In the growing field of nursing education, maintaining academic integrity is vital for both students and nurse educators. Academic integrity incorporates the core values of trust, honesty, fairness respect and responsibility. Nurse educators have a responsibility to promote academic integrity among students when there is an incident of academic dishonesty such as plagiarism, more commonly known as cheating. Some authors prefer not to treat plagiarism as a form of cheating but a habit that student can develop if left unchecked (Mishkin & Panettieri, 2009). It is not uncommon to find duplication of assignments between two students or at least duplication in part; students often do not acknowledge the authors in the assignments. All these situations are considered as plagiarism. In Indian context copying a specified amount of information from a specified book or scholarly article is not considered as cheating, however this is not so in the Western world. Plagiarism is considered as a serious offence leading to severe disciplinary action. Plagiarism is not limited to student assignments, the journal articles or dissertations of qualified professionals are also scrutinised for plagiarism. In a globalised world it becomes imperative for us to compete with the developed nations in every aspect. Therefore, an attempt is made here to shed some light on the issue called ‘plagiarism’.

What is Plagiarism? Oxford English Dictionary defines plagiarism as “to take and use somebody else’s ideas, words, etc. as if they were one’s own”. The Sheffield Hallam University (2008) explains plagiarism as “where someone tries to pass off another’s work, thoughts or ideas as their own, whether deliberately or unintentionally, without appropriate acknowledgement”. Plagiarism may be complete or partial or collusion.

Complete plagiarism: When a student submits his or her work, it may be considered as completely plagiarised work if it has considerable and unauthorised use of the work or ideas of another person without acknowledgement of the source including copying the work of another student. The information may have been copied from a book, article, webpage etc.

Partial plagiarism: An academic assignment may be considered as partially plagiarised if there are several sentences that are taken from an undisclosed source. For example copying the summary of another’s work, changing or altering few words in a sentence and not acknowledging the source are considered as partial plagiarism.

Self plagiarism: When a student submits an academic work that was previously submitted elsewhere for another purpose, failing to acknowledge this is known as self plagiarism. A resubmission of an assignment with amendments is not self plagiarism. Self plagiarism mostly applies to people writing articles for publications.

Repeating oneself in several articles without referencing the previous work is considered as duplicating one’s own work or self plagiarism.

Collusion: When two or more students work on a project but submit the final report as an independent work, it is known as collusion.

Motivation for Plagiarism
Cheating may not be the primary reason for plagiarism. Sometimes it may be unintentional. In Indian context this may be considered as unintentional depending on the policy of the college or university. Traditionally and culturally Asians are afraid to question the views of a scholarly person. Therefore, making certain changes to what was quoted by someone who is in more influential position may be perceived as disregard to that person. Therefore students may feel threatened to alter the quote of a scholarly person. Quoting someone else’s work is an accepted behaviour provided the quotes are in inverted commas and the origi-
nal author is acknowledged.

Plagiarising may be considered unintentional among first year students as they are new to the professional courses and may not be aware of the guidelines on plagiarism. But when a final year student plagiarises, the consequences may be different. It is important to identify why students plagiarise. Some common reasons are: rushing to complete an assignment at the last minute, not doing enough literature searches for the assignment, not completely understanding the concept of the assignment, not being a high achiever, laziness or just taking a chance. Some of these reasons can be managed easily with clear guidelines for writing the assignments and by providing frequent constructive feedback.

How to avoid plagiarism?
Jackowski & Aaron (2009) suggest following strategies to avoid plagiarism in any work:
1. Take notes and indicate the original source of the information.
2. Check any paraphrasing to be sure that it is not exactly the same as the original text.
3. Use quotation marks in notes to be sure that proper credit is given to the author.
4. Keep all drafts of your work to be sure that you do not accidentally omit a reference or citation.

In addition, The University of North Carolina Writing Center in Chapel Hill (2007) has published the following helpful information: To avoid plagiarism you need to cite your source, even if:

- You put all direct quotes in quotation marks.
- You changed the words used by the author into synonyms.
- You completely paraphrased the ideas to which you referred.
- Your sentence is mostly made up of your own thoughts, but contains a reference to the author’s ideas.
- You mention the author’s name in the sentence.

Western nurse educators believe that the incidence of plagiarism may be reduced through the written examinations (Burnard, 2002). Other ways include “publicising good practice, enabling students to experience plagiarism detection of their own work at an early stage in their studies, and helping them to develop good writing and referencing styles” (Anderson, 2009). It is vital to introduce students to academic writing skills in the early stage of their career as a nurse and focus on providing formative feedback on their work rather than giving feedback at the end (summative feedback). When they receive feedback early in their work, students can reflect on the feedback and make necessary changes before submitting the final copy of the work.

It is also important for every school or college to have a policy on plagiarism explaining the facts and procedure should plagiarism take place. Students must understand that the consequences of plagiarism are enormous and can cost their career. In the academic world plagiarism is considered an offence.

Detect plagiarism
Sometimes nurse educators can instantly spot similarities in work of two students but in a large class it may be difficult. Plagiarised content on an assignment can be easily spotted when assignments are submitted online. Several tools are available to determine online plagiarism. These include Turnitin software, Viper, SafeAssign, My DropBox and Google. The plagiarised content on an online assignment can clearly be identified through the use of these tools. Each assignment that passes through any of these tools will produce a report on plagiarised content. The report would show the percentage and the source of plagiarism. Depending on the percentage, a case of plagiarism will be determined. Each university has its own measure to determine plagiarism, for example one university may consider 50 percent plagiarised content in an assignment as a case for plagiarism whereas another university may deem 30 percent plagiarism as an offence.

In fact, these tools are used to help students to identify their mistakes and provide feedback at the right time. Before submitting the final assignment, students are expected to submit their assignment to the plagiarism tool determined by the college. Based on the policy if plagiarism report shows higher percentage, students have an opportunity to rephrase or acknowledge the source in their assignment. Therefore, they are not penalised unnecessarily. These tools are not intended for finding faults. However, based on
the report, a faculty can question the credibility of an assignment and if plagiarism is proved, student may then have to face disciplinary actions.

Conclusion

Plagiarism is a form of academic dishonesty. Plagiarism may be complete, partial or self. Most of times students plagiarise unintentionally. To avoid such circumstances it is essential to introduce students to the concepts of plagiarism in the first year of their professional courses. Giving information and training in academic writing in the early part of their university life also would encourage academic integrity. Nurse educators’ focus should be on encouraging students to identify limitations early in their work and provide feedback as required.

Useful Websites

- www.alltheweb.com Select the exact phrase. Type in 6 or more words and the search engine will detect any evidence of plagiarism.
- www.copernic.com/download Your computer must have Microsoft Internet Explorer to use this site. Type in phrases or sentences and multiple search engines will search the paper.
- www.findsame.com Type in parts of the research paper and the search engine looks for content, not keywords.
- www.easygooglesearch.com Type in words and search for matches.
- www.wikihow.com/Catch-Stu-
dents-Cheating Provides more detailed help for educators.
- http://www.turnitin.com/
- http://www.mydropbox.com
- http://www.scanmyessav.com

References