JOURNAL OF ELT AND EDUCATION
ISSN: 2618-1290 (Print), 2663-1482 (Online), Volume 4, Issue 2, June 2021, Page: 32-37
Published by, Hello-Teen Society & Center for Academic Research and Development (CARD)

Received: 27/02/2021 Accepted: 12/04/2021 Published: 13/04/2021

Impact of Plagiarism in the Higher Education Research of Bangladesh

Analytical Study

Ferdousi Akter*

[**Citation:** Akter, F. (2021). Impact of Plagiarism in the Higher Education Research of Bangladesh. *Journal of ELT and Education*, *4*(2): 32-37.]

Abstract

Plagiarism is a common problem in higher education research, not only in Bangladesh but in almost all countries. It is a rising global problem that many developed countries cannot even control, and developing countries like Bangladesh are not properly aware of. Punishment for plagiarism is not rare in Bangladesh, even different institutions adopted their policy against it, but they can't tackle the situation efficiently. The strongest reason behind this misconduct is that there is no mandatory provision for checking plagiarism in higher education research. From 2019, only a few universities started to use software for checking MPhil/Ph.D. thesis using plagiarism checking software. Even measures taken at the higher education level, for teaching research techniques, are not effective for researching the right way. So, the situation is getting worse day by day. Some effective measures like adopting mandatory checking provision, giving attention to improving research techniques, training up supervisors, etc. will improve the research quality and overall situation.

Keywords: Plagiarism, research, impact, higher education, Bangladeshi policy

1. Introduction

Educational systems or any other ways will develop if someone conducts research on the existing faults of the system and does the needful. Today's developed learning system, better working ways, or other amazing things that we enjoy now are the result of research of previous scholars. They researched how to develop the existing system and that is why now we enjoy modern facilities. So, to develop one existing system research is a must and it is doubly applicable in the case of educational development, or so. In Bangladesh, research on any subject whatever it is gets less importance in comparison with the other countries. So, the quality of research is not so improved and that is why the same archaic styled research conducting system continues over the decades. But now research is realized as the most important way to develop the quality of a system, especially highly complex ones.

All the higher educational institutions in Bangladesh now give importance to it, and now to get higher education degrees like Bachelor or Masters, researching on a certain issue has been made mandatory. But there is a robust barrier in getting the amazing outcome of a huge number of researches, and that is plagiarism. Not all research has been done in proper ways, even some of them are just copying from another research. For doing their research in such a distorting way, researchers cannot deeply understand the problem on which they conducted their research. Over the years, this has happened in higher education research, and there is no continuous attempt to root out this problem.

*Corresponding Email: ferdousipritey21@gmail.com
Assistant Professor, Department of English, Islamic University, Kushtia, Bangladesh

The aim of this study includes examining the quality of research related courses in higher education level in Bangladesh, checking the alleged plagiarism in doing research work, and finding out the effective solution to this long-standing and hard-to-check problem (plagiarism).

2. Literature Review

Ordinarily, the term is understood as copying something from another's work by anyone claiming his work.

> *"To meet the definition of textual plagiarism, a new text must repeat words or ideas from an earlier one; that is, the similarity between two texts cannot be coincidental…The longer the chunks of language that two texts share, intuition suggest, the greater the likelihood that plagiarism has occurred. If it were possible to be certain that similarities between two texts were entirely coincidental, the label plagiarism would not be applied to it. Writing processes are, therefore, a key to understanding plagiarism."* (Pecorari, 2010, p. 6)

Plagiarism can be in many ways, but the traditional view is that only copying line by line is plagiarism though this view changes now.

> *"Plagiarism often shows up under different names: misappropriation, faulty citation, and copyright infringement, literary theft, imitation, cheating, cribbing, and stealing, to name a few. Sometimes described as an affront to traditional values of authorship – and a threat to long-standing economic values attached to authors – plagiarism poses a perennial problem for some because it raises a host of questions about ownership, property, convention, law, education, technology, and more broadly the social and ethical codes in defiance of which the plagiarist, as the story usually goes, plagiarizes."* (Marsh, 2007, P.1)

There are some subtle differences between the term plagiarism and its other names as mentioned by Bill Marsh, but commonly all these are considered as plagiarism all over the world.

Not all the time the offense of plagiarism is committed intentionally, rather sometimes this is done because of lack of attention to quoting.

> *"Plagiarism sometimes is delineated as to whether or not the student has set out intentionally to deceive; if so, the crime is perceived to be more serious than if the plagiarism has been unintentional…at the least serious end of the spectrum might be the employment of a phrase taken from a source which has been incorrectly referenced, or perhaps not referenced at all."* (Tim S. Roberts, 2007, p.2)

But whether a student has done something intentionally or unintentionally is very hard to detect. A big issue regarding this is that in Bangladesh the students do not learn how to quote something from another's work, before entering into higher education level. Even at the higher education level, the scope of learning this type of niceties is very limited.

> *"Literary theorists such as Annette Patterson (1995) argue that intention is decided by the reader – but the point at which that occurs is upon the release of the writing into the public arena. These claims rest on the ideas, drawn from the law, that once a text is written and released from the writer (or author) it exists independently of the author and his declared intention."* (Sutherland-Smith, 2008, P.17)

So, there is no way to think a submitted plagiarized work as unintentional, and in all the cases that should be considered as intentional submission by the researcher.

Marsh (2007) presents an argument like what's liable for plagiarism- internet access or student's morality? He wrote

> *"some cite the recent proliferation of Internet paper mills as the chief cause for today's scourge of student plagiarism.....Some educators choose not to blame online paper mills, or the Internet more broadly, for the perceived lapse in student morality at the turn of the twenty-first century."* (Marsh, 2007, p. 125)

Internet paper mills are easily understandable and accessible to all, especially youngsters. That is a problem where academic integrity is in a lower position, and completing necessary research work by hook or by crook gets ultimate importance. The internet gives us many amenities, but at the same time, it is also true that without integrity, it can be the worst one.

> *"Internet paper mills remain the most obnoxious to educators. This is in part because of the blatant disregard, which borders on contempt, which these sites show for established academic mores, and*

> *partly because of the distaste that educators feel for businesses which appeal to students' base instincts or prey on the desperate."* (Buerger, 2002, p. 322)

In a true sense, through research, we tend to find out the solution to a certain problem, and to do that it becomes necessary to take help or cite some ideas from some scholar's works. But the problem occurs when students try to cite someone's idea which seems to them a bit difficult. Then without trying hard to understand what the source wants to describe; it seems easier for them to just copy and paste. So, developing an understanding of the topic on which a student will conduct research work, may be the right option to avoid plagiarism. A research supervisor or instructor may take this issue into account when a student wants to research under his supervision. He should examine the understanding level of the student on the research topic, and do the needful accordingly.

> *"Most importantly, the instructor can help the student learn methods for reading and writing about difficult texts. Summarizing texts without simultaneously looking at those texts is an invaluable academic skill. Students should learn that the wrong question to ask is 'How else can I say this?' Instead, they should learn to read until they understand; then write without looking at the source; and then return to the source to check accuracy and comprehensiveness and to see if any passages are sufficiently similar that they should quote them exactly."* (Howard, 1995, p. 801)

Here Rebecca Moore Howard gave utmost importance to understanding an issue and then writing in someone's way. But, now, in this era of social media, almost all the young people are busy schedule maintaining, and severely busy in their world. So, they don't have enough time to understand an issue deeply, and sometimes instructors show their reluctance to understand the understanding level of students on the research topic.

The main factor behind the plagiarism that's currently going on in Bangladesh is researching getting a degree in higher education. Now submitting a Research Monograph or Dissertation on a given issue is mandatory to get a Bachelor's or Master's degree from any university in Bangladesh. It's just like imposing a research burden without preparing students for that, even most of the time the supervisor selects the topic without trying to understand the aptitude of the students. Ultimately all these result in submitting a research work copying from somewhere just for getting a degree in higher education. Sutherland-Smith (2008) narrated some factors for which students tend to follow the wrong way.

a) "poor time management skills—panic ensues and plagiarism seems a solution;
b) difficulties in reading theoretically "dense" texts;
c) difficulties in summarizing key ideas in more complex readings;
d) an inability to incorporate their voice into work;
e) poor referencing and citation skills;
f) a myriad of grammar, vocabulary, and general language competence issues;
g) an inability to write a sustained argument (more than 2,000 words); and
h) Problems using terminology in various disciplines correctly." (Sutherland-Smith, 2008)

3. Methodology

To conduct this study, the researcher has gone through the curriculum of different universities and examined the courses mentioned there. This was for examining- how much improved these curriculums are for creating a minimum standard researcher. To do that, the researcher selected the English department curriculum of three universities- Jagannath, Jahangirnagar, and BRAC. Besides the curriculum, the Plagiarism Policy adopted by BRACU, ULAB, Rajshahi University has also been examined. To understand the level of plagiarism going on in different universities, recently published reports in widely circulated newspapers, have been taken into account. To find out the root cause and possible solution of plagiarism in higher education, some writings of well-known specialists have been cited here. In Bangladesh, the students enter the higher education level after passing the secondary and higher secondary level (12 classes). In the secondary and higher secondary level, there is no mention of the essentials of doing research, in any course or subject. At the university level, they start to know the terms relating to doing research, and research relating courses are offered by universities commonly at the ending level. The English Department B.A. (Honors) Curriculum of

Jagannath University includes a course relating to research that's Research Methodology (ENG 4105). This three-credit course is offered in the 7th semester (Fourth Year First Semester), and this course is for learning the research terms, citation rules, research conducting system, and the like. In the case of Jahangirnagar University, the English department syllabus for MA contains an 8-credit course named Dissertation (LECS 516). This course carries 200 marks, and here students have to submit a dissertation containing 18,000 - 20,000 words. The course offering of BRAC University is comparatively rich for preparing a student for doing research. Public universities like Jagannath or Jahangirnagar offer only one research-related course at the Bachelor level and dissertation at the Master's Degree level. But being a private university, the BRAC offers two research-related courses at the Bachelor level. These two are- Research Methodology (ENG 301) for developing research skills and Dissertation (ENG 466) for submitting a research paper. There is also scope for research in one other course included in the course detail of BRAC University's Second Language Acquisition (ENG 327). This course is theory and research-based, and here students undertake a project on any Second Language Acquisition related issues.

The curriculum of public and private universities in Bangladesh is now following more or less the same curriculum as the curriculum of Jagannath University (JnU), Jahangirnagar University (JU), and BRAC University (BRACU) respectively (JnU, n.d., JU, n.d., BRACU, n.d.). That means for completing BA in English from any public university only a course like Research Methodology has to be undertaken by students, but submitting any dissertation is not required. In public universities, submitting a dissertation is required for completing MA in English. But in the case of private universities, students are required to take a research learning course and submit a dissertation in another course, for a complete Bachelor in English. Besides the Bachelor's and Masters levels, there is a scope of research in MPhil and Ph.D. programs. But only some public universities in Bangladesh are now running these two programs, private universities do not have such authority. At MPhil and Ph.D. level, students have to submit a thesis paper that is larger in comparison with the dissertation submitted at BA or MA level.

4. Plagiarism Policy Adopted by Universities

Only a few universities of Bangladesh like ULAB, BRACU, etc. developed their plagiarism policy detailing the investigation procedure for detecting plagiarism, imposing punishment, etc. Suppose BRAC University has adopted a seven-page plagiarism policy, in which every detail like Definition of Plagiarism, Punishment, Investigation Procedure, etc. are mentioned. But there are laudable attempts taken by some universities, in recent years for checking plagiarism of M.Phil. and Ph.D. thesis. Now the universities are more aware of plagiarism, but plagiarism at BA/MA level gets less attention. In 2019, Rajshahi University adopted a policy titled "Plagiarism policy for MPhil/Ph.D. Dissertation" (Plagiarism Policy, 2019). In that policy, they inserted the provision for checking dissertations using plagiarism software. The university bought this plagiarism checking software earlier and using this software the deans or directors of faculty or institutes are liable to check dissertations submitted by students. Though this policy is mainly for the dissertations of MPhil/Ph.D. level and its title include the terms- for MPhil/Ph.D. Dissertation. But, in the Rajshahi University syndicate meeting (490th held on 23-07-2019), there was a recommendation for making the Turnitin Software applicable for the Master's level thesis. Now some other public universities start the use of plagiarism checking software, but such use is not so widespread.

5. Analysis of Current Context- Impact of Plagiarism

Current plagiarism policies adopted by different universities don't ensure that every dissertation at BA/MA level is checked appropriately. In recent years, for MPhil/Ph.D. thesis checking, some universities have started using plagiarism detection software. That is why the impact of plagiarism in higher education research is unknown to all as submitted papers are not checked. But we can assure the quality of higher education research from some factors like- only one course for teaching research methodology, absence of mandatory checking provision, etc.

About two years ago, the wide-circulated newspaper *The Daily Star* published a column by Karim (2019) which detailed the condition of research in Dhaka University, the oldest university of Bangladesh. Which reads-

"We have seen news headlines such as 57 DU Law Students Fined for Plagiarism (DU Correspondent, 2016); Stealing Ph.D. Thesis, Dhaka University Suspends Teacher (Sun Online Desk, 2016); and Plagiarism a result of shady recruitment at Dhaka University (Islam and Shovon, 2017). One of the consequences of the 1973 Ordinance is an explosion of low-quality journals that are used to aid faculty promotions. DU happens to lead the pack. Publications in these journals, a large fraction of which is suspected to be plagiarized, give an impression that these authors are engaged in research. In 2011, DU produced six journals. By 2018, the number grew to 13. In 2011, Bangladesh Journals Online (Bangla JOL) included 73 journals of which only eight could make it amongst the top 18,854 global journals."

We can assume how shocking the condition of the other universities is, from the Daily Star Column. Most meritorious students from all corners of Bangladesh come to Dhaka University and get admitted thereafter passing the most competitive admission test. And the student who can't get admitted to this university, try to get admitted to other places. So, the overall standard of research of such other university's students is lower, and the plagiarism rate is higher.

Another shocking part of the BA/MA level research is that the supervisor has only one month or less for checking the dissertation. In the dissertation course, students submit their dissertation at the end of the semester i.e., during or at the end of the final exam. So, before starting the next semester, it is required for the supervisors to see the dissertation and give marks on that. It is like- there's no time and checking tools, there's one way- accepting dissertation in time.

6. Major Findings of this Study

a. At the BA/MA level, supervisors can accept the dissertations submitted by students and can give pass marks in the dissertation submitting course without checking plagiarism as checking isn't mandatory at least according to the adopted policy. But in some universities like Rajshahi University have made it mandatory to check MPhil/Ph.D. thesis with Turnitin Software.
b. Not all universities have their plagiarism policy, only a few universities like BRACU, ULAB, and some others adopted policies applicable for plagiarism.
c. Plagiarism checking software or something like that is not available in all the universities, but submitting dissertations are mandatory for students of all the universities.
d. In public and private universities, there is only one course like Research Methodology to teach the research conducting way. The duration of this course is only 4 months in private universities, and 6 months in public universities.

7. Concluding Remarks and Recommendations

Plagiarism is still a new idea to many university students and sometimes to university teachers as well. After completing a Bachelor's and Master's level, a person may be in the teaching profession as a lecturer. At the Bachelor's and Master's level, a person has to complete only two/three research-related courses. So, the teachers who will act as a research supervisor is not well equipped with vast knowledge in this regard. No effective measures are seen to be taken by university authorities, or any other regulating authorities. Seeing this situation, after some days, students start to think plagiarism is not a serious issue. So, adopting the following measures is immediately necessary for improving the overall situation and research standard.

a) Universities should make the checking of submitted dissertations mandatory for all the levels- BA, MA, MPhil, and Ph.D.
b) A supervisor should have at least one month for checking a piece of the dissertation of BA/MA level, and at least two months for the MPhil, and Ph.D. level thesis.

c) Plagiarism checking using software like Turnitin may detect the plagiarism effectively, so having a supervisor's access to the use of such software is a must.
d) There are a good number of sites like "Dupli Checker," "Plagium," and the like for checking plagiarism without any cost. Temporarily the universities which cannot buy costlier software immediately may use these sites for checking plagiarism.
e) Inserting mandatory dissertation checking provisions in the plagiarism policy and distributing copies of the policy among students may raise awareness.
f) Universities should offer at least three courses for learning research techniques and plagiarism-related issues, before allowing students to submit dissertations.
g) Incidents of punishment for submitting plagiarized dissertation isn't rare but fewer, necessary action should be taken immediately and when plagiarism is detected.
h) Training up supervisors to detect plagiarism efficiently from a dissertation will be helpful in this regard.

References

Buerger, G. E. (2002). The Owl and the Plagiarist: Academic Misrepresentation in Contemporary Education. Retrieved from http://hdl.handle.net/10222/55870, Faculty of Graduate Studies Online Theses, Dalhousie University.

DU Correspondent. (5th October 2016). 57 DU law students fined for plagiarism. *The Daily Star*, Retrieved 17th January 2021 from https://www.thedailystar.net/city/57-du-law-students-fined-plagiarism-1294357#:~:text=Fifty%20seven%20students%20of%20the,according%20to%20the%20dean's%20committee.

Howard, R. M. (1995). Plagiarisms, Authorships, and The Academic Death Penalty. *College English*, *57*(7), 788-806, https://doi.org/10.2307/378403

Islam, S., & Shovon, F. R. (4th October 2017). Plagiarism a result of shady recruitment at Dhaka University. *Dhaka Tribune*, Education Section, Retrieved 16 January 2021 from https://www.dhakatribune.com/bangladesh/education/2017/10/04/plagiarism-result-shady-recruitments-dhaka-university

Karim, M. A. (11th April 2019). Dhaka University: Challenges for the future. *The Daily Star*, Retrieved 11 September 2020 from https://www.thedailystar.net/opinion/education/news/dhaka-university-challenges-the-future-1727953

Marsh, B. (2007). *Plagiarism, Alchemy and Remedy in Higher Education*. State University of New York Press.

Pecorari, D. (2010). *Academic Writing and Plagiarism*, Continuum International Publishing Group.

Plagiarism policy. (2019). Plagiarism policy for MPhil/PhD Dissertation, Bengali Information, Retrieved from www.ru.ac.bd/examcont/wp-content/uploads/sites/124/2018/02/plagiarism_ordinance.pdf

Roberts, T. S. (2007). *Student Plagiarism in an Online World*: Problems and Solutions, Idea Group Reference, doi: 10.4018/978-1-59904-801-7

Sutherland- Smith, W. (2008). *Plagiarism, the Internet and Student Learning improving academic integrity*. Routledge, ISBN 9780415432931.

Sun Online Desk. (28th December 2016). Stealing PhD thesis, Dhaka University suspends teacher. *The Daily Sun*, Retrieved 10th December 2020 from https://www.daily-sun.com/post/194529/Stealing-PhD-thesis-Dhaka-University-suspends-teacher

Webography

BRACU (n.d.). BRAC University Course Detail of B.A. in English. Retrieved from: https://www.bracu.ac.bd/academics/departments/english-and-humanities/bachelor-arts-english/course-detail

Jn.U (n.d.). Jagannath University Curriculum for B.A. in English. Retrieved from: https://dept.jnu.ac.bd/portal/courses_info/english/9.html

JU. (n.d.). Jahangirnagar University Syllabus for MA in English. Retrieved from: https://www.dropbox.com/s/e8zopitu63ixsca/MA%20Syllabus%20for%20Literatures%20in%20English%20and%20Cultural%20Studies.doc