

Chapter 26

Plagiarism vs. Pedagogy: Implications of Project-Based Learning Research for Teachers in the 21st Century

Paulo C. Dias

Catholic University of Portugal, Portugal

John R. Mergendoller

Buck Institute for Education, USA

ABSTRACT

Plagiarism research has demonstrated the prevalence of this practice as well as its relationship to various individual and contextual factors. This research has been conducted in traditional educational contexts emphasizing teacher authority and knowledge acquisition with limited student autonomy, voice and choice. In this chapter, the authors explore the possibility of changing the educational context in order to diminish plagiarism. Project-Based Learning (PBL) is suggested as a way not only to reduce plagiarism, but to also teach for deep understanding and promote students' acquisition of 21st Century Skills. PBL emphasizes building a team-centered learning culture, using authentic and creative projects presented to an audience, and changing classroom norms to encourage positive student behavior. We discuss the implications for the classroom roles of staff and students, and the need for preparing teachers to use PBL instructional methodologies in their classrooms.

INTRODUCTION

The 20th Century has been dubbed by many authors the 'Learning Century'. The structure of education systems, advances in legislation and development of human and technological resources available for the education of children and youth, have enabled significant advances in civilization. The advances in developmental sciences i.e., Education, Sociology and Psychology, have given rise to new learning theories and pedagogical practices. Also, the adoption of new technologies for educational purposes have the potential to change classroom structure and management significantly. These contributions have been pillars ensuring that educational systems continue to be a social instrument for the promo-

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tion of humanism, democracy, justice and citizenship, as well as promoting the integral development of children and youth. At the same time, however, technological advances, especially the dissemination of information and communication, and easy access to information in a variety of formats, have acted as a catalyst for both academic misconduct and learning in Higher Education (HE).

With the beginning of the 21st Century, research has shown that plagiarism and cheating are common occurrences across all school sectors and all levels of education, from compulsory education to universities, and across all fields, from Economics to Medicine and Law. Despite the differences in the definition and evaluation methods, several studies report that more than 40% of students admitted have previously copied examinations, plagiarized papers or engaged in other academic misconduct (e.g., Brown & Chong, 2005; Lin & Wen, 2007; Whitley, Nelson, & Jones 1999). The wide prevalence of plagiarism has been described by some researchers as ‘epidemic’ (e.g., Bazoukis & Dimoliatis, 2011; Thomas, 2004), while others argue that this misconduct presents a basic ‘threat’ to the values that inform current educational systems (e.g., Fonseca, 2009).

This chapter explores individual and contextual predictors of plagiarism behaviors. Given the central role of teachers in the educative process, we will discuss teachers’ strategies and interventions to prevent academic misconduct, and discuss plagiarism prevention. Beyond this, we believe the discussion of plagiarism prevention needs to go deeper and explore possible changes in teachers’ initial and in-service training, in order to promote authentic and creative learning. This includes integrating technology into the instructional process, and helping students develop the 21st Century skill of digital literacy. Rather than confining ourselves to the discussion of specific strategies to prevent plagiarism, we make the argument that it is necessary to challenge traditional instructional methods and to update and adopt new instructional methodologies.

Despite the importance of teachers’ reflections on evaluation and improvement of instructional practices and quality of education in general (OECD, 2009, 2013), there has not been a great deal of research focused on teachers’ classroom instruction. In a society mediated by technologies, where information is everywhere at any time, a significant change in teacher training is urgently needed to adapt pedagogical practices for a changing world. New learning opportunities for the development of 21st Century skills must be put at the center of the debate; not only to prevent academic misconduct but to promote authentic and creative learning. In an attempt to contribute to this debate, this chapter aims to present and discuss the contributions of Project-Based Learning to prevent plagiarism. Unlike ‘traditional’ pedagogical models, where the teacher is the center and ‘knowledge provider’ (Savery, 2006), in PBL the student becomes the center of the teaching-learning process through the solving of simulated or actual problems, and subsequent reflection on their learning process (Hmelo-Silver & Barrows, 2006). Using technology as a resource and research and collaboration as a method, we believe PBL can address some of the most critical factors related to plagiarism and contribute to an important pedagogical shift in the classroom.

PLAGIARISM: WHAT DO WE KNOW?

Issues, Controversies, and Problems

Previous literature reviews focusing on plagiarism tend to consider it as a universal and transdisciplinary issue assuming epidemic proportions (e.g., Bazoukis & Dimoliatis, 2011; Thomas, 2004). For example, a review by Whitley, Nelson and Jones (1999), considering 107 studies, found that on average 70.4%

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