

# [Plagiarism in education system education essay](https://assignbuster.com/plagiarism-in-education-system-education-essay/)

## Introduction:

Plagiarism has stained our education system for long. The reason behind highlighting this problem is that people, especially in our society are unaware of the consequences of this practice, and it is deemed normal without any sense of guilt or dishonesty. And further the expansion of the internet has made it easier for people to fetch and present someone else’s work as their own. So this problem has to be identified so that this unethical practice can be eradicated. The first step in the eradication should be to bring reforms in the educational sector, because students carry on these habits into their practical lives causing social dilemma.

This report discusses the reasons for plagiarism and its proposed, and some tried and tested solutions.

## What is Plagiarism? :

“ Plagiarism is the copying of ideas, wording, or anything else from another source without appropriate reference or acknowledgement so that it appears to be one’s own work. ” (grips, 2011)

Some others define Plagiarism as…

…the reproduction or paraphrasing, without acknowledgement, from public or private (i. e. unpublished) material (including material downloaded from the Internet), attributable to, or which is the intellectual property of another, including the work of students”. (University of Southampton).

…the copying or paraphrasing of other people’s work or ideas into your own work without full acknowledgement (University of Oxford).

From above definitions we deduce following important points about plagiarism that it is:

using someone else’s work, or ideas.

and doing so without proper acknowledgement.

mere rephrasing of someone else’s work does not alleviate one from the crime.

Plagiarism is unethical and dishonest. It is unfair to one’s fellows who actually worked hard and did the given work/assignment themselves. It like stealing from someone. It can damage one’s own credibility along with the credibility of the one whose work the person has plagiarized. Further it Prevents Learning.

Hence awareness has to be brought among the students so they can avoid these dire consequences of this practice.

## Methodology:

Plagiarism has existed throughout the history of mankind in one form or the other, but the rise of the technological era and especially internet has made access to information (& other’s work) exceptionally easier, which has increased the instances of plagiarism considerably. The practice of plagiarism causes damage to the both the doer and the victim. So this practice has been deemed unethical and awareness needs to be brought to every person related to education, so that this practice can be eliminated.

This problem can be solved by going through following steps

Recognizing plagiarism and its origin

Reasons for why students plagiarize

Educating and forming anti plagiarism policies.

Each of these steps has been based on surveys/studies that were done by credible authorities during the past decade or so. I have gone through these surveys and articles published by my peers, and made my own understanding of this problem. This approach has been employed in the past to highlight such problems and I have thus adopted it to present the problem and its various solutions in this report.

## Recognition of Plagiarism:

Recognizing plagiarism is one of the most important steps towards the eradication of this crime. Everyone needs to recognize the problem of student plagiarism in this internet era. The extent to which this problem has affected the academia is very deep. The reason behind the difficulty in the recognition of the problem is that it is not easy to define plagiarism as there is a very fine line between what can be borrowed and what can’t be. So everyone in the environment i. e., peers, instructors have to help students fetch information and guide them the right way to gain the information they seek.

Next we have to look into:

The reasons why students plagiarize.

The General attitude towards plagiarism.

The role of academic institution.

Means used by students to plagiarize.

Ways by which academic institutions detect plagiarism?

Available & Potential Solutions

One important thing is the extent to which this problem has affected our system and how deep it has spread into the education system

## Reason behind Plagiarism:

To get an insight into various reasons why student plagiarize various studies have been done..

In 2002 a survey was conducted of some 35000 U. S college students 36 % admitted to have done copy n paste plagiarism some time in their academic life. (McCabe, 2003).

While in a 2006 Canadian survey, “ more than half of the undergraduates and 35 percent of the graduate students surveyed admitted to some form of cheating on written course work, such as failing to footnote, turning in someone else’s work, or falsifying a bibliography” (Birchard, 2006).

The same situation is here in our country where plagiarism, especially in university students has grown considerably and without any check. Here copying of each other’s assignments is considered normal and no one penalizes them for this practice. Hence students are being encouraged. The problem with such surveys is that the fear of penalties resulting from the conviction of plagiarism causes many students to be dishonest. So the statistics coming out of such surveys have to be regarded as the minima.

## Academic institute’s attitude:

In my opinion it is an ethical issue and hence universities can’t do much in this regard, besides making strict policies because just by creating mere policies and penalties this can’t be controlled effectively as students will find a way around detection. This is an issue that has to be solved by teaching and talking to students about plagiarism in a friendly way. But our teachers do not give heed to plagiarism and once detected do not do the official procedure for the punishment, A few reasons behind such attitude are: The time required is not worth it. The time required in follow up procedures can effect concentration from teaching and learning, the procedures are very stressful, It’s not always the student’s fault because of the culture from they came can be different and they may not know the seriousness of the issue.

## Internet- the ultimate seduction:

A part from the culture students come from, the major reason behind the rise of plagiarism is the rise of the internet. The ease with which information is available has tempted everyone to do less work “ Researching” and spend more time “ Searching”. This is done extensively by students and without proper citation and hence they gain more by doing minimum work. The arrival of bit torrent sites has made it possible for students to get their hands on material with a few clicks, that couldn’t have been borrowed without written permission of author before. These comforts have made plagiarism attractive to most of the students.

One serious issue is that now there are “ paper mill” or commonly known as “ cheat” sites. Which not only provide students with the material which they can copy and paste but they also encourage them to do less work and hence be “ efficient” they proudly announce that they are aiding students while in reality they are doing a serious offence and ruining the learning phase of many students. These sites enable students to buy material that is exactly what they need without even making the effort to search it online.

Once reasons behind plagiarism are known and we know the means by which students can plagiarize we can take better measures to counter plagiarism.

## Plagiarism Detection:

Plagiarism detection used now a day is still very simple because it is based on text matching and they rely on existing databases. Such plagiarism detection has two weak points:

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A minor paraphrasing or rephrasing of the copied work will make the plagiarized work undetectable, such sites are effective against students who have make no attempt to amend the text.

Also such sites rely on existing databases so material copied from stuff that is not in their database will go undetected. Such as material copied from books, magazines and fellow students, which are not available online.

Despite these shortcomings recent studies have shown that these plagiarism detection tools have been somewhat effective in indicating the instances of plagiarism. Some of these are:

Turnitin. com is the most widely used plagiarism tool, according to its official website “ it enables instructors to manage grades and assignments online and instantly identify papers containing unoriginal material”.

Apart from it, other software such as MyDropbox Suite, Easy Verification Engine (EVE2, MOSS are also very efficient.

These are machine based plagiarism detection tools which have their limitations, if we are to eradicate this practice we have to resort to the more conventional ways of human persuasion. We have to make sure that students know the ethical importance of this matter, the dire consequences this can have in their coming life. So that they can avoid this unnecessary ill practice. And resort to the way of learning the right way.

## Penalties & Honor codes:

One effective way to prevent plagiarism is through introducing strict penalties on plagiarism and using honor codes at the time of admission and professing them so that students avoid unnecessary disciplinary action against them.

## Results:

The point of the methods described previously was to Identify and Prevent plagiarism. The success of these methods has been measured by many studies.

First step was to recognize plagiarism, Tsang and Choy’s (2005) study was conducted after their seminars on plagiarism, where they educated students about it in those seminars. Before and after seminar they asked students to fill in their questionnaires, which consisted of questions regarding programming and text plagiarism. The results show that before the seminar series only 8-9 percent of the students knew the correct meaning of plagiarism while after the series 90 percent of students knew the correct meaning of plagiarism. Results show the high success rate of such seminars that help students understand and Recognize plagiarism.

Next step was to identify the reasons why students plagiarize the results of Tsang and Choy (2005) have been compiled in the following graph.

graph. jpg

This survey and studies done by (McCabe, 2003) & (Birchard, 2006) highlight following major reasons behind plagiarism:

Students plagiarize because they don’t care about the difference between searching & researching.

Sometimes due to high expectations students tend to copy other’s work that is presented in better wording that their own.

Lack of knowledge on how to cite references in their work.

Pressure to get good grade.

Poor time management and organizational skills.

The plagiarism Culture i. e. everyone around them is doing the same then why should they restrain themselves.

Then the means by which students plagiarize, according to a studies conducted by Roberts (2007) & Stoerger (2006) major mean by which students plagiarize is through internet. And the trend of using paper mill sites is gaining popularity such sites include: ‘ Schoolsucks. com’, ‘ Termpapersmonthly. com’, ‘ Coursework. info’, and ‘ Essayschool. com’.

Plagiarism detection tools have been very successful in recent times as indicated by following survey conducted by the turnitin. com, on number of teachers using turnitin each year:

instructors\_by\_AY. png

(University of IOWA, 2011)

Lastly, the effectiveness of Plagiarism Detection Software and the actions taken, I have generated the following from figures presented in (turnitin. com, 2010).

graph2. jpg

The results are very much as expected in the previous sections of the report. The reasons why students plagiarize have been generalized and the instances of plagiarism have increased alarmingly. The results of these surveys clearly show that although plagiarism can be detected quite efficiently now days, cases of plagiarism are increasing every year. The penalizing is not happening proportionally. Hence plagiarism is being encouraged indirectly by not taking action against it.

## Discussion:

The purpose of this report was to propose efficient ways to Identify and Prevent the plagiarism in our education sector, the results clearly show favor to the suggested methods i. e., alone relying on machine base solutions does not ensure the attainment of our goals as indicated in figure 3, although instructors caught many cases of plagiarism, no disciplinary actions were taken. Hence there is no point in detecting plagiarism if correct action is not to be taken. So a Mixture of software based methods and proper human guidance are both necessary to control plagiarism. The software based methods have their limitations, so they are not the enough to prevent the instances of plagiarism. As indicated in the results, the seminars and conferences are very effective in educating students on plagiarism and the most effective way to do so is to enable them to realize that it is an ethical and moral issue rather than a professional problem. In this way they can be mentally prepared to counter this problem.

Most cases of plagiarism can be avoided, however, by citing sources. Simply acknowledging that certain material has been borrowed, and providing your audience with the information necessary to find that source, is usually enough to prevent plagiarism. It is obvious that instructors see plagiarism as a wrong practice and they think that students should be penalized for it. However it is also a fact that instructors ignore many aspects of plagiarism and do not teach students how to avoid it. So the attitude towards plagiarism is correct but the process of tackling instances of plagiarism is not. It should be focused on preventing plagiarism due to ignorance. Only then when instances of plagiarism are caught one can say that it was intentional and strict action is justified.

The students should be taught the skill of avoiding plagiarism, and academic institutions should be patient with this as it will take time for students to learn wholly this skill. Carroll (2002) has discussed the complexities that arise in teaching students about plagiarism. In our institutes students are simply given a brief overview of plagiarism and then a website is given to them for details. Such practice is not teaching anyone, anything. Instead, it should be taught gradually, so that students are familiar with core aspects of plagiarism. Also it should be presented as an aspect of academia and not as a crime.

## Searching vs. Researching

Today students try to avoid the brainstorming that is required when researching content. Because it involves reading information and then processing it in their minds to get the idea and use it for their research. Instead an attractive alternative is to search the content “ efficiently” and then using it as it is without processing it and forming one’s own understanding of the topic.

## Promotion of Ethical Behavior:

Although Official Polices and awareness lectures do stress the seriousness of the issue among the students but they do not tell the students what it really entails and why they should not do plagiarism?. The punishments do not effectively prevent plagiarism; instead they just make them more cautious. So students themselves should be able to form an opinion that they should not plagiarize and that they themselves should learn skills to write without copying. Plagiarism, as an ethical issue requires students to change their mentality and actively seeking ways to avoid it.

## Possible New Directions:

The plagiarism prevention methods discussed in this report i. e. moralistic, disciplinary and software based, all have their shortcomings. So new innovative approaches may be used to counter plagiarism:

## Use of Technology by Students:

First of all students themselves should be able to detect plagiarism instead of their instructors, this will give them an idea of how much they have “ unintentionally” copied, so that they can refine their work and do plagiarism check again and again until the software clears them out. This method saves the students the embarrassment of unintentional plagiarism. Another way is to develop software that can catch the rephrasing that is done by the students to prevent plagiarism.

## Control to instructor:

Instead of depending on future technologies, we can use an approach which is practical, the procedures of officially dealing with plagiarism are very cumbersome so instead, the student shall be given a chance to convince the instructor that he has learnt the meaning of the thing, hence the goal has been achieved. This can be done by conducting an exam of some sort by assessor and see whether the student has really learned something or not. But this scheme only works within certain courses, for publications and research work there is zero tolerance for any kind of plagiarism.

## Conclusion:

Well, by analyzing the definitions of plagiarism, the attitude of education sector toward it, the current ways of educating students about plagiarism and the consensus that offending students should be punished, explained in this report. We conclude that Plagiarism is a serious issue and needs to be addressed. But the problem cannot be solved by increasing the use of machine based plagiarism detection software only or using even more strict policies, but by educating all the involved parties and by using balanced combination of software and human based solutions.