag, 2013; Mustafa, 2016; Pecorari, 2019; Pecorari & Petrić, 2014; Sariffuddin et al., 2017), a "copy-and-paste/cut-and-paste" strategy (Bretag, 2013, p. 2) or "word salad" (Rogerson & McCarthy, 2017, p. 15) has been most frequently found in written work of international students or those for whom English is an additional language.

When considering factors that influence students' plagiaristic behaviour, many studies have found that lack of understanding of the concept of plagiarism for both students and academics, is a primary reason for students' plagiarism (Hue et al., 2018; Kavita & Joshi, 2018; Sariffuddin et al., 2017; Sutherland-Smith, 2019). The context of students' learning, or where they develop their beliefs about plagiarism, could be one of the most important factors of the students' behaviour (Al-Shamaa et al., 2017; du Rocher; 2018; Hue et al., 2018).

The literature also suggests that most students plagiarise because they have inadequate skills in a complex task of writing and lack of knowledge in any standard styles of citation and referencing (Kavita & Joshi, 2018; Pecorari & Petrić, 2014; Sariffuddin et al., 2017; Sutherland-Smith, 2019) including lack of confidence in their academic writing (Ballantine et al., 2015) as well as a general lack of research skills (Kavita & Joshi, 2018). Khathayut's (2014) study found that most students copied and pasted sentences from an original text, changed some words and put them into their work without citation. Charubusp (2015) has suggested that in many situations, students

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<sup>1</sup> Copying and mixing sentences from several sources in one's own work without citation

will attempt to paraphrase and cite correctly, but persistently and unknowingly plagiarise, suggesting that students are unaware of its seriousness. Such views are supported by Al-Shamaa et al. (2017) and Sutherland-Smith (2019) who found that teachers' ignorance in dealing with plagiarism in students' work influences students' behaviours. Researchers that have explored strategies that help raise students' awareness and their understanding of plagiarism have found that addressing it has far-reaching consequences for students and staff (Williamson and McGregor, 2012).

### **Institutional and academic responses to plagiarism and plagiaristic behaviour**

The responsibility of dealing with plagiarism at university rests on all members of the institution (Craig & Dalton, 2014). However, existing literature suggests that institutional practices are varied in their reaction to plagiarism, and particularly in understanding the scale of individual academics' acknowledgement of their moral obligation toward such behaviour (Gallant, 2017; Pecorari, 2019). Gallant suggests for example, that explicit attention should be paid to academics' integrity during orientation of new staff, lest individuals would assume that they could make up their own mind about a whole range of policies, including plagiarism, a finding revealed in earlier work by Eret and Gokmenoglu (2010). The definition of plagiarism and its types used in plagiarism policies need to be clarified precisely with appropriate penalties and professional ethics (Coughlin, 2015; Sutherland-Smith, 2019; Tongamsri & Promgird, 2017). McQueen and Shields (2017) found that most students at a university in the United Kingdom held misconceptions and anxieties about what constitutes plagiarism, and the university

guidelines on plagiarism did not improve their understanding. Sutherland-Smith (2010, p. 13) noted that,

implementing holistic approaches to plagiarism management, through the adoption of ethical discourse about the relationships shared by academics, universities and students, offers a foundation to begin a dialogue about implementing sustainable reform in university plagiarism management.

Brown and Janssen (2017, p. 102) asserted that the guidelines and rules applied in an institution can influence students' ethical and moral views as well as their behaviours, and that, "with stricter rules and ethical guidelines in force, cheating behaviours could therefore be deterred".

Sutherland-Smith (2011) examined university plagiarism policies of twenty high-ranking universities across Australia, Canada, the United Kingdom and the United States. It was found that those universities used legal discourse in their plagiarism policies with a range of penalties. Sutherland-Smith argued that for more educationally sustainable practice of handling with plagiarism within universities, and that plagiarism management should rely on ethical approaches which relate to the policies and processes rather than punitive approaches, as the punitive approaches might be too heavy-handed for those who plagiarise inadvertently. However, there is a lack of consensus as to how to achieve this in practice. Gallant (2017, p. 89) proposed that to reduce cheating in an institution naturally, the institution needs to produce mastery-oriented environments, which can motivate students to learn and develop their meta-cognitive skills. Gallant (2017, pp. 89-90) also suggested three guidelines for academic integrity, which is a critical component to the teaching and learning approach: 1) assessment that needs to be related to students' interests and lives including their future

career interests, 2) providing students a chance to design methods of grading, and 3) using active learning pedagogies including peer instruction.

In contrast, Pecorari and Shaw (2019, pp. 158-165) proposed seven elements for handling plagiarism in pedagogical practice including:

- don't believe in quick fixes (e.g. plagiarism detection software or ONLY telling students “don't plagiarise”);
- teaching writing skills (e.g. design a task that suits a purpose of the course);
- reframing plagiarism (i.e. not only knowledge of plagiarism but also its role);
- having realistic expectation (i.e. developing students' writing towards appropriate intertextuality not penalising when not achieving);
- an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure (i.e. providing prompts with argument, claims and support from literature);
- teaching how to think about writing (e.g. providing practice in the skills required for effective source use); and
- accentuating the positive (i.e. given into considerations among disciplinary expectations, institutional contexts, and teaching and assessment practices).

Literature suggests that a key weakness within most universities regarding plagiarism is the lack of consistency within academics' responses. Sutherland-Smith (2019) argued that recently there have been no effective solutions to ensure that all staff at the universities follow policy or procedure across all disciplines and all campuses. But Santoso and Kahaya (2019), who explored factors influence the lecturers' plagiarism in



Indonesia, found that very high workloads and the pressures of academic competition for promotion in academia were dominant factors in preventing academics being more proactive. Sutherland-Smith (2019, p. 50) also asserted that teaching staff in many universities have a lack of agreed response to plagiarism as many fundamentally disagreed both with the idea that dealing with it was their responsibility, and in addition, that plagiarism itself was not worthy of scholarly time-investment, on the basis that it was a low-level skill.

It can be concluded that whilst appropriate instruction regarding plagiarism and plagiarism avoidance should be required for all students in an institution to raise their awareness of plagiarism, such instruction is not without difficulty, and rests on a deeper understanding amongst academics as to its ultimate motivation and purpose.

### **Thai Academics and Plagiarism: educating the educators**

In Thailand, teachers and academics are highly respected and acknowledged by students and the society (Benjakul, 2009). Teachers not only play a crucial role to encourage and motivate students to have mastery in their subjects and exert great authority in relation to ensuring academic standards (Gallant, 2017). The Thai Qualifications Framework for Higher Education (2013) has attempted to encourage students to have research skills by assigning independent study projects within the curriculum, and such skills rest on high standards of academic behaviour (Pinjaroenpan & Danvivath, 2017; Puengpipattrakul, 2016). This situation is reflected in the various ways in which some universities have attempted to solve the problem. Bunjoungmanee (2016) used instructional activities to solve plagiarism problems of Thai university students, based on efficacy within technical aspects of writing. In comparison, Techamanee (2016) emphasised the negative

impacts of plagiarism on academics' future prospects, whilst Thienthong (2018) asserted that higher-level skills of reasoning and logic were the most effective way to combat plagiarism.

It seems that such studies have not sufficiently motivated students to change their plagiaristic behaviours however, and this is arguably due to the practice of academic conduct and scholarship in Thailand being ambiguous especially within Thai academics themselves. Many cases of plagiarism have been found in the work of “national scientist, head of university medical research centre, awarded lecturer, or associate dean in research affairs” (Joob & Wiwanitkit, 2018, p. 56). Some academics have been withdrawn from their academic position or penalised due to plagiarism, but those cases have been kept secret within their institutions (Techamanee, 2016).

To raise Thai academics' awareness of plagiarism, Thomas (2017) stated that teachers need to adjust their teaching approaches and curriculum that create an atmosphere of critical thinking including discussion, problem solving and questioning (Thomas, 2017), as well as a much-reduced acceptance of forms of plagiarism such as patch-writing (Cadigan, 2015), which teachers often overlooked because their students had limited English proficiency (Charubusp's (2015). Indeed, overlooking plagiarism seems to be a common thread amongst Thai academics: for example, Suandusitpoll (2011), showed that most Thai lecturers and academic staff were confused about using information from a group discussion to do an academic report and plagiarism. More than 92 per cent said that information taken from a group discussion can be used in their individual academic report, and they do not need to give references. Only a small minority (7.46%) argued that if someone uses the ideas from the group discussion, and

they do not refer to the sources, they will be a plagiarist. Reablerthirun et al. (2013) stated that most Thai teachers designed their teaching materials by copying some contents or information from the Internet without citation or proper acknowledgement, as well as re-cycling their own work repeatedly without citation.

Although many universities in Thailand uphold a policy for plagiarism with text-comparison software to prevent plagiarism problems of students, the knowledge of academic writing with source-use and practices of plagiarism avoidance are extremely patchy (Reablerthirun et al. (2013). The implications of this on the reputation not only of individual universities but also of the country are clear: Thai academics including administrators, policymakers, researchers, lecturers, and students or even stakeholders need to be informed regarding the academic integrity violations and the seriousness of plagiarism, for without it, academic misconduct affects all aspects of higher education in Thailand. For a country with a long-term goal of being ASEAN<sup>2</sup>'s educational hub (Panyaarvudh, 2016), Thai Higher Education has a long way to go to address this pressing issue.

### **Research Aims and Questions**

As this study contributes to the knowledge of Thai lecturers' understanding of plagiarism, this study aimed to explore an understanding of lecturers' conceptualisation and understanding of plagiarism at a Thai university. The research questions are:

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<sup>2</sup> Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN) include Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Indonesia, Lao PDR, Malaysia, Myanmar, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand and Viet Nam (Association of South East Asian Nation, 2018).

- 1) To what extent do Thai lecturers understand plagiarism?
- 2) How do Thai lecturers conceptualise plagiarism in academic contexts?

## **Methodology**

### ***Participants***

Forty-four lecturers who taught and/or supervised students on their research project in the first semester of academic year 2017 at a university in the south of Thailand participated in this study. The University and its staff and student body are typical of regional Thai universities, in size, curriculum offering and the backgrounds of the academic staff. The participants were selected from the pool of all qualifying staff, that is, ones who both supervised students on research projects, and were doing so within the first semester of the academic year that the study took place. Their highest education was master's degree (n=40), doctoral degree (n=3) and bachelor's degree (n=1). Most of them (n=33) are female and the rest (11) are male, aged between 30 and 40 years (n=17), more than 50 years (n=15), between 41 and 50 years (n=8) and less than 30 years (n=4), respectively. Most lecturers (n=23) have been teaching at colleges or higher education institutions for more than ten years, followed by less than five years (n=12), and between 5 and 10 years (n=9). The Shapiro-Wilk test showed no statistically significant differences between the lecturers' test scores within the measures used, and their programs ( $p > 0.05$ ), meaning that the lecturers shared a similar perception of plagiarism. Twelve of them volunteered to take part in the interview.

### ***Research instruments***

The research instruments used in this study were designed in Thai based on the definitions of plagiarism, types of plagiarism and the application of relevant concepts to

our research questions, (Bokosmaty et al., 2019; Kokinaki et al., 2015; Mustafa, 2016; Pecorari, 2019; Pecorari & Petrić, 2014; Walker, 1998).

To examine the lecturers' conceptualisation and understanding of plagiarism, a questionnaire was adapted from previous research including that of Cardiff University (2014), Indiana University, School of Education (2014), Kokinaki et al. (2015), Orim (2014) and Srisongkram (2011). It was separated into three sections: 1) general information, 2) a test of academics' understanding of plagiarism, and 3) a survey of the respondent's perception of students' plagiarism. Due to the relative scarcity of research into academics' conceptualisations and lived understanding of plagiarism, yet at the same time, research into plagiarism in this particular context showing particular cultural elements, two factors became significant when initially developing the questionnaire. First, we needed to ensure that general statements about plagiarism definitions were wide enough to allow us to follow up on the quantitative analysis, during the interview stage. Second, the situations that were presented needed to have balance of wider plagiaristic behaviour from a range of cultural and international contexts, with some very specific cases that we knew might exist from previous students' plagiarism research in Thailand.

This study (the results of other elements are reported elsewhere) used and analysed section 2 of the questionnaire (Table 1), which was divided into 2 parts: 2.1 example written paragraphs (8 items) and 2.2 scenario-based questions (14 items) and finally, semi-structured interviews, based upon responses to the first two parts of the study but particularly focused on the lecturers' perception of plagiarism including their opinions about plagiarism deterrence or regulations for plagiarism at the university. Part 2.1 was designed by using both Thai and English texts, and part 2.2 was designed in

Thai based on the situations or cases that have been found in previous studies including definition and types of plagiarism. The respondents would be given 1 mark for a correct answer, and they would be given 0 (zero) mark for a wrong answer. A total score was 22 marks.

Table 1. Measurements used to analyse the lecturers' understanding of plagiarism

<b>Measurement</b>	<b>Part 2.1 (Items 1-8)</b>	<b>Part 2.2 (Items 1-14)</b>
<b>Sham paraphrasing</b>	1,2,3,8	4,8
<b>Illicit paraphrasing</b>	6,8	3
<b>Other plagiarism</b>	-	1
<b>Verbatim copying</b>	2,4,5,8	12,13
<b>Recycling</b>	-	2,6,7
<b>Ghost writing</b>	-	10,11
<b>Purloining</b>	-	14
<b>Summarising</b>	3,4,7	5,9
<b>Using quotation marks and appropriate citation</b>	1,3,5	-
<b>Copying and pasting several sources without citation</b>	4	-
<b>In total</b>	<b>22 items</b>	

The semi-structured interviews were employed to support research findings from the questionnaire. The interview questions were focused on the lecturers' perception of plagiarism including their opinions about plagiarism deterrence or regulations for plagiarism at the university.

Before data collection, all instruments were checked the content validity and reliability by applying an Index of Item Objective Congruence (IOC) approach and Cronbach's Alpha. The instruments were piloted with 20 lecturers who were not the same group of the main study. The results showed that the Cronbach's Alpha is 0.720. As Hinton et al. (2014) suggested, the acceptable Cronbach's Alpha should be higher than

0.6. It means that the questionnaire used in this study were acceptable and ready for data collection. For the interview questions, two representatives of the lecturers checked the suitability of the questions, and it was found the questions were suitable and did not need to be adjusted.

### ***Data collection procedures***

The participants were informed about the purpose of the study and their right before they were invited to sign a consent form. The data were made anonymous by excluding information that showed the participants' identities. All of them (44 lecturers) accepted to complete a questionnaire and gave their consent for the research. Then a paper-based questionnaire was distributed to the participants by the researcher.

The participants were also invited to take part in the interview to provide insightful information. Twelve lecturers volunteered to take part in the interview. Each interview took approximately 40 minutes. Two weeks after each interview, the transcription was sent to each interviewee to examine inaccuracies in transcribing and ensure clarity of his/her original thoughts. All transcriptions were approved by the interviewees, and all of them were collected by the researcher.

### ***Data analysis***

Data from the questionnaire were analysed by SPSS finding the descriptive analysis, i.e. frequency, percentage mean and standard deviation. It should be pointed at here that despite the rigour and integrity of the study, ultimately, the sample was relatively small and so the analysis should be read with this understanding. Data from the interviews

were analysed using the thematic analysis, which means the repeated patterns of meaning found in the transcription were coded, and then each code would be linked and grouped under the same themes. The codes and themes were discussed with the co-researcher until an agreement was reached.

## Findings

### *Thai lecturers' understanding of plagiarism*

The results from the questionnaires showed that the mean score of the lecturers was 13.25 (S.D. = 3.822). Most of them (n = 24) scored lower than mean. The minimum score was 7 and the maximum was 20. It can be concluded that most of the lecturers in this study have limited understanding of plagiarism. These particular findings are important in that they contribute to an under-researched field, although they support the work of Harper et al. (2018) in relation to staff being concerned about, but being lenient toward, academic cheating and plagiarism.

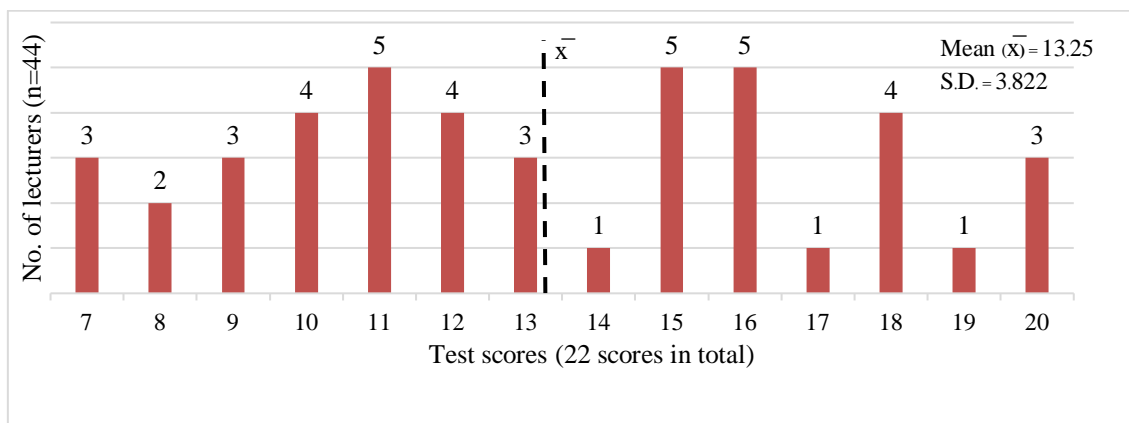


Figure 1. Lecturers' understanding of plagiarism

Table 2 also revealed that the participants did not fully understand plagiarism, especially ghost writing ( $\bar{x}$  = 0.35, S.D = 0.411), sham paraphrasing ( $\bar{x}$  = 0.45, S.D = 0.288),



and using quotation marks with appropriate citation ( $\bar{x} = 0.49$ , S.D = 0.300). Studies investigating staff knowledge of student cheating behaviour including plagiarism show similar results. The work of Awdry and Newton (2019) for example, showed a significant international difference between UK and Australian academics in relation to understanding both reasons for, and costs of contract cheating.

Table 2. Mean of the lecturers' scores categorised by the measurements

<b>Measurement</b>	<b>Mean (<math>\bar{x}</math>)</b>	<b>S.D.</b>
Sham paraphrasing	0.45	0.288
Illicit paraphrasing	0.56	0.664
Other plagiarism	0.90	0.290
Verbatim copying	0.62	0.216
Recycling	0.59	0.424
Ghost writing	0.35	0.411
Purloining	0.88	0.321
Summarising	0.67	0.232
Using quotation marks with appropriate citation	0.49	0.300
Copying and pasting several sources without citation	0.52	0.505

### *Thai lecturers' conceptualisation of plagiarism in academic contexts*

The findings from the interviews supported those of the questionnaires. Out of twelve lecturers, eleven of them defined plagiarism as verbatim copying or copying word-for-word from an original text without citation.

It's copying information from another source and using it as one's own without citation [and] without summarising. (T3)

[It's] copying information from the Internet, books or journal articles and using it without citation. (T9)

Some lecturers showed their misunderstanding about plagiarism avoidance that a copied sentence must not be changed to the author's words, but it needs to be cited.

According to what I have learnt and my understanding [of plagiarism avoidance], I have understood that when we copy sentences from original texts, we must cite every source...um...we cite the sources, but we must not change the sentences into our own words...um... this is what I understand about it. (T8)

Three of them have never known how to use and never used quotation marks in their research papers.

I have never known that when we copy a sentence from another source, we can use quotation marks with citation [to avoid plagiarism]. (T4)

In my previous research paper, I have never used quotation marks because I do not know how to use them with a copy sentence, [so]...no quotation marks in my research. (T12)

It is interesting that most of the lecturers (n=8) did not realise that ghost writing or hiring or asking someone to write a paper for them and presenting it as their name was a type of plagiarism. Moreover, some of them thought that ghost writing is acceptable if it is done via hiring.

[...] I don't know that hiring another person to write a paper without our knowledge is plagiarism. I think we shouldn't do that, but...um...is it plagiarism? I don't know. I think it relates to an ethical issue. (T8)

We pay for them [ghost writers], so it should be acceptable (T2)

Many lecturers (n=5) mentioned that the lecturers can use the students' work, but they should put the students' names as co-authors.

If we use the students' work as our own, it will be accounted for taking an advantage from the students. It's unethical...like stealing the students' intellectual property...the lecturers can use their students' work to publish or present at a conference but they need to show the students' names as co-authors or co-researchers. (T12)

On the other hand, some of them said that this can be based on agreement between the lecturers and the students.

It is based on agreement between the lecturers and the students. [...] after the project, sometimes I asked the students whether they would use it for their further study or not, if not, I would use the students' work as my own with a name of another lecturer. Most of them said OK...They don't care. They don't think they may use it in the future. (T5)

When the lecturers were asked how they teach students about plagiarism, most of them (n=7) reported that they have not focused on it much. They have focused on the students' comprehension of the content of the course rather than students' plagiarism.

I have never taught them explicitly on summarising or academic writing with citation because of a tight schedule with limited time in each course. I could meet them one hour a week in the class [research course] plus a huge class size [with over 50 students], so I could not effectively monitor the class and sufficiently give them feedback. (T4)

We [the lecturer and the students] usually meet in an informal meeting, and I give them an oral feedback on their work. I only suggest them how to do it in general but have not explicitly taught them how to write. (T5)

Although many lecturers have not explicitly taught the students how to write their thesis appropriately, some of them said that they gave their students some written

examples. Therefore, the students could learn from them. However, it was clear that the lecturers never made clear to students the relationship between written examples, the purpose of these in relation to wider academic learning, and the penalties for overtly plagiarising as a result.

I never teach them how to write, but I wrote and showed them some example sentences. (T7)

I allowed them to learn from written examples, but did not explain at what point this learning stops and plagiarising starts. (T8)

I show them some examples of written work, so they can learn from the previous studies such as how to write their thesis with in-text citation and cite several sources in one sentence. However, I have never asked them to practice in class. (T9)

When asked about their perception of students' plagiarism, the lecturers reported that the students lack practices in writing a summary and paraphrasing an original text into their own words. The students usually summarised by removing some words or changing or copying and pasting the sentences, or, sometimes, the whole paragraph from original texts into their own work.

[...] the students cannot express what they have read into their own words. Summarising, in their understanding, is removing some words, copying an introduction of an original text or copying only a conclusion of the original text and pasting it into their work. They have limited knowledge of summarising. (T2)

Most of the lecturers (n=9) said that students may plagiarise unintentionally due to lack of awareness of plagiarism. Students are not aware that what they have been

doing is plagiarism because they have not been trained on plagiarism avoidance sufficiently or been informed about seriousness of plagiarism.

In my opinion, the students may plagiarise unintentionally because they have insufficient knowledge of academic writing. They copy unintentionally. They do not intend to plagiarise. (T5)

We [Lecturers] haven't focused on plagiarism, so...um... they innocently plagiarise. They don't know what would happen if they plagiarise...now...I think that it will cause a serious problem if we don't encourage students to avoid plagiarism or [if we do] not inform them about it. (T9)

When the lecturers were asked about the policy for plagiarism at the university, all of them (n=12) reported that they have never heard about it. Eleven lecturers said that they have also never heard whether the university has provided any workshops or seminars on plagiarism avoidance. Therefore, many lecturers at the university are unclear on how to avoid plagiarism in academic writing. Although the university has provided workshops or seminars relating to the requirement of getting higher academic position for the lecturers, but those workshops have never addressed the continuum of how academics' beliefs intersect with plagiarism, from imposed rules to discussion about ultimately whose responsibility detection and learning are in practice. Furthermore, at a purely processual level, such workshops have never firmly informed them about plagiarism avoidance, and it is thus clear that there is a wide scale ambivalence concerning the practice and theory of plagiarism, and in policy terms, discussions were not approached from the perspective of individual responsibility and personal morality.

The university has never informed us about it [information about plagiarism avoidance]. Mostly, the university has arranged a seminar about writing an academic book or an academic paper. Some of the lecturers attended. The seminar informed us about the criteria for paper publication, not about writing a summary and citing sources. (T2)

To create an academic integrity environment at a university, specifically for undergraduate students, the lecturers suggested various strategies for plagiarism deterrence as shown in Figure 2.

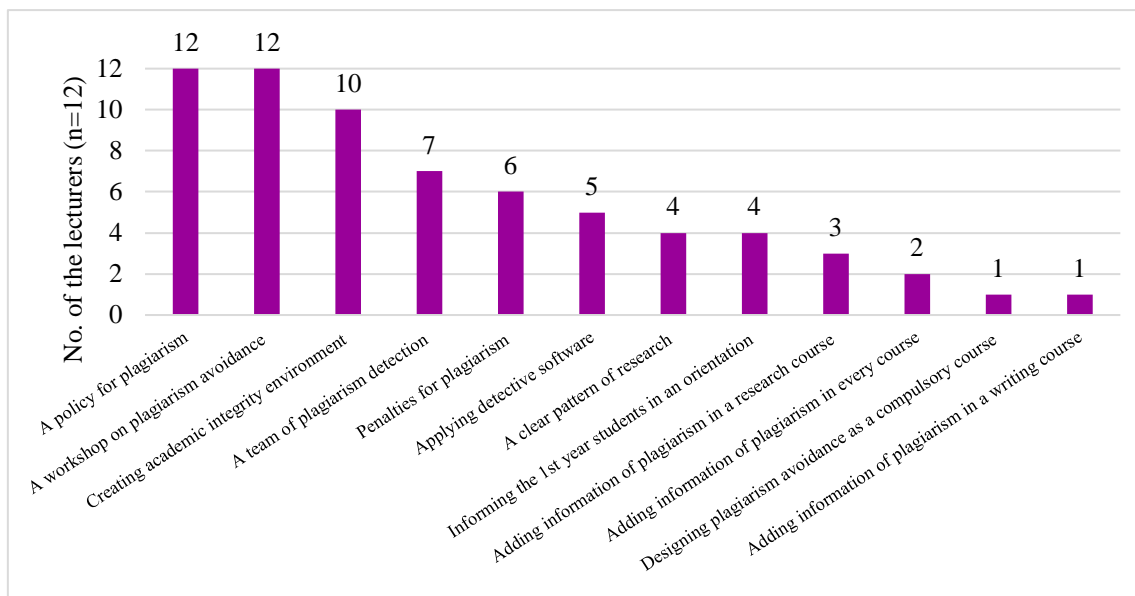


Figure 2. The lecturers' suggestions for plagiarism deterrence at the university

Some lecturers provided interesting suggestions for plagiarism deterrence at the university. For example, T7 has been teaching at the university for more than eighteen years suggested that:

The university should devote much attention to plagiarism such as launching a campaign of plagiarism avoidance to raise students' awareness of plagiarism. I am quite sure that most of the students plagiarise unintentionally because they do not know the seriousness of plagiarism and how to avoid it. The university should give priority to the lecturers'

awareness of plagiarism because they are those who teach and inform the students about it directly. (T7)

It can be concluded that the lecturers in this study had limited understanding and low awareness of plagiarism both in academic writing and the concept of plagiarism. These could affect how the lecturers teach or inform their students about plagiarism and plagiarism avoidance. These could also influence what students perceive about plagiarism.

## **Discussion**

This study aimed to explore what the lecturers understand about plagiarism and what they conceptualise about it using a mixed-methods approach integrated the results from the questionnaires and the semi-structured interviews. The results revealed that the lecturers had both limited understanding and low awareness of plagiarism, and that their conceptualisation of plagiarism both as a problem of scholarship and of moral behaviour was unsophisticated at best and a matter of ambivalence at worst. Moreover, in the lecturers' perception, the university has not shown sufficient attention to take plagiarism seriously.

### ***Lecturers' understanding of plagiarism***

The question that is significant for this research is how and whether lecturers can teach students about the concept of plagiarism when they have not fully understood it themselves (Suandusitpoll, 2011). According to the findings of this study, the lecturers showed limited understanding of plagiarism, especially ghost writing, sham paraphrasing and using quotation marks with appropriate citation. Although they

understood that plagiarism is copying word-for-word from an original text without citation, it is necessary for them to realise other types of plagiarism may be rife and thus learn how to manage it appropriately and ultimately to avoid it. Such findings illustrate the piecemeal way in which the academics in this study understood plagiarism, as a low-key and rather abstracted issue within studying, rather than a more sophisticated and conceptually complex matter (Gallant, 2017).

### ***Lecturers' conceptualisation of plagiarism***

#### *Lecturers' misconception of plagiarism*

In the lecturers' perceptions, plagiarism is conceptualised as copying word-for-word from an original text without citation. It is however an insufficient definition as explained previously because some lecturers demonstrate deep misconceptions about plagiarism avoidance. For example, the sentences from original sources must not be changed to one's own words (T8). The lecturers' understanding of plagiarism could certainly therefore influence that of students' which may lead them to plagiarise unintentionally and could affect the university's reputation in the future, especially within a university culture where academic behaviour is influential and holds great sway over student morality. In accordance with Sutherland-Smith (2019, p. 50), this research supports some existing work that indicated that the lecturers in many universities choose to deal with plagiarism in their own ways, based on their own beliefs, ideas and personal pedagogical orientation.

#### *Lecturers' view on using someone's work to present as one's own work*

The findings of this current study revealed that most of the lecturers had never heard



ghost writing or contract cheating. Unsurprisingly in this context then, some of them thought that hiring someone to write their paper was acceptable and as such, did not amount to plagiarism because they themselves had not written the work. Such behaviour has been found widely especially in international institutions where non-native English speakers have to write and submit their written work in English (Al-Shamaa et al., 2017; Ison, 2018).

This study found that using students' work and presenting students' names as 'co-authors' is quite common at the university. This study demonstrates that as long as the students' names have been shown on their work, it might be accepted if the lecturers have not used it for a personal purpose. However, it is ambiguous when some lecturers said that whether they could use the students' work as their own, it should depend upon an agreement between students and lecturers, a finding that contrasts with Jumlongkul (2016, p. 251) who stated that lecturers did not necessarily require agreement from other co-researchers.

#### *Lecturers' views on students' plagiarism*

The lecturers' views highlighted on students' plagiarism showed that students usually plagiarise due to lack of paraphrasing and summarising skills. It is similarly found in Sariffuddin et al.'s (2017) study that most students had inadequate skills in complex task of writing. But this study showed that the lecturers did not necessarily know how to react to students' lack of awareness of plagiarism, as well as found in many studies (e.g. Ballantine et al., 2015; Sutherland-Smith, 2019). As such, although the lecturers were aware that their partial knowledge was not advancing students' behaviour, they were

ambivalent in regards of how to progress either their understanding, or students' development as learners.

#### *Lecturers' attention to deal with students' plagiarism*

The more lecturers take plagiarism seriously, the more students' deeper understanding of plagiarism can be enhanced. It is apparent that the lecturers in this study have not sufficiently concentrated on students' plagiarism. They prefer instead to focus on the content of the course than plagiarism in students' work. The findings are similar to those of Al-Shamaa et al. (2017), Charubusp (2015) and Coughlin (2015), which found lecturers' ignorance in plagiarism assessment and students' plagiaristic behaviour.

This is exacerbated in international contexts, such as occurs in Thailand, where a rote-learning approach is used (Tangkitvanich, 2018) and which might implicitly suggest that teachers copy the contents or information from the websites without appropriate acknowledgement or citations for their teaching materials (Reablerthirun et al., 2013).

#### *Lecturers' views on plagiarism deterrence at the university*

Plagiarism can "threaten the reputation of nations, universities, teachers, and honest students, as deceptive practices lead to questions in relation to the quality of the educational experience" (Thomas, 2017, p. 141). This notion is similar to that of Salleh et al. (2012) that whether plagiarism has been intended to deceive, such behaviour could have an impact to the cooperate image of the university.

The interview findings showed that most of the lecturers had never heard of the policy for plagiarism at the university, and the university has not provided any workshops or seminars to inform students and lecturers about the concept of plagiarism

and plagiarism avoidance. Therefore, it is perhaps unsurprising that the lecturers feel confused when they need to cope with students' plagiarism or teach students how to avoid it. It could be assumed that the university has not taken plagiarism seriously, or the policy for plagiarism at the university may not exist, so the lecturers have to deal with plagiarism of students at an individual level.

### **Concluding Thoughts**

This study used a mixed-methods approach to explore the faculty's awareness and understanding of plagiarism. Forty-four lecturers at a Thai university participated in this study that demonstrated a clear lack of understanding about plagiarism, how to avoid it, and how to teach wider academic integrity. It is clear within this study, that not only is this a widespread problem, but also that plagiarism conceptualisation is a multifaceted issue and so depends on not only one method of reducing it. The current status of literature supports this, and demonstrates the urgent need to clarify both concepts around the different types of plagiarism and how each is understood by academics, as well as suggesting ways forward to understand how plagiarism amongst academics is frequently a cultural issue, new and develop academics learning from existing academics when plagiarism is an issue and when it appears not to be. Policies with a precise definition of plagiarism and its types including penalties for those who plagiarise should be centralised at this and other universities, and the university should take plagiarism seriously not only to create an environment of academic integrity but, and in support of Tran's (2017) work, also to raise all members' awareness of plagiarism at both sophisticated and practical levels, and in processual and appropriately punitive ways.

These elements of plagiarism awareness are being pursued within the university of this study as a result of this current research. However, the findings confirm that a multifaceted approach is critical in recognising academics' uncertainty about when and if plagiarism constitutes major infringements, and so for the sustainability of plagiarism deterrence, the university is developing policies for plagiarism with the precise definition of plagiarism, types of plagiarism and penalties for plagiarism, which might help raise the lecturers' awareness of plagiarism and encourage them to deal with plagiarism of students in a more nuanced and morally responsible way. Although this particular study cannot be completely generalised due to relatively small samples, it may encourage both Thai universities and other higher education institutions alike to pay more attention to dealing with plagiarism and to understand the impact of not doing so on both academic integrity and future academics' career development.

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