Is Copy-Paste Culture Substantiated as Unstoppable in Written Assignments?
A Study of Academic Integrity in Higher Education of Bangladesh

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Abstract

The idea of exhibiting academic integrity is not a recent phenomenon when academics and researchers have been expressing fury against any kind of academic theft worldwide. The strolling of internet, since its inception, appeared as the best blessing of all the technological innovations which has created the threat of content theft simultaneously among the faculty members, researchers and students. Research substantiates that students in higher education are mostly keen to copy-paste in written assignments or take-home exams without following proper referencing system. Sometime, students attempt to cite and refer the source of their writings, but they fail to paraphrase or summarize intellectual properties appropriately.

In Bangladesh, it is often uttered that most of the higher education students are victim of this ill practice. Idea stealing, improper citation and referencing lead a student to copy-paste and to, somehow, manage a deadline. Creating new knowledge what it is called the purpose of coming to a higher education institution; but is it actually the scenario globally in general and Bangladesh in particular?

Easy access to the sources at present, reluctance of students to devote themselves in the challenging mission of creating, lack of authentic and dominant tool to check plagiarism (though some web checkers like turnitin have been contributing a lot) are the main reasons behind this curse of copy-paste.

This paper attempts to analyze the present scenario of plagiarism checking practices worldwide, to compare those with that of Bangladesh and to provide future directions for reducing the practices; and thus answering question of the title of this paper.

Key Terms: academic integrity, plagiarism, copy-paste

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Introduction

Are there any new ideas in the world? - is one of the key questions towards the originality of any write-ups. And it is true to a great extent that most of the writers struggle with originality (Donovan, 2016). So, what is wrong if a student in higher education borrows a little bit from other sources? There is no problem when students borrow ideas from somebody else rather it arises when they do not cite, refer or even forget to acknowledge other peoples' contribution. The situation of such unawareness is defined as plagiarism. When a student becomes a teacher, he tries to stop this copy-paste culture which was, in most cases, ignored to a greater degree in the student life. The advocates of copy-paste culture, though hardly be found, may take this as an argument that one can borrow ideas or somebody else's work by citing and referencing them, but what sort of value it creates if they just copy and paste by doing so? That is what is seen in the higher education institutions that they tend to copy and paste in take-home examinations without following proper referencing systems or without paraphrasing properly. This copy-paste culture is intensified by the revolutionary emergence of the modern technology. So, the great challenge of tackling copy-paste culture is well known and bears high concentration of the pedagogues worldwide.

Objectives

Plagiarism does not, at all, add value to the existing knowledge, nor even provides creativity to the students rather accelerates the intentions of clicking, selecting, copying and pasting. That is how generations are created, leaving aside the significant part of exceptions, who are unable to think and create. The title of the paper categorizes copy-paste as a culture, so, this culture, presumably, can be changed by developing a cultural movement academically among the pedagogues and pupils.

The key objectives of this study are-
   a. analyzing the present scenario of plagiarism checking practices worldwide;
   b. to compare them with that of Bangladesh;
   c. to provide future directions for reducing the practices; and
   d. Thus, answering question of the title of this paper.

Methodology

A descriptive research methodology is adopted in this study in quest of quantitative and qualitative results. Analysis and interpretation is done in association with primary and secondary data. A structured questionnaire (Table 1 & 2) survey was administered to collect primary data while internet was used as the prime source of secondary data. The 1st part of the questionnaire attempts to bring out the level of agreements with 15

statements in a range of minimum 1 to maximum 5. These statements were prepared in line with the widely spoken allegations against the students and the teachers regarding plagiarism. 2nd part (questionnaire 2) of the questionnaire with 6 open ended questions invokes comments and suggestions of the samples to describe the scenario and directions for further improvements.

Focus Group and Sampling

As per the significant role of Faculty Members serving in various universities, both public and private in Bangladesh, they are taken as the focus group in relevance to the research problem. A blend of convenience and judgment sampling technique, under nonprobability method, were taken during the sampling process. Convenience sampling were favorable in the sense to minimize cost for collecting data by sending the questionnaires in email and the judgment sampling was used to ensure the representation from the focus group. 8 universities were taken as focus group on random basis, questionnaires were sent to 244 email addresses, sending email failed 36 of them and only 15 questionnaires got back (Appendix A).

Limitations

Looking for the easy access to reach to the focus group tempted to go for convenience and judgment sampling which at the same time cannot be congenial. And eventually, the paper is not free from limitations, rather, the quality of the paper would have been improved if the following limitations could be overcome:

   i. time constraints for data collection and preparation of the report;
   ii. small nonprobability sampling;
   iii. small number of respondents which hardly provides scope to make authentic decision;
   iv. the perception of faculty members are collected ignoring the students' opinion;
   v. email may not be congenial for the samples to receive and reply;
   vi. lack of cooperative attitude of the samples;
   vii. lack of sufficient secondary online data regarding the research problem in Bangladesh.

Literature Review

What is Academic Integrity?

There is a remarkable difference between honesty and integrity. Integrity is something more than honesty. Someone can have honesty without integrity but cannot have integrity without honesty (Flamingogirl, 2009). And the fictional difference between integrity and honesty is shown in *A Mother in Mannville* by Rawlings (1936). The honesty is to possess the positive qualities in a character whereas the integrity means to uphold those

qualities in the life. Learning and preaching as an academic is the noble passion for a teacher and to maintain the nobility at the same time is essential for them. Students tend to overcome the impediments of course works somehow. But, the question is, how many of them possess academic integrity while undertaking the written assignments and presentations? The idea of borrowing is common in the knowledge sharing process for academics. Students, generally, are informed regarding the maintenance of academic integrity; not only just honesty. How can they do that? Many may think that the referencing by following the established systems is the single best solution to maintain academic integrity, but the argument, here, students may be showing honesty by following the proper referencing systems, but they fail to maintain academic integrity. Because copying, pasting and referring to the source may represent honesty but does not represent integrity. On the other hand, idea borrowing, paraphrasing or quoting, and referring to the source can represent academic integrity. As The School for Ethical Education – SEE (2015) defines academic integrity by honest academic work where:

1. "the ideas and the writing of others are properly cited;
2. students submit their own work for tests and assignments without unauthorized assistance;
3. students do not provide unauthorized assistance to others; and
4. students report their research or accomplishments accurately."

Understanding Plagiarism

Plagiarism means, according to Mirriam-Webster Online Dictionary (2015),

- "to steal and pass off (the ideas or words of another) as one's own
- to use (another's production) without crediting the source
- to commit literary theft
- to present as new and original an idea or product derived from an existing source".

The significant difference between innovation and invention (Grasty, 2012) may add some striking argument to make a distinction in creating a new product or process without depending on others' ideas, whereas, innovation may mean to bring new things depending on others' ideas. That is why it is not a wonder when Levitt (1966), a high priest of innovation, considers and advocates about imitation for further growth in business. So, the imitation of ideas is not exceptional and thus imitating with a touch of invention is innovation of ideas as well. Paraphrasing may be the best single tool to avoid the plagiarism i.e. innovating ideas.

The numbers of students who admit cheating in some form in the USA are eye-opening. The statistics below are a snapshot of overall trends

uncovered over the past 12 years by a research conducted by International Center for Academic Integrity (ICAI) and McCabe (2015):

	Graduate Students	Undergraduates*
Number responding	~17,000	~71300
% who admit cheating on test:	17%	39%
% who admit cheating on written assignments	40%	62%
% total who admit written or test cheating	43%	68%

* Excluding first year students, code schools, and two years schools

Paraphrasing and Metaphrasing

The talked issue of academic integrity underlines the difference between paraphrasing and metaphrasing. 'A restatement of a text or passage in another form or other words, often to clarify meaning' is termed as paraphrasing (The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language, 2015) and 'A word-for-word translation' is called metaphrase (The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language, 2015). Metaphrases are used vastly when translating any religious scripture (Wikipedia, 2015). Because the concentration, when translating the holy verses of scriptures, is on how successfully one can write without changing the meaning of the sentences. But, when it is talked about the rephrasing of course work such as written assignments or classroom presentations, paraphrasing is needed to provide critical opinion to the comment of the source. And that is why, converting the text of others, according to the requirement of the course works, is essential. So, metaphrasing does not represent a students' or writers' opinion; thus it violates the academic integrity from academic point of view. Conversely, a tricky paraphrase can violate the academic integrity as the online plagiarism detectors are unable to detect tricky paraphrases. Then, students may take the opportunity of submitting a single work paraphrased several times

Common Knowledge

The educators and votaries of academic integrity emphasize on the use of internationally accepted referencing systems. Some may comment on the exaggeration of such requirement to use reference in sources someone uses in any write-up. There is an exception while referencing sources for common knowledge. Harvard Guide to Using Sources (2015) clarifies common knowledge as "information generally known to an educated reader, such as widely known facts and dates, and, more rarely, ideas or language".

Originality Checks

Turnitin is the leading organization in the originality check industry. Online based Turnitin uses databases having 45+ billion web pages crawled,

400+ million archived student papers, 130+ million articles from 110,000+ journals periodicals and books (Turnitin website, 2015). The writecheck for students, ithenticate for publishers and researchers, turnitin for academic professionals, and plagiarism.org for educational resources are included in the product line of Turnitin Company.

The other companies working to detect plagiarism and proper attribution include copyscape (http://www.copyscape.com/) and SafeAssign (http://www.safeassign.com/) etc.

Turnitin and Controversy

Plagiarism checking is mandatory in many educational institutions in the USA which has triggered controversy. Some finds this attribution checking as the gross encroachment of Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) in the country (Brenner, 2014). The Act bans revealing any personal information of students to any third party without the consent of the students or their family. But checking the write-ups in turnitin violates the Act. The votaries of this act find plagiarism checking as a tool to create mistrust between the teacher and students. On the other hand, the mandatory submission of written papers creates presumption of guilt in the students' tender mind (Hurley, 2006). Presumption of guilt is aroused when a student is told that the produced work will be checked by an online detection tool. And when they concentrate on referencing, students cannot contribute creatively in write-ups. In contrast, some teachers argue that the online checkers reduces effort of examiners and increases a tendency among the students to contribute vigilantly.

Preventing Plagiarism Globally

A number of organizations work worldwide to prevent plagiarism and to maintain the academic integrity. They attempt to create awareness and promote the values of academic integrity; thus, to create a positive culture in the academic arena.

The organizations which work globally to build a culture of academic integrity include (ICAI website, 2015)-

1. Asia Pacific Forum on Educational Integrity (APFEI)
2. Association for American Colleges and Universities (AACU)
3. Association for Moral Education (AME)
4. Association for Practical and Professional Ethics (APPE)
5. Professional Ethics
6. Council for the Advancement of Standards in Higher Education (CAS)
7. Center for Business Ethics
8. Center for the Study of Ethics in the Professions (CSEP)
9. Character Counts

10. National Character Education Center
11. Character Education Partnership (CEP)
12. Council for Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA)
13. Journal of College and Character
14. Ethics & War
15. American Psychological Association
16. Emory Center for Ethics
17. Online Ethics Center for Engineering and Science (OEC)
18. Markkula Center for Applied Ethics
19. Advancing High Ethical Standards and Practices
20. Ethics Updates
21. Institute for Global Ethics
22. The Kenan Institute for Ethics at Duke University
23. Frances Marlin MANN Center for Ethics and Leadership
24. NASPA Student Affairs Administrators in Higher Education
25. National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA)
26. Mansfield Ethics and Public Affairs Program
27. Plagiarism dot org
28. ReferenCite
29. The School for Ethical Education (SEE)
30. The Society for Values in Higher Education

International Center for Academic Integrity (ICAI) and other organizations devote to advocacy against plagiarism i.e the content theft and to ensure infringement for the copyright owner. ICAI works to "identify, promote, and affirm the values of academic integrity among students, faculty, teachers, and administrators" (ICAI website, 2015). SEE contributes in this regard by a project called 'integrity works' (SEE website, 2015) whereas Plagiarism Today endeavors to protect the copyrights of the owners (Plagiarism Today website, 2015).

Preventing Plagiarism in Bangladesh

Attempts to ensure academic integrity have been seen in only a few number of higher education institutions in Bangladesh. It seems that the problem attracts the attention of the academicians, but organized movements like the global academic thinkers, are not seen yet in Bangladesh. However, a few institutions have incepted activities to tackle the challenge in the country. Such as Sher-e-Bangla Agricultural University (SAU) (Haque, 2016) developed plagiarism detection facility; Eastern University (Eastern University Library, 2016) uses turnitin as the major tool for detecting plagiarism as well as prescribing free online detection tools; Hamdard University Bangladesh (Hamdard University Bangladesh Website, 2016) includes academic integrity in the core values of the university; University of

Liberal Arts Bangladesh (ULAB) holds seminar to combat plagiarism (ULAB Website, 2016); and evidence of classroom presentation is found in the BRAC University (BRAC University Website, 2016).

Referencing Systems

The role of recognized referencing systems is immense and students can avoid unintentional plagiarism by following one of them. The most common referencing systems used globally are (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2009)-

1. Author-Date Systems (The Harvard Style)
2. The American Psychological Association (APA) Style
3. Numeric Systems
4. Modern Language Association (MLA) Style.

Data Collection

For collecting data, an attempt to send the questionnaire via email was made and, unfortunately, but not surprisingly, got 15 opinions from (244-36=) 208 emails (Appendix A). Collecting data by using internet is not going to be easy, was presumed. But the time and the cost consideration left the only option to collect data by using virtual media.

Findings and Analysis

The respondents' attitude regarding the knowledge of plagiarism (initial 9 statements) among the students whom they teach and attitude of themselves (6 statements) in the same regard are shown in Table 1 as it was found by email reply. In the questionnaire 1, among the 15 statements in which the respondents replied by putting the weight starting minimum 1 to maximum 5 depending on how far they agree to the statement.

The bold numbers in table represent the highest numbers and percentage of agreement in the weighted scale. It is quite obvious that a significant number of students, according to the samples, are not aware of the plagiarism, referencing and a trend to hit the internet for collecting answers without proper paraphrasing. The easy accessibility, may be, in the internet threatens the future of academic integrity in Bangladesh. Although the sample is not sufficient enough judge and come to a conclusion, but empirical study of the author can justify the statement by the help of the reflected opinion.

Table 1: Respondents: Faculty Members of universities in Bangladesh

Total No. of Respondents: 15

(Parenthesis Exhibit % & Fraction Rounded)

No.	Statement	Weight				
	Students- (Statement no. 1-9)	1	2	3	4	5
1.	tend to search the given assignment in the internet on the first hit.	--	2 (13)	--	4 (27)	**9 (60)**
2.	copy and paste the answers from the internet straightaway, if available.	1 (7)	--	2 (13)	**8 (53)**	4 (27)
3.	are able to paraphrase successfully.	6 (40)	**8 (53)**	1 (7)		
4.	cite any reference or quotation within the text, if it is borrowed.	4 (27)	**8 (53)**	2 (13)	--	1 (7)
5.	refer the source properly by following established referencing system.	**7 (47)**	6 (40)	1 (7)	1 (7)	--
6.	are aware of the fact of showing academic integrity.	**9 (60)**	3 (20)	2 (13)	--	1 (7)
7.	are familiar with the term 'common knowledge'.	**8 (53)**	--	3 (20)	4 (27)	--
8.	understand the idea of plagiarism.	**7 (47)**	2 (13)	4 (27)	--	1 (7)
9.	are acquainted with online plagiarism checker.	**9 (60)**	5 (33)	1 (7)	--	--
	I- (Statement no. 11-15)					
10.	discuss about academic integrity in the very outset of the semester to students.	2 (13)	2 (13)	**6 (40)**	5 (33)	--
11.	can detect plagiarized work of students, most of the time, without using online checker.		4 (27)	**5 (33)**	3 (20)	3 (20)
12.	penalize the plagiarized work to the maximum.	2 (13)	**5 (33)**	3 (20)	3 (20)	2 (13)
13.	use more than one source to discuss a topic in the classroom.	1 (7)	2 (13)	1 (7)	5 (33)	**6 (40)**
14.	properly cite and use references in the class materials, if provided to the students.		3 (20)	1 (7)	**8 (53)**	3 (20)
15.	motivate the students to use references always.		2 (13)	2 (13)	3 (20)	**8 (53)**

Source: Email Survey

53% respondents agree with the statements that the students go to internet and produce, in fact, copy-paste, answers without paraphrasing successfully (statement 1,2,3,4). Similar opinion is found about the other statements (5-9) showing significant disagreement with the statements representing the gross violation of academic integrity in higher education.

Statements no. 10 – 15 is about the samples' knowledge and applicability of the academic integrity. Significant numbers of respondents showed the positive feedback about maintaining academic integrity and motivating students regarding this.

Table 2: Summary of the answers from Questionnaire 2

No.	Questions	Summary of Answers
A.	What are the main reasons, in brief, behind the copy-paste culture (academic theft) in higher education?	1. lack of hardworking mentality of students 2. lack of motivation from the teachers 3. negligence of teachers 4. availability of data 5. lack of curiosity 6. cultural background of this region 7. weakness in language (English) 8. lack of guidelines 9. time saving tendency 10. impractical assignments
B.	How far, do you think, the accessibility of information in the internet is responsible to the emergence of copy-paste culture?	1. to a great extent
C.	Why cannot students paraphrase successfully? (If you do not agree to a greater extent with the statement no. 3 of questionnaire 1)	1. poor command over English
D.	How can the culture of referencing be achieved in the higher education?	1. practice and teaching 2. knowledge of academic integrity 3. report writing lessons 4. creating awareness 5. motivating and training,
E.	How can we prevent copy-paste culture (academic theft) in the university level?	1. Strictly handling by teachers 2. using plagiarism detecting software 3. motivating 4. penalizing
F.	Is copy-paste culture substantiated as unstoppable in the take-home exams nowadays?	1. Could not be determined the answer.

Source: Email Survey

Table 2 represents the qualitative findings of questionnaire 2. The respective reasons and possible answers from the respondents bear significance because the respondents are closely related to the research problem. Most of the questions in table 2 provide possible solutions and answers except F. The respondents somewhat tied to this yes/no question in about 45% or 55 % which is not substantial to answer the title of the paper.

Conclusion

The plagiarism checking practices are not in force significantly. That is why, the data relating to the plagiarism checking, academic integrity could not found in Bangladesh perspective. Literature review, data analysis and findings may fail to answer the research question, but the report has successfully reviewed the existing plagiarism checking practices worldwide, and has been able to create a sense of attention to the education providing stakeholders in Bangladesh. As it is essential to tackle plagiarism to establish academic integrity, it is, at the same time, also important to provide relief of presumption of guilt to the mental faculty of students. The paper title contains the word 'culture' and as so, the solution of this problem should be a cultural movement. A cultural movement towards changing and building a nation with upholding academic integrity, in which, no one has to face the presumption of guilt. The role of faculty members in this regard is vital to develop the culture of academic integrity which can be sustainable when students will nurture it by adopting the suggestions represented in the third column of Table 2.

Unsuccessful paraphrasing caused by poor command over English leads individual students to go for the easy way of copying from the electronic sources and sometime from the friends. Motivating and creating thirst for new knowledge and ideas, teachers can undoubtedly contribute towards combating the challenge. Where there is tendency of copying, the question of substantiation may not carry that much significance when tackling the problem can deserve to be the top priority.

If the limitations mentioned in the paper could be overcome and a rigorous research could be conducted, the result may have been different and close enough to answer the research question and there lies the implication of future research.

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Appendix A

Sample Units

Name of Sample Unit	No. of Emails Sent
1. University of Dhaka	50
2. University of Chittagong	51
3. Comilla University	35
4. Noakhali University of Science and Technology	01
5. International Islamic University Chittagong	82
6. Feni University	20
7. Metropolitan University, Sylhet	01
8. Britannia University	04

Number of emails sending failed: 36