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Understanding of plagiarism by the students in HEIs of Lithuania

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Abstract

In different works of researchers or university documents plagiarism is defined in different ways. Most scientists in their work mention that there is no single definition of plagiarism. The definition of plagiarism in different countries and even different universities also differ or is not published officially. Due to this reason members of academic community could have different understand the essence of plagiarism and consequences and this fact may be one of the factors contributing plagiarism. The problem of plagiarism understanding is quite relevant, because students are often uncertain how to write their works. Due to this reason most scientists offer institutions and academic communities at the first stage of creation of plagiarism prevention system to discuss and officially published a clear and detailed definition of plagiarism. The purpose of this research is to identify the understanding of plagiarism by the students in HEIs of Lithuania in comparison with general understanding of this phenomenon. Students themselves confidently say they know what it is plagiarism, but empirical study showed that understanding of plagiarism among participating students' is unambiguous as it is stated and in analyzed scientific publications and this understanding not satisfying academic community. Comprehensive and clear definition of plagiarism and various types of it with practical examples could help the academic community to develop plagiarism prevention.

Keywords: plagiarism definition; academic ethics; higher education.

1. Introduction

This paper deals with understanding of the word plagiarism in context of academic activity. The wrong understanding of plagiarism and incorrect definition could cause academic society with of numerous cases of plagiarism. Students often unclear understood plagiarism and how to prepare properly a written work. Teachers also

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could interpret plagiarism differently. Plagiarism often becomes as a moral maze for students. They deal with a moral and ethical dilemma having unclear understanding what behaviour is appropriate. Therefore the institutions and academic communities are suggested to discuss and formally provide a detailed and clear definition of plagiarism in process of implementation of plagiarism prevention systems of higher education (J. Carroll, J. Appleton 2001). In recommendations for plagiarism prevention policy formation is suggested creating a definition of plagiarism not only on institutional but also at national level. This definition should be appropriate to different fields of study and daily use, specifying what behaviour and actions are acceptable. In the absence of a uniform definition could be difficult proving plagiarism facts of specific cases and could be leaded confusion among students and academic community.

Process of plagiarism definition detection is quite complicated, as in scientists work in documents of higher education institutions plagiarism is defined in different ways. Plagiarism is not defined in legal acts of the Republic of Lithuania, such as "Law on Copyright and Related Right"[1] and "Law on Higher Education and Research"[2]. Also, it is not mentioned either in the Civil Codes[3], Criminal Code[4] or Code of Administrative Offences[5]. Students also have their own understanding of plagiarism.

The search of a detailed description of plagiarism in this article it is based on analysis of plagiarism cases and types described in the scientific literature. The findings of this study can be used for development and adoption a formal definition of plagiarism in particular Higher Education Institution (HEI). The process of search of comprehensive and useful for practical use definition of plagiarism have be linked to analysis of academic practice in a specific academic institution, which could allow to identify level of understanding of plagiarism by students and scholars, their attitude to cases of plagiarism and applicable measures for plagiarism prevention.

The aim of this research is to identify the understanding of plagiarism by the students in HEIs of Lithuania in comparison with general understanding of this phenomenon.

The tasks of research:

1. To investigate in definitions of plagiarism and practices of research of particular phenomena provided in scientific publications.
2. To prepare questionnaire for research of real understanding by students the phenomena of plagiarism and foreseeing methods for processing of results of this survey.
3. To provide analysis of responses provided by bachelor and master students from universities of Lithuania and to estimate real understanding of plagiarism by participated students.

Research methods:

For investigation in definitions of plagiarism and practices of research of particular phenomena it was used methods of analysis of scientific publications, logical analysis and comparison. For data collection it was used on-line questionnaire with closed and open questions, including possibility to indicate the strength of respondent opinion. For summarising of gathered data it was used methods of statistical data processing and analysis, logical analysis and comparison.

The survey was conducted in period from September 2012 till May 2013 in frame of implementation of the international project "Impact of Policies for Plagiarism in Higher Education across Europe" (IPPHEAE). In questioning by this project were involved students and teachers from HEIs of all EU member states. HEIs of Lithuania in this survey were represented by 119 university student.

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[1] Law on Copyright and Related Rights (in Lithuanian). *Valstybės žinios*, 1999, 50-1598; accessed from
http://www3.lrs.lt/pls/inter3/dokpaieska.showdoc_l?p_id=417078
[2] Law on Higher Education and Research (in Lithuanian) *Valstybės žinios*, 2009, 54-2140, 61, 101; accessed from
http://www3.lrs.lt/pls/inter3/dokpaieska.showdoc_l?p_id=438419
[3] Law on the Approval, Entry into Force and Implementation of the Civil Code. *Valstybės žinios*, 2000, 74-2262; Nr.77; accessed from
http://www3.lrs.lt/pls/inter3/dokpaieska.showdoc_l?p_id=453924
[4] Law on the Approval and Entry into Force of the Criminal Code. *Valstybės žinios*, 2000, 89-2741; accessed from
http://www3.lrs.lt/pls/inter3/dokpaieska.showdoc_l?p_id=111555&p_tr2=2
[5] Code of Administrative Offences. *Valstybės žinios*, 1985, 1-1; accessed from http://www3.lrs.lt/pls/inter3/dokpaieska.showdoc_l?p_id=453621

2. Theoretical approach

Plagiarism is a term derived from the Latin word *plagarius* (a thief, a deceiver). Plagiarism can be regarded as a moral evil, copyright infringement, poor scientific practice, mental illness and so on. Plagiarism is not a consequence of the development of information technology. This phenomenon is as old as writing itself. It is believed that plagiarism has been clearly defined in the 18th century in order to protect writers' copyrights.

Currently plagiarism in different cultures and countries understood differently. This phenomenon is prevalent not only in the environment of the higher education. Plagiarism could be found in science, journalism, literature, film creation and other areas. The plagiarism cases could be detects even in works of famous writers, songs and film makers, philosophers, scientists and public workers.

2.1. Plagiarism analysis in the context of higher education

Plagiarism in students' works is a specific problem of higher education, which can be analysed in the broader context of academic activity or social norms:

- Scientists phenomena plagiarism and prevention tools examine by investigating into academic misconduct or fraud, academic integrity, unethical academic research (Park, 2003).
- Plagiarism is often equated with copyright and intellectual property violation, but according to S. Cavanilles (2008), plagiarism is not the same as copyright infringement.
- Plagiarism is also closely associated with a person or public moral and academic values.

As wrote Park (2003), "...when we are talking about morality and values, by whom and how should be made decision in the University what is right and what is wrong and who can provide teaching on this? The current generation of students is fearless (*theno-feargeneration*) or generation "why not?", thinking that previous generations are ignorant and copying from the Internet is not a crime".

East (2009) not agrees with the majority of scientists, who are analyzing plagiarism only from student positions, and claims that this phenomena have be analysed in context of academic culture. Plagiarism undermines academic integrity, because it is based on academic respect. In her opinion there is a significant problem in universities on academic integrity. There are cases when second or later years students are plagiarising more often than the first year students. This indicates that first year students are plagiarising due to insufficient knowledge and senior students – because adjusting to the prevailing academic culture.

On the base of perform detailed analysis, taking into account a variety of contexts, it is possible to claim that search of a unified and clear definition of plagiarism is not easy task, but it is necessary to do so before implementation of plagiarism prevention policies, techniques and procedures in the academic community.

2.2. Detailed analysis of the definition of plagiarism

Plagiarism is most often defined briefly. For instance, plagiarism is the use of other works not indicating the source or it may be the appropriation of a work done by another person. Some authors determine that plagiarism is realized or unrealized appropriation of the idea, hypothesis, thesis or results from other people as it may be useful for oneself (Annane & Annane, 2012). These brief definitions are not clear, as plagiarism in academic society is not only understood as the appropriation of works or their parts created by another author. Therefore, it is more significant to define all the techniques of plagiarism so that it could be perceived unambiguously in all the academic society. Plagiarism and its types are most often defined in details on institutional level, implementing the policy for plagiarism prevention in institutions so that indicated measures for plagiarism prevention could be applied properly (Šarlauskienė, 2012).

A detailed explanation of the cases of plagiarism is presented in the definition of plagiarism of Swinburne University of Technology's (Devlin, 2006). It is indicated that plagiarism is the action when somebody else's

thoughts, writings or other works are appropriated and presented as of one's own. Also, plagiarism is the cases indicated below, when exact and relevant information about sources is not presented:

- the use of computer programme or its part done by another person,
- the use of entire written work or its part as well as the use of a book, a magazine, a newspaper, lecture summaries, written works of students or other people, websites and data bases while writing an essay or other written works,
- paraphrased work of another person,
- the use of pieces of music, sounds, images, graphics and photographs,
- the use of objects, artefacts, models etc.

Also, inappropriate collaboration between students in a task or assignment that is later presented for assessment as individual work is regarded as plagiarism, even in that case, when a presenter does it having the permission from the rest of the group. It is noteworthy that Swinburne University encourages students to participate in scientific research, however, the results of the task done individually should be presented. Allowing plagiarise at university is also treated as the type of plagiarism. Allowing plagiarise is understood as a permission or help to the student to copy or plagiarise in other ways, for instance, providing access to the project, or the work done by other people or other works (Devlin, 2006).

It is indicated in the documents of Pennsylvania public university that "plagiarism is action, which claims or enables to understand that the work of another person is of your own. You plagiarise, if you:

- present the work, which is not written by you;
- copy answers or text from other student and present them as of your own;
- quote or paraphrase other works not indicating the original author;
- quote data without references to original sources;
- present the ideas of other authors as of your own;
- fake references or use improper references;
- provide presentation, programme or other work of another person with minimal changes.

It is not the final list – any actions, seeking to provide the results of another person deceitfully may be a plagiarism." Next to the definition of plagiarism it is written that "sometimes limits between the use of scientific results and plagiarism may be ambiguous" and it is suggested for students to read on the Internet websites discussions about plagiarism and how to avoid it (Defining Plagiarism and Academic Integrity, 2012).

Attempts to provide a detailed description of plagiarism could be find out and in works of other scientists. For instance, Park (2003) indicates that plagiarism is:

- stealing information from a work done by another person (copy of a work done by another person without any references to the source; presentation of a bought work; presentation of the work done by another student with or without his cognition);
- the presentation of the work written by another person (a friend, a relative etc.) as of your own;
- the presentation of copied parts from works done by other people in one's own work with references to the source, but without quotation marks, making an impression that a work was paraphrased by the author;
- the presentation of paraphrased information from works done by other people, not indicating references to the sources.

Atkinson and Yeoh (2008), defining the types of plagiarism, in addition with ones mentioned by Park, presents and these:

- the presentation of the student collaborative work results as individual work;
- the presentation of your own work or the work done by another person once again.

The latter mentioned type of plagiarism, i.e. the presentation of the same work once again (or self-plagiarism) is rarely analysed in scientific works. This topic was investigated by Bretag & Mahmud (2009b). They assert that self-plagiarism is most often analysed in the activities of scientists, when the same results of scientific research are presented for publishing for several times or when much information in the article is used from previously published articles. Self-plagiarism is found rarer in students' works, however, the perception of plagiarism must be universal, not being applied only in the cases of student plagiarism or measures for prevention. The definition of self-plagiarism, as well as the definition of plagiarism, is a difficult task due to different understanding of proper academic behaviour. Different countries and institutions differently perceive whether it is ethical to publish article in a scientific journal, if it has been already published in conference publication, or how much information from the works published earlier can be presented in the article.

In Bretag & Mahmud (2009b) opinion both cases: in the case of student plagiarism and in the cases of self-plagiarism the intention of the author to deceive should be taken into consideration. The behaviour of the authors who present the same text or data in article, in conference publication, in scientific journal or in the chapter of the book and who claim that it is the original publication does not corresponds the norms of academic ethics and may be referred to as self-plagiarism. Other possible cases of self-plagiarism are analysed in the discussions, for instance, when mingled data are presented in the article or the results of one research are segmented into separate parts and presented in different publications. Any cases of self-plagiarism or plagiarism in scientific works provide negative influence to the culture of studies and student consciousness. All academic society should have to keep unanimous perception of plagiarism and policy for prevention.

2.3. Analysis of plagiarism types

Hence, doing the analysis of the definition of plagiarism, it becomes clear, that it is difficult to present unanimous, specific and clear criteria, according to which the text in the work may be categorised as plagiarism. Researchers also suggest paying attention to the originality of the work and the level of plagiarism.

Park (2003) claims that students do not often understand the difference between paraphrasing and generalising, they often cannot paraphrase information found in sources, create proper references to the sources, present proper quotation marks. Also, it is difficult to define the level of paraphrasing of the original text so that the author of the work could not be accused of plagiarism. Bretag & Mahmud (2009a), summarizing the experience of other scholars also indicate that the main methods of plagiarism is copying or paraphrasing without reference to the source.

Also, problems arise due to the presentation of ideas perceived universally or general knowledge. Ideas and thoughts are generated, presented, distributed in different ways, and sometimes it is unclear to whom the idea belongs. The majority of scientists agrees that presenting general knowledge, there is no need to quote, but it is difficult determine, what is general knowledge. These difficulties in writing may be attributed to unintentional plagiarism. Unintentional plagiarism may be defined as the loss of memory while writing or crypto-amnesia, which is the illusion of the mind, that the author created the idea himself, even though he has read or heard about it somewhere. Even experimental research proved how implied past memories may be repeated unintentionally. In order to avoid such mistakes and to retrieve one's memory, it is suggested to use more than one reliable source. (Park, 2003).

Unintentional plagiarism, nevertheless, is plagiarism, and it must be supplanted, because carelessness is almost the same as deception. Students, even those who did not intend to plagiarise, must be punished, but their intentions should be palliatives. Unfortunately, some students plagiarise continually. An intentional plagiarism is when a student has planned to deceive. Such student's intentions are aggravating circumstance while punishing for plagiarism.

It is understandable that the definition of plagiarism, relevant for practical use in academic environment, depends on the completeness of this definition. This can be achieved by using not short definition of plagiarism and by enumerating and explaining the various forms and types of plagiarism. Table 1 summarizes the various types of plagiarism, provided in various sources of information, and, hopefully, should help to understand the problems concerning plagiarism issues. The following table is not exhaustive and not the final list of types of plagiarism. Over time, changing processes in the study process, students' habits and institutions policies the list of types of plagiarism

could be changed. So, shall keep the list complete it is necessary to take into account changes of students' values and behaviour, progress in information processing technologies, to discuss these issues and correct this list in accordance with the need for the use of the institutions.

Table 1. Types of Plagiarism (prepared according to Bretag & Mahmud, 2009a; Annane & Annane, 2012; Devlin, 2006; Park, 2003; Defining Plagiarism and Academic Integrity, 2012)

Type of plagiarism	Explanation or detailed description
Appropriation (stealing information from a work done by another person or stealing all the work)	The appropriation of another author's written work or created piece (written works, computer programmes, presentation, task answers, pieces of music, sound, image, graphics, photographs, objects, artefacts etc.) and using it as made by oneself.
	The presentation of another author's presentation, programme or other work with minimal changes made.
	The appropriation of the part of thoughts, ideas, hypothesis, results, models and other works.
	The appropriation of the work or the forms or structure of its parts, presenting them as made by oneself.
	The presentation of paraphrased work made another person.
Cheating: Presentation of a bought work Presentation of the work or created piece done by other person Presentation of the students' collaborative work as individual work	The presentation of a work bought on the Internet or from other person.
	The presentation of a work downloaded from the Internet.
	The presentation of a written work or its parts, done by another person (a friend, a relative etc.), as individual work.
	The presentation of a work or created piece by another student as a work of one's own, not considering whether a real author knows about it or not, gave a permission or not.
	The allowing plagiarise at university could be understood as a permission or help to the student copying or plagiarising the work in other ways (providing access to the project or work done by other people etc.) and also could be considered as cheating.
	The presentation of the results of students' collaborative work (projects, tasks), which were done together with other people, as individual work not including case the presenter has a permission from other people.
Improper presentation of information from the works of other authors / Improper citation of the sources and presentation of references	The presentation of copied parts from works done by other people in the work of one's own without references to the sources (direct, word-by-word copying).
	Word-for-word translation of the texts from foreign languages.
	The presentation of copied parts from works done by other people in the work of one's own with references to the sources, but without quotation marks, making an impression that the work was paraphrased by the author.
	It is presented less of cited text (in quotation marks) than copied text from works done by other people, making an impression that a part of the work was paraphrased by the author.
	The changes in the work of one's own were made in the copied text from works done by other people (word inversion used, grammatical structure used, changes of sentences and words made, shortened etc.) making an impression that the work was paraphrased by the author.
	The presentation of paraphrased or generalised information from the works of other authors without references to the sources.
	Quoting information or data from secondary sources.
	The presentation of non-documentary factual information.
	The presentation of improper or fake references to the sources.
	Forgetting to provide references (crypto-amnesia).
Self-plagiarism	The presentation or publication of the same or similar work of one's own once more;
	The presentation of more than 10 % (in other sources – 30 %) of information from the works published earlier;
	The presentation of information from the works published previously not quoting it and without references to the primary sources;
	Segmentation of the results of one research into separate segments and presentation in different publications;
	New aim or question of the research in the publication presented is not formed, new theoretical arguments, new or additional data of scientific research are not used.

Summarizing the results analysis of plagiarism definitions, the conclusions can be made that it is difficult to provide a detailed definition of plagiarism and thorough list of the types of plagiarism, but it is necessary to try to prepare and present it to academic society with detailed explanations and practical examples. Considering that there are negotiable limits between intentional and unintentional plagiarism, between plagiarism and the analysis of the sources, student's intentions should be regarded, whether he or she was intended to deceive or he or she is unable to do the analysis of the sources and properly write in academic style. In any case institutional policy and system of plagiarism prevention have been created and definition and concept of plagiarism have been included as essential part of this system.

3. The study

This paragraph of the article shall summarize the Lithuanian student survey results on their abilities to define and recognise plagiarism. The survey was conducted in 2013, in process of implementation of the project "Impact of Policies for Plagiarism in Higher Education across Europe (http://ippheae.eu/) by universities from 5 European Union member states. The responses were received from 119 students from various universities in Lithuania. In this survey participated 92 undergraduate students, 24 master's degree students and three those students, who not indicated the level they are studying.

3.1. Submitted by students descriptions of plagiarism

First, students were asked to form a short, one sentence to describe the word "plagiarism." Provided answers helped authors of this article to learn did students accurately perceive the essence of the word, or treat it as any academic misconduct.

42 percents of students' responded provided a very abstract answer: plagiarism is literally copied work or work written using "copy – paste" method. These students understand plagiarism as copying. A quarter of those 42 percent respondents were satisfied with such incomplete answers and only a few students pointed out that plagiarism: "someone copied the whole unchanged", "copied word for word all the work or part of the work". Other students (17 percents) stated that plagiarism is copying the work of others, copying another person's work for performance of own task. The provided responses not allow even clear realize whether the students perceive copying as legal or illegal activity. There were founded even those answers that plagiarism is not original work, the similarity of the subject, any copy of the original object. One student with a smile wrote that plagiarism is "work found on the Internet, without the need to do the own work and it is a great good". Without a doubt, that this idea expresses the desire of some students to carry out the work quickly and at a lower cost of efforts.

Other respondents (45 percent) perceive or clearly indicated plagiarism as illegal thing, bus some of them were confusing plagiarism with intellectual property theft, copyright violations, academic misconduct, cheating or simply identified as "something illegal". In most cases, these students said that plagiarism is a misappropriation or presentation of another person's work as your own. 10 percent of students accurately wrote that plagiarism is the use of information collected by other person or another person's work without mentioning the author or literary source. The analysis of few students' responses allowed to form an opinion that they have heard about the copyright, but do not know how can legally use the resources. They pointed out that plagiarism is use of material without other person permission.

In summary it can be said that describing plagiarism most students did not provided clear and precise answers, but told they believe that they know the definition of plagiarism and the essence of this phenomenon.

Students also were asked when they learned what it is plagiarism. Even 72 percents of students said that they knew before becoming students, 21 percent – during undergraduate studies and one student – during master's degree studies. Only 6 percents of students' responded admitted they are not sure they perceive the essence of plagiarism. However, a positive assumption of most of the students about understanding the essence of plagiarism not correspond with provided definitions of plagiarism and other results of this survey.

3.2. Students' ability to recognize plagiarism by analyzing examples

To be identified understanding by students what really the plagiarism is, in the questionnaire it was described following situation: "Assuming that 40% of a student's submission is from other sources and is copied into the student's work as described below, indicate your judgement on plagiarism" and provided descriptions of 6 different cases of quotation and referencing. Also, it was provided two requests: to identify is it each described case plagiarism or not (by chose one of possible answers: "This is serious plagiarism", "This case is plagiarism", "Not sure about this case" or "This is definitely not plagiarism") and to indicate is it each described cases worth to be penalised or not. In reality all six cases in this situation may be categorised as plagiarism, but some cases could be construed as poor academic practice or perhaps patch-writing due to poor language skills could account for some matching. The results on real understanding of plagiarism cases by students are presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Students' responses (in percentage) to the questions: "Which cases could be considered as plagiarism if 40 percents of text taken from another source and presented as the statements?" and "Which cases from situation, described in previous question, have be punished?"

Possible cases of plagiarism	Is it plagiarism case? (the number of chosen answers in percents)				Did need punishment for plagiarism?
	It is serious plagiarism	It is plagiarism	Not sure about this	It is not plagiarism	Yes
word for word with no quotations	40	37	10	8	32 %
word for word with no quotations, has a correct references but no in text citations	13	41	33	10	16 %
word for word with no quotations, but has correct references and in text citations	8	18	39	30	6 %
with some words changed with no quotations, references or in text citations	15	28	38	16	18 %
with some words changed with no quotations, has correct references but no in text citations	9	23	41	21	9 %
with some words changed with no quotations, but has correct references and in text citations	8	16	36	34	8 %

The specific assessment of the situation (Table 2) shows that the majority of students do not know in which cases the text from other source is considered as plagiarism. Even in the first case, the text is copied word for word with no quotations, only 40 percent of the students indicated that this is serious case of plagiarism, 30 percent – that it is plagiarism, 10 percent indicated they do not know whether it's plagiarism and even 8 percent – it is not plagiarism. Even less students recognized the plagiarism assessing the other cases. Evaluating the appropriateness of punishment, most students chose options favourable for themselves. Only 32 percent of students indicated that the penalty should be literal copying case and in other cases penalties for plagiarism appointment expediency reported by less than one-fifth or one tenth of the surveyed students.

The investigation showed that although the students understand and claim what is plagiarism, but only a few were able to describe it properly. The study also revealed that students do not understand the difference between the correct quotation, paraphrasing and plagiarism in the text. It may be that students do not know what is the proper citation, paraphrasing and how to write a work properly. While 68 percents of the surveyed students said they had experienced so that other students plagiarised texts, and even 64 percent confessed their accidentally or intentionally have plagiarised, these results cannot be interpreted clearly.

4. Discussion and conclusions

Analysis of scientific publications and results of empirical research showed that there is no single definition of plagiarism academic community. The short and succinct definitions of plagiarism could not express the essence of the phenomenon of plagiarism and describe existing features. These definitions of plagiarism presented by scientists or higher education institutions could be estimated as background for detailed explanation of plagiarism. It may indicate what a student should or should not do while preparing written work to prevent intentional or unintentional

plagiarism. The detailed definition of plagiarism should be referred plagiarism types (possible alien information misappropriation, fraud, self-plagiarism cases) and the necessary level of work originality or plagiarism discouraging (incorrect presentation of information from other authors works, inadequate citations or incorrect links to used sources).

The scientists' in their publications are avoiding to analyse of very specific cases of plagiarism, the text quoting features and to indicate allowed amount of not paraphrased text in the work. As it is shown by the results of empirical research students imagine they know what it is plagiarism, but are not able to provide a specific definition of plagiarism and to recognize it in concrete examples. This means that students while preparing their written work are following a very abstract understanding of plagiarism and are not willing to admit that they should be penalized for copied information in their work. The understanding of plagiarism by students' students participated in the survey is not satisfactory for academic community, although most of the students confidently say they know what is plagiarism and understand the essence of this phenomenon.

The application to recognize plagiarism in specific examples was especially useful for investigation in real perception by students of essence of plagiarism. However, the results of this study also showed that in order to even better understand how students understand plagiarism providing survey in the future is worth not just to ask for a brief description of plagiarism, but and to ask to specify types of plagiarism and actions that they perceive as illegal activities or negative phenomenon in the academic community.

In order to properly describe the plagiarism, it is important to define all types of plagiarism. This would help the academic community to understand clearly the essence of plagiarism. In developing the plagiarism prevention academic community should have to formulate a comprehensive and clear definition of plagiarism, to identify possible plagiarism types and to provide explanation of them using practical examples.

Acknowledgements

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