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Institutional policies to avoid dishonest practices in Spanish universities

Políticas institucionales para evitar prácticas deshonestas en las universidades españolas

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ABSTRACT

Dishonest behavior or practices are a concern in all universities around the world and are addressed differently in university institutions in different countries. This study focuses on the topic of academic integrity and pursues two objectives: on the one hand, to review the academic integrity policies aimed at avoiding plagiarism in Spanish universities, through the documents available there and, on the other hand, describe those documents in terms of their characteristics and their content. An analysis of the content of the 275 documents in the websites of 47 public universities Spanish is carried out. For the collection of information, a Computerized Registration Form was designed, and the information obtained was

analyzed both qualitatively and quantitatively. The main findings underline that most of the documents located are in the vice-rectorates for scientific policy, innovation and transfer, in the Faculties of Education and Humanities and in degrees corresponding to the branch of knowledge of Social Sciences. Due to their regulatory nature, most of these documents are textual, or have an HTML format, and are linked to informative measures aimed at the university community in general and refer to applicable rules focused on informing, detailing ways of proceeding and even controlling or sanctioning certain behaviors, especially those aimed at the student body. The main conclusion of the study is the coincidence, in all the universities studied, of the need to carry out preventive, informative and sanctioning actions that should form part of a regulatory institutional framework.

Keywords: academic dishonesty, ethics, integrity, plagiarism, institutional policies, university

RESUMEN

Las conductas o prácticas deshonestas preocupan en todas las universidades del mundo y se abordan de modo diferente en las instituciones universitarias de los diferentes países. Centrándose en la integridad académica, se persiguen dos objetivos: por un lado, revisar las políticas de integridad académica dirigidas a evitar el plagio existente en las universidades españolas, a través de los documentos en ellas disponibles y, por otro, describir esos documentos en cuanto a sus características y a su contenido. Para lograr dichos objetivos se analizan 275 documentos localizados en los sitios web de 47 universidades públicas españolas. Para la recogida de información se diseñó una Ficha de Registro Informatizada y se analizó la información obtenida tanto de modo cualitativo como cuantitativo. Los principales hallazgos subrayan que la mayoría de los documentos localizados se encuentran en los vicerrectorados de política científica, innovación y transferencia, en las Facultades de Educación y de Humanidades y en titulaciones que corresponden a la rama de conocimiento de Ciencias Sociales. Por su carácter normativo, la mayoría de estos documentos son textuales, o tienen un formato HTML, están vinculados a medidas informativas dirigidas a la comunidad universitaria en general y hacen referencia a normas aplicables y enfocadas a informar, detallar formas de proceder e incluso controlar o sancionar determinadas conductas, especialmente aquellas dirigidas al alumnado. Como principal conclusión del estudio destaca la coincidencia, en todas las universidades objeto de estudio, de la necesidad de llevar a cabo actuaciones preventivas, informativas y sancionadoras que deben formar parte de un marco institucional regulatorio.

Palabras clave: deshonestidad académica, ética, integridad, plagio, políticas institucionales, universidad

INTRODUCTION

In higher education institutions, lack of academic integrity is a growing problem in the learning process as well as in teaching, research and academic management (Ahmed, 2020).

In order to understand the scope of this wide-ranging problem, it is useful to study and delimit the concept of academic integrity, as well as the different behaviors that fall under this multidimensional construct (Hensley et al., 2013) including academic plagiarism in students, on which this work will focus more specifically. Academic dishonesty «constitutes a violation of rules or norms prescribed by educational institutions» (Vaamonde & Omar, 2008 p. 11) and can be classified into four types: exam cheating; plagiarism; false excuses; and cyber-plagiarism. The International Center for Academic Integrity (2021) defines academic integrity as «the commitment of institutions to six core values: honesty, trust, fairness, respect, responsibility and courage» (p. 4).

Among the most common dishonest behaviors is plagiarism, which consists of using «other people's ideas and/or words as one's own or without attribution of authorship» (Vargas-Franco, 2019, p. 159). It is, therefore, a dishonest behavior that may be intentional or unintentional, depending on whether or not the referenced authorship is cited (Dumitrina et al., 2019).

Honesty implies, on the one hand, that universities adopt policies aimed at making the university community aware that «falsifying data, lying, fraud, theft and other dishonest behavior are unacceptable» (Morales-Montes & Lujano-Vilchis, 2021, p. 4). On the other hand, it is also essential to know how universities deal with these types of practices that threaten academic integrity, to identify the general structure that governs the governance of universities and the regulations available on this matter, which are vital elements in order to significantly reduce unethical behavior in the organization (Stoesz & Eaton, 2020). As Wijaya and Gruber (2018) point out, if there are no rules or laws regulating this issue, plagiarism practices will increase.

The existing literature on the subject highlights that this issue is of concern in universities around the world and is dealt with differently in universities in different countries. For example, according to Mohd et al. (2021) in Malaysia, there are no common policies to address plagiarism in universities. In the same vein, Akter (2021) notes that very few higher education institutions in Bangladesh adopt policies to prevent plagiarism, have access to plagiarism detection programs, and offer very few training courses to prevent plagiarism.

Anti-plagiarism policies are found to be insufficient. Thus, according to Morales-Montes and Lujano-Vilchis (2021), in Mexican public universities, there are regulations to prevent and combat academic plagiarism, but there is no policy to

prevent this type of practice, nor are there specialized resources. Along the same lines, Stoesz et al. (2019) consider that in Canadian universities there is a need to review sanctioning policies and raise student awareness of the importance of academic integrity.

In the European context, studies analyze plagiarism policies in university institutions reach similar results. The study conducted by Foltýnek and Glendinning (2015) in 27 European Union member states on existing policies on academic integrity in higher education institutions shows differences between countries in anti-plagiarism policies and in the sanctions applied to this type of practice. Specifically, in the case of Germany incorporating changes in regulations aimed at increasing the penalties for plagiarism behavior depending on its typology, creating the figure of the Ombudsman for Science (Ombudsmann für die Wissenschaft) and making widespread use of anti-plagiarism software (Ruipérez & García-Cabrero, 2016). In other European countries such as Spain, there are no specific studies on how plagiarism policies are being developed in universities, although it is worth mentioning the work of Sureda-Negre et al. (2016) on the regulation of assessment fraud in Spanish universities. In this respect, these authors point out that, although the rules, regulations and ethical codes address this issue, their treatment is very limited.

In view of the above, it should be noted that, although legal initiatives are relevant to lay the foundations for a culture of academic integrity, policies in this regard should emphasize the value of what academic integrity means. It should be noted, as indicated by Morales-Montes and Lujano-Vilchis (2021), that legal initiatives to combat plagiarism cannot be the only strategy to confront dishonest behavior; however, they seem to be the basis for the design of actions and resources to eradicate it; therefore, it is necessary to know and evaluate the resources that university institutions make available to the university community to combat dishonest acts (Ramos-Quispe et al., 2019).

In order to understand how academic integrity policies are dealt with in the university context, it is useful to know first of all the general and formal structure that governs university governance, as well as the regulations available on this matter. In the specific case of the Spanish University System, it should be pointed out, first, that is made up of 85 universities (50 public and 35 private). These universities offer official degrees, which are structured in three cycles: Bachelor's, Master's and Ph.D. degree, are structured in collegiate bodies (Social Council, Governing Council, University Senate, School and Faculty Boards and Department Councils) and in single-person bodies (Rector, Vice-rectors, General Secretary, Manager, Deans of Faculties, Directors of Schools, Departments and University Research Institutes) and are organized into faculties and schools, departments and university research institutes, being the faculties and schools responsible for the organization

of teaching and academic, administrative and management processes leading to the obtaining of university degrees (Ley Orgánica 6/2001, de 21 de diciembre, de universidades).

The European Higher Education Area has forced a process of adaptation of Spanish university studies, but, in the words of Casado et al. (2018), in this process «the training of the responsible citizen» (p. 66) has been neglected. Thus, numerous studies call for the need to incorporate the values that make up academic integrity (honesty, trust, responsibility, justice, respect and courage) in the curricula as well as in the different university regulations, so that students are educated in a comprehensive manner and so that teachers focus their attention on the teaching and assessment practices they carry out (Stoesz & Eaton, 2020). As Morales-Montes and Lujano-Vilchis (2021) point out, «a culture of academic integrity maintains the social legitimacy of the university» (p. 4).

Understanding academic integrity policies requires knowledge not only of the general and formal structure that controls the governance of universities, but also of the available regulations that they develop in this regard, a vital element to significantly reduce unethical behavior in the organization (Stoesz & Eaton, 2020). In this regard, in the case of Spanish universities, it is worth highlighting, firstly, the Real Decreto Legislativo 1/1996, 12th April, by which the consolidated text is approved by Ley de Propiedad Intelectual, which states in Article 32 that:

It is lawful to include in one's own work fragments of other works of a written, audio or audio-visual nature, as well as isolated works of a plastic or figurative photographic nature, as long as they have already been published and their inclusion is made by way of quotation or for their analysis, commentary or critical judgement. Such use may only be made for teaching or research purposes, to the extent justified by the purpose of such incorporation and indicating the source and the name of the author of the work used.

Likewise, the Real Decreto 1791/2010, 30th December, which approves the University Student Statute, recognises that university activities must be governed by honesty, truthfulness, rigor, justice, efficiency, respect and responsibility (article 63. 1) and establishes, as one of the duties of university students, to refrain from using or cooperating in fraudulent procedures in assessment tests, in the work carried out or in official university documents (art. 13).

It is also necessary to refer to the recently approved Ley 3/2022, 24th February, of university coexistence, whose article 11.g establishes as a very serious offence:

Plagiarism totally or partially a work, or committing academic fraud in the preparation of the Bachelor's and Master's Degree final Projects or the Ph.D. Thesis. Academic fraud shall be understood to be any premeditated behavior aimed at falsifying the results of an exam or work, whether one's own or someone else's, taken as a requirement for passing a subject or accrediting academic performance.

In view of the above, this article presents a review of academic integrity policies in Spanish universities. Furthermore, given that one of the main university manifestations of academic integrity is centered on the commission of plagiarism, whether and how this specific type of academic misconduct is addressed within the academic integrity policy is also examined. It should be borne in mind that plagiarism, as a multifaceted phenomenon, depends on the regulatory framework of the university institutions themselves.

This article poses the following research questions: what kind of documents are available in Spanish universities to deal with plagiarism?; what are the main characteristics of these documents?; and what is the specific content of these documents?

The objectives pursued in this article are, on the one hand, to review the academic integrity policies aimed at avoiding plagiarism in Spanish universities, through the documents available in them and, on the other hand, to describe the main characteristics of these documents both in terms of their format and their content.

METHOD

To achieve the purpose of the research, it was decided to carry out a descriptive study, of documentary review, based on the analysis of the documents available in Spanish public universities, to identify their initiatives around university academic integrity and plagiarism, in line with other studies such as the one carried out by Morales-Montes and Lujano-Vilchis (2021). The study involves a quantitative approach, based on the quantification of the documents analyzed and their typology, and a qualitative approach, focused on the analysis of content from categories and subcategories.

Selection of participating institutions

To determine the participating institutions to study, a search was first carried out by accessing the Register of Universities, Centers and Degrees of the Department of Universities and the existing universities were verified on the website. Of the 50 public universities in Spain, we worked with a total of 47, as they met the selection criteria previously set in the study and which are specified in the following three:

- To be a Spanish university financed with public funds, legally recognized as a university and regulated by the legislation in force in the Spanish state in relation to university studies. As research institutions, we assume that they are more aware of the ethics of academic work. Also, as they are

public institutions, their information is more accessible than that of private universities.

- To offer a degree in each of the five branches of knowledge of Law and Social Sciences, Arts and Humanities, Health Sciences, Sciences and Engineering and Architecture.
- To offer at least one double degree in each of the five aforementioned branches of knowledge.
- To carry out the search, the Ministry of Universities' Register of Universities, Centers and Degrees was used and the existing universities were checked on the website. The final result was the identification of 47 universities that met the previously established requirements.

The sample of documents consists of 275 documents available on the websites of the 47 universities, relating to rules, regulations, codes, etc., which include references to academic integrity, and specifically to academic plagiarism. The search included those that affect universities in general, the different university services, faculties and degrees (both undergraduate and postgraduate).

Instrument

For the collection of data, a computerized registration form was designed to collect the information found on the websites of the universities under study. On the project website (integridadacademica.com), a digital tool EVALREDPLAXIO was created for internal access by the working team, in which three forms were introduced to search for information on university services, faculties and degrees. The fields on the form were as follows:

- a) Information on the university, university service, faculty or university center, university degree, body on which it depends and branch of knowledge.
- b) Type of the document.
- c) Format of the document.
- d) Name of the document.
- e) Location of the document (web link including http or https).
- f) Type of measure to which the document refers (coercive/punitive, plagiarism detection, educational or informative).
- g) Target group.

Information collection procedure

The information was collected by the research team, distributing among its members the search for and analysis of the information from the 47 universities under study.

The following keywords were used to search for information: plagiarism, academic plagiarism, ethics, academic honesty, academic dishonesty, academic integrity, intellectual property, dishonest practices, quotation and authorship.

Once the universities had been identified and distributed among the members of the research team, a common work protocol was established to be developed in different phases:

- The first phase involved accessing each university's website to identify its structure, to be carried out from April 1 to May 30 2021.
- The second phase involved accessing the different governing bodies (vice-rectorships, collegiate and statutory bodies, representative bodies, etc.) of each university and locating the different available documents. It was carried out from June 1 to July 31 2021.
- A third phase involved, initially, the downloading, reading and analysis of all the documents located, a total of 275, on regulations, legislation, guides, informative courses, training courses, PowerPoint, videos, guidelines, seminars, tutorials, anti-plagiarism tools, conferences, congresses, manuals, etc., and secondly, the reading and detailed analysis of the information contained in each document. It was carried out during the month of September 2021.
- Finally, the documents located, they were grouped into three basic categories: regulations or legislation on plagiarism; ethical codes; codes of good practice.

Analysis of the information

The data collected through the Computerized Registration Form used were subjected to quantitative and qualitative treatment for analysis. The quantitative analysis focused on the description, in terms of frequencies and percentages, of the data referring to the location (university, faculty, branch of knowledge and body), type and format of the documents, type of plagiarism avoidance measures to which they refer and recipients. For this analysis, the statistical program IBM SPSS Statistics version 27.0 was used.

The qualitative analysis focused on the content of the localized documents, taking into account several categories of analysis that emerged depending on the type of document: regulations and code of ethics and code of good practices. In turn, the following subcategories were established: intellectual property regulations, evaluation standards, regulations for the preparation, tutoring and evaluation of the TFG / TFM, doctoral regulations, external internship regulations, disciplinary regime regulations, academic dedication plans, publications regulations, university

statutes, strategic plans and specific regulations on academic fraud. The qualitative analysis was carried out using the MAXQDA program.

RESULTS

The results obtained are presented below and organized according to the type of analysis carried out; firstly, the results referring to the quantitative descriptive analysis and, secondly, the qualitative analysis.

Quantitative results

Information was collected on the university where the documents were located, as well as the faculty or center, the branch of knowledge of the degree in which they were located and the body to which they belong. Thus, it should be noted that most of the documents were located at the University of Huelva (7.64%), followed by the University of Seville and the University of A Coruña (5.82%), University of Santiago de Compostela and University of Murcia (4.73%), Rovira i Virgili University (4.36%), Rey Juan Carlos University and University of Malaga (3.64%). In the rest of the universities studied, the total number of documents located was below ten.

The total documents were located in a total of 91 different centers, mainly in the Faculties of Education (17.58%) and Humanities (10.99%). In the rest of the centers (71.43%), the number of documents is below ten.

Most of the documents correspond to university degrees belonging to the branch of Law and Social Sciences (34.07%), followed by the branch of Arts and Humanities (21.98%), Engineering and Architecture (20.88%), Sciences (18.68%) and Health Sciences (4.39%).

Most of the documents are located in the Vice-Rectors' Offices for Science Policy, Innovation and Transfer (30.00%), followed by the General Secretariat (22.94%), Vice-Rectors' Offices for Academic Organization, Teaching and Faculty (20.59%), Governing Council (11.18%), Vice-Rectors' Office for Students (8.82%), Vice-Rectors' Office for Strategy, Digital Education and Technologies (2.94%), Vice-Rector's Office for Infrastructure (1.18%), Vice-Rector's Office for Communication and Institutional Relations (1.18%), University Senate (0.59%) and Vice-Rector's Office for Culture, Sport and University Extension (0.59%). It should be noted that many documents could not be assigned to a specific body, in 61.82% of cases.

Table 1 shows the main characteristics of the documents analyzed.

Table 1*Records relating to institutional policies*

Types of documents	Percentage	Types of measures	Percentage	People	Percentage
Regulations or legislation	79.64%	Informative	71.63%	All members	52%
Code of ethics	20%	Coercive or punitive	16.73%	Undergraduated students	25.45%
Code of good practice	0.36%	Formative	10.91%	Master's students	9.45%
		Plagiarism detection	0.73%	Ph.D. students	8.36%
				Research staff	3.64%
				Teaching staff	1.10%

As show in table 1, out of total documents, 219 (79.64%) were coded as regulations or legislation on plagiarism (most of these documents are text documents, others are in html format, video or Power point or Prezi presentations); 55 documents (20%) were categorized as code of ethics and only one document as a code of good practice (0.36%). In the specific case of the code of ethics, the format of the documents is mostly text-based. Finally, as far as the code of good practice is concerned, the only one located is also in text format.

As for the types of measures addressed, the most of documents are coded as regulations refer to coercive or punitive measures and to training measures; the remaining cases refer to the detection of plagiarism. The documents coded as code of ethics are of an informative and formative nature; the code of good practice is of an informative nature.

Finally, the people to whom the documents are addressed are, for the most part, all members of the university community in this order: at undergraduate students, at Master's students, at Ph.D. students, for research staff and for teaching staff. The documents codified as Ethical codes are mainly intended, like the regulations, for the entire university community and for undergraduate students. In the case of the localization Code of Good Practice, research staff are the main target group.

Those documents that refer to assessment standards establish the way to proceed when academic plagiarism is detected. In most universities, when this behavior is detected, they opt for assigning a numerical mark of zero, either in the specific assessment test or in the final mark for the subject, in addition to applying the corresponding disciplinary or sanctioning procedure, in accordance with the legislation in force at each university. With regard to Bachelor's and Master's Degree Final Projects, in some cases, in addition to a failing grade, a change of subject and director is ruled for.

Other documents refer to the regulations for the preparation, tutoring and assessment of Bachelor's /Master's Degree final Projects and, specifically, once again the regulations establish that these projects are protected by the Ley de Propiedad Intelectual (Real Decreto Legislativo 1/1996) and focus, above all, on how to proceed when academic plagiarism is detected, in line with the aforementioned assessment regulations. With regard to plagiarism, many university institutions require a declaration in which the originality of the work is assumed, understood as the fact that no sources were used without citing them properly and, furthermore, that if plagiarism is detected before the public defender, the student will lose the right to the defender. At the time of applying for the defender, university regulations focus on ensuring that the legal obligations regarding intellectual and industrial property and the originality required of a Bachelor's /Master's Degree Final Project have been complied with and, to this end, in most cases, electronic plagiarism detection tools are used, both during the defender application period and during the performance of the panel assessing the work.

The Ph.D. regulations are also present in the regulatory documents located and analyzed; in this sense, with respect to Ph.D. studies, most of the documents analyzed follow the same line of action as in the other regulations (on intellectual property, evaluation, ...), establishing commitments of supervision that guarantee a good academic relationship between Ph.D. students and the university, as well as the main rights and duties of the persons involved, including possible academic property rights.). At the same time, special emphasis is placed in several of these documents on the duty to avoid any kind of plagiarism and on compliance with ethical rules by all those involved, making available to them electronic anti-plagiarism tools which, in the event of detecting a high number of coincidences, will lead to the non-authorization of the reading of the thesis.

Another type of regulatory documents found are those referring to the regulations governing external placements, which refer to intellectual and industrial property rights as a right of students on placements. Few universities address this issue in their external placement regulations, and where reference is made to it, the intellectual and industrial property of students' work is also guaranteed as a student right.

Also included are the disciplinary regulations, academic conduct or rules of coexistence, which make direct reference to academic honesty based on mutual respect, courtesy, recognition of people's dignity, insisting on not carrying out fraudulent actions such as signing the attendance of classmates who do not attend class, plagiarism in the development of work, disseminating teaching materials provided by the teaching staff that have intellectual property. Other documents of an academic nature were also found, in which the universities include aspects related to intellectual property, academic fraud, the rights and duties of students in relation to this issue, and plagiarism in assessment tests. In general, these regulations correspond to the academic dedication plans of teaching and research staff, general academic regulations, academic regulations for degree programs or regulations with special indications for students.

Likewise, documents were found that refer to Regulations on Publications; in this case, and although few universities contemplate it, in some libraries and publication services or university archives, through their regulations, they refer to issues related to academic integrity, focusing on the intellectual property of the documents they work with (books, journals, publishing products, etc.).

Some university statutes and strategic plans also refer to issues related to ensuring the intellectual property of students' original work, as well as to committees in charge of ensuring originality and respect for the intellectual property of research carried out in the university context. Some cases refer to the avoidance of the use of fraudulent procedures in assessment tests, and in official university papers and documents, encouraging ethically correct behavior in all academic activity.

The universities also draw up specific rules on academic fraud to discourage dishonest conduct. More specifically, the universities analyzed refer, above all, to the student assessment process, establishing the types of conduct that will be identified as academic fraud. Basically, the following are considered: using unauthorized information tracking media, using unauthorized or authorized electronic media for unauthorized purposes, impersonating identities when taking tests, copying or allowing oneself to be copied, manipulating certificates or minutes, etc.

Reference is also made to what is considered as plagiarism in the academic work submitted by students, i.e.: including fragments as if they were their own without citing the original authorship, copying from the Internet, composing a work based on copied fragments without making reference to their authorship, handing in work from other courses or from other classmates, commissioning one's own work to another person/s and preventive measures for fraud or plagiarism and sanctioning measures are introduced in the event that plagiarism is detected, with consequences in the grade or the possible opening of disciplinary proceedings.

Finally, universities also have numerous codes of ethics provided by the Ethics Committees that operate in them, reflecting concern for ethical issues, authorship of work, honest conduct, etc. In the Code of ethics and Code of good practice of the universities analyzed, there are clear references to the promotion of ethics in the institutions, identifying what conduct is considered to be fraudulent, the tools for detecting it, the measures aimed at preventing academic fraud, as well as the guidelines for both preventive and punitive action, by means of the regulations to be applied in all cases of academic fraud.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

The aim of this study was none other than to show how academic integrity is contemplated in the documents available in different public universities in Spain. The main results obtained include, on the one hand, that the number of documents found referring to institutional policies on dishonest practices such as plagiarism in academic work reveals that the universities analyzed are concerned about this issue, This is especially true of those universities with the highest number of documents referring to academic integrity and, more specifically, plagiarism and that these documents are mainly located in vice-rectors' offices related to Science Policy, Innovation and Transfer. Similarly, it is noteworthy that most of them are located in faculties of Education and Humanities and correspond to degrees in the branch of Law and Social Sciences.

Due to their normative nature, most of these documents are of a textual nature, or in html format, and are linked to informative measures aimed at the university community in general. In general terms, it is worth noting that most of the documents located refer to applicable rules focused on informing, detailing ways of proceeding and even monitoring or sanctioning certain conducts, especially those referring to the student body, in line with studies such as Stoesz and Eaton (2020).

If the information in the documents that universities collect on their websites is analyzed more closely, it is observed that the majority of those located emphasize the responsibility of those who prepare their academic work regarding the use of good practices, so as not to have to assume negative consequences, but the co-responsibility of the management and governing bodies of the universities is also highlighted, which must facilitate a change in the culture of the organization that emphasizes values and ethical behavior in university life.

In general, it was noted that Spanish universities are working to transfer the principles and requirements of general policies, both national and European, to their own regulatory framework or institutional regulations. The data confirm that the universities analyzed, on the basis of the Ley de Propiedad Intelectual (Real Decreto Legislativo 1/1996), make more use of quotations, reviews and illustrations

for educational or scientific research purposes, highlighting the use that university teaching and research staff can make of certain fragments of works by other authors as part of their research function.

The important work of the Research Committees of Ethics are essential to ensure scientific and academic integrity, as is the role of the University Ombudsman in ensuring respect for individual rights and freedoms and university quality.

However, it is also necessary to point out the importance given to this issue in relation to undergraduate, Master's and Ph.D. students and their academic work that can be assessed (work carried out during their studies, research work, external internship reports, Bachelor's and Master's Degree Final Projects, Ph.D. Theses), in which reference is made to intellectual property regulations and to the express authorization of the authorship of the fragments that are reproduced in whole or in part in such work.

Some works in this regard point to the need to standardized criteria on what constitutes plagiarism in textbooks and seminars, establishing deterrent measures such as prevention (Porto et al., 2019), teaching students to exploit information in an appropriate manner (Chankova, 2017), or helping them to «acquire the awareness that in this field there are also specific moral regulations that must be followed» (Miranda, 2013, p. 723). Prevention is also pointed out by some authors (Caldevilla, 2010). In this sense, there is a lack of actions that establish gradations of plagiarism and differentiated sanctions depending on the number of plagiarized texts, as pointed out by Glendinning (2013) and Ruipérez and García-Cabrero (2016). Educational organizations, as pointed out by Casado et al. (2018), Díaz-Arce (2016) and Egaña (2012), must establish effective policies for the prevention of this problem, hence the need to adopt measures in this regard in the context of the Spanish university system.

In short, the main conclusion that can be drawn from this study is that, considering the findings, the measures to be adopted by teaching staff, students and those responsible for the academic management of the centers, faculties, services, vice-rectorates and universities coincide in the need to carry out preventive, informative and punitive actions to ensure that dishonest academic conduct and lack of ethics cease to be common practice in the university context. These actions must form part of an institutional framework that regulates them.

Among the main limitations of the study, it should be pointed out that the possible differences between the different universities studied in terms of their size, specialization, the degrees they offer and also their age have not been considered, aspects that may be shaping a different approach to the problem of academic integrity in the institution from the point of view of the policies developed. In line with this limitation, it is also considered interesting to carry out a study in the immediate future to extend, from a geographical point of view, the research to

countries in the immediate vicinity or to those with which Spanish universities have traditionally maintained close contacts derived, among other things, from the use of a common language. It would also be of interest to study the role of universities in the integral formation of students and their commitment to the transmission of ethical values.

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