ARTICLES

Authorship construction in the fight against plagiarism: an overview of school research [1] [2] [3] [4]

Construção de autoria no combate ao plágio: um panorama da atividade de pesquisa escolar

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Abstract

This article presents the results of a doctoral research that assessed how schools of excellence in the city of Rio de Janeiro manage school research and fight plagiarism. Three groups of actors from four schools were interviewed in a semi-structured way: teachers and specialized professionals who work in the 6th to 9th year of middle school and their students. Students declare that: (i) they plagiarize; (ii) do not present works drafted by them; (iii) they buy works from others; (iv) they make paraphrases without citing sources; (v) they make compendiums of quotations from unread works. Also, schools promote authorship construction and plagiarism is a major concern among all professionals. Thus, teachers should pay greater attention regarding an ethical-pedagogical approach when requesting and conducting school research. The work is based on a theoretical framework that values the dialogue between polyphonic voices in constructing authorship, and in fostering the construction of knowledge through school research.

Keywords: School research project, Authorship and plagiarism, Ethical-pedagogical conception, Middle School

Resumo

Este artigo apresenta resultados da pesquisa de doutorado que aferiu como escolas de excelência da cidade do Rio de Janeiro gerenciam a pesquisa escolar e combatem o plágio. Foram entrevistados de modo semiestruturado três grupos de atores de quatro escolas: professores, profissionais especializados que atuam no 6º ao 9º ano do ensino fundamental II e seus respectivos alunos, com idades entre 11 e 15 anos. Estudantes declaram: (i) plagiar; (ii) não apresentar trabalhos por eles construídos; (iii) comprar trabalhos; (iv) parafrasear sem citar as fontes; e (v) realizar compêndios de citações de obras não lidas. Constatou-se que as escolas promovem a construção autoral e que o plágio é uma preocupação pungente entre todos os profissionais. Assim, aponta-se para a necessidade de uma maior atenção dos professores no que tange a um olhar ético-pedagógico ao solicitar e conduzir as pesquisas escolares. Inspirados por uma corrente de pensamento que sublinha o tratamento didático da questão da cópia (plágio), como fase anterior à punição (visão legalista), acredita-se no diálogo entre vozes polifônicas para construir autorias e fomentar a construção de conhecimentos por meio da pesquisa escolar.

Palavras-chave: *Trabalho de pesquisa escolar, Autoria e plágio, Concepção ético-pedagógica, Ensino fundamental II*

Starting point: an overview of plagiarism at schools

Plagiarism, recurrent in the worldwide research in recent years, (Jeffrey, 2012a, 2012b; Peters, 2015; Torres-Diaz et al., 2018) increasingly imposes limits, doubts, and obstacle for effective actions to solve or minimize it. Despite their unequivocal importance for the limits of pedagogy, ethics, and knowledge acquisition, approaches to plagiarism in education are still limited (Dias, 2017, Dias & Eisenberg, 2015; Jeffrey & Dias, 2019). The ethical-pedagogical view directs its gaze to the bases of an iceberg (Jeffrey & Dias, 2019) that bears a myriad of problems, elucidating the reasons for so much plagiarism. This perspective consists of three central axes: (i) methodological aspects linked to the *modus operandi* of research, from understanding what is research to all inherent procedures of an investigative practice; (ii) literacy, linked to the obstacles students experience in reading and writing; and (iii) current technologies and their uses. In the latter case, common sense claims the freedom of using bibliographical sources, which would justify the infamous "copy and paste" (Park, 2003). In previous studies (Dias, 2017; Dias & Eisenberg, 2015), university students stating that the information located in the cyberspace has no owner, belonging to everyone and thus can be copied at will.

This introduction raises the following questions: what kind of problems teachers and students list when asked to reflect on the subject? What has been done to try mitigating the effects of indiscriminate plagiarism or to prevent it? What actions have led to the most positive results regarding raising awareness about plagiarism and fighting it? Can schools train authors? Are the schools allowed to?

We adopt the notion that plagiarizing is taking others' discourse or construction for oneself (Maurel-Indart, 2018) and authorship is finding pathways to create and dialogue with voices that belong to students' universe (Jeffrey & Dias, 2019).

Methodology

This is a qualitative case study with semi-structured interviews conducted with students, middle school teachers of different subjects, and school specialized professionals. This research was conducted in elite schools in the city of Rio de Janeiro: (i) one laboratory school; (ii) two municipal schools[ii]; and (iii) one private school of excellence.

Participants

In total, 28 6th- to 9th-grade students aged 11–15 years and 15 of their teachers from various subjects were included in this research. Also, five specialized professionals were interviewed, namely: (i) a computer science teacher; (ii) two librarians with a degree in Library Science whose function is to organize collections, receive students, and guide them in their school research, choosing printed texts or internet materials that serve as a source for their papers; and (iii) two reading instructors that are municipal tenure teachers.

All participating students were indicated by the pedagogical coordinators of schools. The students were chosen based on their communicative skills, willingness to grant interviews, average academic performance, and time availability.

Teachers were indicated by principals or coordinators. We asked principals and coordinators to introduce us to the teachers who carried out research with their students the most. Regarding the few specialized professionals in the investigated schools, they were interviewed if willing to participate in the research.

Procedures

This research was approved by the Ethics Committee at the Pontifícia Universidade Católica do Rio de Janeiro (PUC-Rio), opinion No. 2015-30. The interviews were conducted on days and hours provided by the participants. Informed consent forms were signed by teachers, specialized professionals, and students' guardians and an assent form, by students (if applicable). For further analysis, all interviews were audio recorded and transcribed.

Teachers were individually interviewed with the following questions: why do you ask for research papers? How do you observe your students' relationship with researching? How do you deal with plagiarism in students' papers? What doubts students have during their research? Do students sustain a critical opinion in their research? What is the reason for your students' (not)opining on a topic? What task do librarians and computer lab teachers undertake in school research activities?

For students, collective interview sessions were held with three to four participants. Our goal was to understand how they interpret school research, if they feel able to be authors and reconstructors of knowledge, what doubts they have about the investigative activity, and what they learn from it or how they interact with their teachers when they are conducting research activities. Atlas.ti[iiii] tool was used to support the transcriptions analyses. The statements in the doctoral thesis and in this paper were chosen from categories of analysis that are synthetically described: concept of authorship, definition of research, research model and commands for conducting research, and moral judgments about plagiarism.

Results

About the schools

We found no relevant differences in the participating schools. Furthermore, no discrepancies were found between the statements of teachers, students, and specialized professionals. These statements were interconnected and corroborated, showing no relevant counterpoints for this research.

Specialized professionals

When requested, library, reading room, and computer lab professionals stated that they act as those who put research into practice. These professionals oversee students' processes of searching, organizing materials, and constructing the final products.

The reading instructor at the municipal school 1 no longer guides research since the function of the room has changed over time, becoming an area dedicated to literary reading. We could not interview the reading instructor at municipal school 2. The laboratory school had no specific professional managing its computer lab. The participating municipal schools also lack specific professionals for their computer labs, but they offer computers for students. Only the private school had a teacher in charge of a computer lab. This teacher, via partnerships with colleagues from other disciplines, conducted what he called *school research*. Answering the question "what is your role while students conduct school research?," this professional stated supporting students in understanding research commands, search and selection of references, and treating them for the elaboration of the final research constructs.

> The advantage I see here at the school is exactly this support. We have an openness with all the teachers, and we establish a partnership with them. Depending on the content they are working on, if they need to, they ask for it and we set up something, a class according to what they need (Comp1, 2016).

This specific case evinces the necessary steps for school research that aims at critically analyzing what students assemble or what is done in partnership with them, as Mottet et al. (2013) and Peters (2015) suggest.

We found that the visits to the specialized rooms take place: (i) on students initiative when they need some research source; (ii) at teachers' suggestion or order; (iii) when the research paper involves a partnership between teachers of a specific discipline and specialized professionals; or (iv), in the case of the reading room of municipal school 1, when students want to read or borrow literary books since this space is no longer intended for research. In this context, we found differences between our research findings and those by Oliveira et al. (1999), who point out that students did not attend the libraries to do research, doing so only to read or study for exams.

School research definitions

When questioned about what they consider school research, teachers and specialized professionals showed greater concern in presenting their objectives for the proposed activities than in elucidating what they understand as research. We identified that these professional trivialized the word *research*, associating it with any work made by students. Thus, our findings corroborate Ninin (2008) indicating the absence of a reflection on what school research actually is and what are its purposes. Once again, we mention Peters (2015) and Mottet et al. (2013), who claim that school research is a systematized activity that diverges from other school practices; thus, research can and should be taught at school.

Still on the question "what is school research for you?," students interpret school research as a means to improve their knowledge, to discover and to measure something, or to solve questions. The following statement presents a different element as it suggests *interest* as necessary trait for the investigative process as it deals with discovering and knowing a previously unknown object, which must be linked to an interest mobilizing the investigation.

> *I think that, at least for me, research is something you don't know yet and you try to know out of interest to know something better, sometimes even better. To keep improving in certain ways* (Std17, 2016).

This statement directly dialogues with Ninin (2008), who shows that students implicitly have the notion of the purposes of research and the possibilities of creating a critical reasoning.

The relation between research and grades

The question "are all research activities conducted for grades?" suggests a direct relation, i.e., according to teachers' statements, grades are assigned to the research activity. Data leads us to agree with Fernandes and Freitas (2007), who we paraphrase: evaluations neither begin nor end when grades are given to students' activities.

Grading is another matter for students. They worry more about grades than with acquiring knowledge. This is what the following statement suggests, in which we find that teachers tried to somehow show students that what matters is learning and that grades only reflect such learning.

And when they feel challenged: "Is it going to be worth a point?" I said: "No, it's going to be worth the learning." If they feel challenged by the questioning, they will research and want to find the answers (Tch5, 2016).

However, in Luckesi's (2005) terms, research can serve as an evaluative instrument if it usefully assesses what students have or not learned. As we have seen, always linking research to grades functions as a bargaining chip, which, under no circumstances, represents an evaluation.

Research proposal models

As an answer to the question "how do you request a research paper?," data show that teachers and students declare that the former's research commands are based on a theme to be investigated or a script to be followed. The theme has, generally, been discussed in class and teachers ask papers so that students can complement information or reinforce the taught content.

The following excerpt shows that students confuse scripts with texts to guide discussions. We also observe that practice employed by teacher fosters a dialogue between what has been read and the social world in which students live. In our view, this exemplifies authorship fostering, even if we do not consider this practice as research per se.

No … In fact, it [the script] *tells you things about the theme. It doesn't mean, "Ask that question!" It makes propositions about the theme* (Std25, 2016).

We understand, as does Peters (2015), that this structure of commands is a routine part of the school culture. We found in teachers and students' statements that setting a theme, format, and deadline will hardly fulfill what is expected as an outcome of a research.

We heard statements from students who urge the possibility of positioning themselves in their papers, of remaining motivated to search for answers, satisfy their curiosities, and thus write their own history as authors. The following statement evinces the importance of acquiring knowledge. The student, answering the question "what is the importance of school research for you?" says that what she learns from research helps her during tests.

I think it's important. You acquire more knowledge … what's even more important…. Before, when I was younger, I didn't like to do these research activities, but then, my mother … She says that it will be good for me, that later, at the time of a test, it will make a difference … (Std19, 2016).

We also found statements indicating that research is interesting or even fun. According to students, this enjoyment and interest are directly related to the type of paper and final product to be presented and especially the interest aroused by the activities. Notably, students' interest fades away when papers, disciplines, or teachers are unmotivating. Thus, we observe that they start to do their papers without dedication, sometimes plagiarizing.

Internet, research, and plagiarism

Regarding "where students look for inspiration or sources for their research papers," we found that students use the internet the most. It enables the independence of learners toward seeking information that interests them. It refers to freedom and autonomy in the search for information.

Some teachers demonize the internet as if it were the main responsible for plagiarism in research activities. Perhaps, the statements on how students should handwrite what they find in their searches should be rethought. This concept is based on the allegation that such practice at least forces reading exercises and thus lead students to retain the read and copied content. Perhaps therein lies the answer: retaining content does not necessarily mean knowing. How long will students retain what they have copied or read? Or how long will students keep what they have actually learned?

Regardless of the final product, Jeffrey and Dias (2019) and Dias (2017) propose that school research papers should comply with ethical-pedagogical precepts that train authors and fight copying. Our records show that teachers have been dealing plagiarism, sometimes punishing students who plagiarize papers with a poor grade, sometimes asking them to redo the activity. Thus, statements such as the one below illustrate actions related to the question "how do you deal with your students' plagiarized papers?"

So, when I see the papers are copies of something else … I take it [the final grade] and divide it by two. Like, everybody gets an A and then I divide it by two. And when I see that it's a copy from the internet, I will deduct a point or have the student redo the paper. … It depends on the case, you know? (Tch2, 2016).

Only two statements were more punctual regarding guiding students on how to use information and avoid plagiarism. The example below illustrates a more educational based than punitive approach.

> *I talk to them, I say, "Oh, the activity is not quite that, I want a summary, I want you to look elsewhere, I want you to form your own idea. I don't want something ready-made. If I wanted something ready-made, I'd searched myself." And they're not resistant to that observation, no. They redo it* (Tch5, 2016).

Only one teacher stated not identifying plagiarism. Missing plagiarism prevents the detection of problems related to non-authorial construction and that its non-observance enables students to deem their behavior as correct, ethical, or as something that does not affect their learning process.

What do students say when asked why a student plagiarizes or copies information from the internet or other sources? They claim that they plagiarize out of laziness or disinterest. According to them, this lack of interest may be related to the research theme, the discipline, or to the teacher who requested the research paper. We found an understanding of plagiarism as an act practiced by students who are considered lazy or uninterested in their learning process. Following this thread, we observed that students understand that one should avoid plagiarism, that research sources should always be referenced, and that copying for the sake of copying is an unethical behavior.

In the statement below, the student, answering the question "how should we use the materials found on the internet or other sources?" partially understands the processes that must be carried out to avoid plagiarism. Perhaps they lack the exact notion of the norms, but they have the idea that the other should be given due value for the constructed discourses.

> *It's, for example, using quotation marks, taking an opinion from someone, you know? For example, take a line from you: I like ice cream. And then I quote, "I like ice cream." I use quotation marks and explain why I found that theme interesting* (Std27, 2016).

The statement below, stemming from the question "what do you think about copying things to do a research paper?," is an example of silencing; of how plagiarism silences ones' authorship and prevents the reconstruction of knowledge.

I believe that … It's wrong and it's become commonplace for people to not be able to express themselves. Because if the teacher asks someone what they understood from the paper, they won't be able to express nothing (Std1, 2016).

Although students barely highlighted it, the opinion that students plagiarize due to lack of understanding about the theme (thus having difficulty doing the activity) should be considered. Those who paraphrase but do not make references to them are cases that require greater attention because if teachers are inattentive, students will continue plagiarizing without realizing what this means. We neither justify plagiarism nor agree with it. We think that, if difficulty can lead students to plagiarism, it is necessary to detect such difficulty and the teacher must pay more attention to the way of giving research commands, guidance, and follow-up.

Students also plagiarizes out of laziness. In this case, they neither feel concern for knowledge nor challenged or interested.

Students' difficulties

Regarding the question "what are the greatest difficulties students have during the research process," from the understanding of what they should do to their relationship with the text, the following statement exemplifies how expressing oneself seems to trouble students. In the same report, the teacher reconstructs the answers of a student who only seems to be able to express themselves based on their teacher's commands. These commands, in general terms, are artifices for the construction of critical thinking, essential to authorship construction.

I was staggered at their difficulty in using their own words or in synthesizing knowledge, in interpreting images from what they had read. . . . I said: "but why did you paste this sentence exactly the same? …. What does this phrase relate to this image you're seeing?" "Oh, I don't know, because it was already written." They do not elaborate a knowledge of what they seek, about what they search. . . . If research is the construction of knowledge about something, right? (Tch1, 2016).

Researching and positioning oneself are not automatic activities. Researching and expressing oneself in an authorial and critical way requires teaching, time, thoughtful conduction of the research, and the understanding that students will not necessarily be ready to build what teachers propose.

> *In the Arts class, students misunderstand the proposal a lot, and then I comprehend it as the teacher's fault. Like, "let me see if everyone understands." . . . And sometimes, generally speaking, it's more "what is the procedure I have to do? What's it been … requested?" And eventually we talk about the papers, you know? "What did you do there?"* (Tch1, 2016).

The above statement shows students' relationship to research commands, and the difficulties understanding what should be done and how it should be done. The teacher points out that the lack of understanding of the proposal is related to the failure of their own action when requesting the research, which would require a better explanation in the exposition of the activity .

The following statement shows how challenging group work can be for students. Group members must dialogue to reach consensus. Moreover, the type of command and research proposal are relevant factors. If the teacher asks for research on a topic but does not command students to confront it or to establish dialogues, it is easier to search for information because, in these cases, uncomplicated answers can induce plagiarism.

> *It depends on the research. If you're researching in pairs … You have a bit of a tough time dealing with your partner. But there's also the challenge of the research itself, like … mainly research on my notebook, which requires a lot of reading* (Std18, 2016).

Regarding the question "what is more difficult for you when doing a school research?," we hypothesized, based on studies such as Dias (2013), that lack of time would configure one of students' obstacles in the research process, but our data did not confirm it. We understand that, for students, dealing with the search and selection of information is a problem.

> *And there are also some themes that aren't very popular. Then, for example, if you are going to search on the internet, it may be difficult to find what you want* (Std4, 2016).

> *And what you're looking for isn't always reliable. You might be looking for something that isn't quite right. You're going to put in the paper, but it is wrong. So, I guess I had to … this one is harder …* (Std7, 2016).

Students use the internet but cannot necessarily judge if what they read is true, if it is actually useful for their paper, if the information deserves to be highlighted, or how they could operate with the information.

We emphasize that teachers should guide students, making them reflect on their authorial positions and giving them the necessary details for undertaking their research. It is necessary to understand that students' time for comprehending and act differs from the time that teachers deem necessary to perform a given task. Working with research is an arduous task but, if properly done, can present students and teachers with new ways of understanding the world.

Papers that most stimulate authorship construction

The following account points to a relevant element. The teacher talks about post-research, which, in general terms, is related to what will be done together with the students based on what they have built in their research. This practice implies discussing and analyzing the results and reflecting and critically positioning oneself since it places students as agents in the construction of their knowledge.

> *Ideally, we should always start with something that really interests them… And when we have the possibility to listen to these students about what they can to enrich that research instead of us telling them to bring either this or that piece of information, you know? … I think the most important thing is the post-research, understanding what we're going to do with the various pieces of information they picked up. … Because how do we value their papers, so they feel really important for having done that research?* (Tch11, 2016)

Based on the previous statements, we noticed that the most emphatic statements are among those of teachers that request papers and offer guidance and encourage students to position themselves in an authorial way. The statements that point to a research model that somehow promotes reflection correlate with the other statements on encouragement and support since, by participating in the construction process of student-authors, teachers will help to instigate moments of reflection.

The confrontation of ideas and visions, as in the statement above, makes students dialogue about the world around them, place and position themselves, and be agents of transformations. The reality check is a mechanism that fosters reflection and instigate students to position themselves.

For students, becoming an author when conducting school research consists of:

I think in compositions. Yes, because sometimes compositions ask you to create a story, argue about something … you know? … You're not answering no questions, you're not analyzing no research, so it's only you. What's at stake is your opinion (Std26, 2016).

I think in Portuguese [classes]. *Because, for example, in the first paper … We were supposed to compare a movie and a short story. And then we could write what we thought, what the text meant … We could express ourselves. … I think it happens more in the Portuguese* [classes] (Std23, 2016).

Still in the line of the types of papers that foster authorship creation, the students mentioned oral presentations. The statements below exemplify this statement:

Usually we express ourselves more freely [confusing excerpt], *usually the Portuguese teacher and sometimes the science teacher that ask for these presentations. They organize the class in circles and tell us to talk about a theme …* (Std14, 2016).

We answer the questions together with the class and the teacher. So, we take a piece of paper they give us, and we do answer together. And you, based on some answer your friend goes wrong, may have a right portion… You can give a right answer and it can be a very good answer, you know? … You can also listen to other people's opinions a lot, you know? You can see everyone's opinion, including the teacher's (Std16, 2016).

The aforementioned oral presentations are based on previous research on a given theme. This is because the presentation format may favor the exchange of ideas and the expression of sensations or positions. This means that students are motivated to speak, expose themselves in front of the group, and show their thinking about the world.

We understand that this could be done as an essay resulting from the research process, but we realized in our empirical research that essays have been gradually replaced by other constructs, such as theatrical presentations, songs, poems, presentation poster, etc. This fosters some debate questions: firstly, why have essays stopped being worked on? If students point out difficulties with written materials, whether in reading or writing, should they not be encouraged to write more? Could the teacher in fact teach them how to construct a text resulting from a research process?

Secondly, we ask: why request a research paper—which students point out having difficulties to write—, give an F for this task when students plagiarize but not teach students how to properly write a paper? In what sense is the ethics required of students similar to the ethics of teaching in this context?

Students' statements on the compositions and on the oral presentations highlight the need for expression. This becomes clearer when they openly declare that the papers in which they can express themselves most freely are those in which they can translate into written or spoken words their opinions and worldviews, as in the following statements.

> **RESEARCHER:** *What kind of papers do you write at school, in which you can express yourself more freely?*

> **STD14:** *Those who say, "give your opinion"!*

> **RESEARCHER:** *And what do these papers look like?*

> **STD11:** *Usually talk about a subject. To carry out research on such a subject and then give your opinion on it (Interview Excerpt, 2016).*

In total, two isolated statements emerged from the question "when and in what kind of papers are you able to express yourself better?" The first is when students claim freely expressing themselves in drama classes:

> *Well, in the performing arts papers, which I like a lot. And there's a lot of papers which require memorizing texts and doing some scenes and such … or recreate and make it yourself… by yourself or with a group and in this I express myself a lot. So, performing arts… are for you to express yourself. And I'm very expressive in the things I think, I express myself a lot. So … performing arts (Std22, 2016).*

The second statement that deserves to be highlighted is the one pointing out research as a type of paper that enables free expression of authorship. Although when questioned about the possibility of constructing authorship in research papers, the students stated that it was possible to be an author, in this specific item, research was inexpressibly pointed out. Only one student states that it is possible to express authorship in school research.

> *I think when you have more freedom to do things, ask questions and stuff … It's more when you're doing group work, in which you already have a group of friends … everyone knows each other… Then it becomes a lighter atmosphere, and you can ask, give your opinion … and, I don't know, no one will criticize you (Std20, 2016).*

The investigated schools understand the importance of the research space to construct authorship, but the construction of this space remains deficient. The only concrete proposal we

have found in the statements so far for authorship in school research is changing the model of the question for students. Some teachers suggest that one should not directly ask for a concept as students can easily find the answer on the internet. Thus, they recommend that research questions give space for students to take a stand, position themselves, and give their opinion on what they have read in the searched sources. The type of question proposed to students may facilitate plagiarism or authorial positioning.

Author concept

> *Yes, I understand that they're authors when they , since preschool, when they make a drawing, right? … They sign their names to identify, of course, the work as theirs. Since then, they have been authors. … If the teacher says that the paper is to be brought from home, the student will do the easiest thing. Find it on the internet, print the text, and bring it. … I don't think there is an exact moment since the formation of the individual* (Tch4, 2016).

The excerpt above presents a teacher's view on the construction of student-authors based on the question: "is it possible to construct a student-author? If so, how?" The teacher understands that students author when they act, when they sign their name on something they constructed or when they create. At schools, they would author when they were given opportunities to express themselves.

> *When, with the inherent difficulties of age, with the typical knowledge of the adolescent, they have read, they have interpreted, and they will put on paper or verbalize what has remained of this knowledge they searched for. When I see, for example, a student who is not brilliant in regular examinations but who uses the knowledge that is being worked on (sometimes by using image projectors, sometimes through the reading of a text) and exposes (whether correctly or not but courageously and personally) what they are thinking about, this for me is a gain. It's a win. That's why here, when we talk about evaluation, we look for all these aspects, all the productivity, all the interest, the search, right? not just regular examinations itself* (Tch13, 2016).

This statement values students' actions, showing that, even if they are not considered brilliant, they show a little of themselves and what they understand about the world when doing their schoolwork. The teacher, in this case, associates students' actions with courage, overcoming, and exposing what they think about a certain topic.

I think their training is one of critical development. … At the beginning of the year, we had an issue regarding outsourced workers, the people who clean the school not being paid, and classes were delayed … And we [teachers] *discussed a lot with them about this issue of cleaning up the school. Why clean up the school? They experience things and they are not treated like children who don't understand. Are we going to hide the problems from them? No! They are treated as students who have to participate in the discussions at school* (Tch3, 2016).

Critical thinking is the hallmark of the previous statement. The teacher perceives that students become authors by dialoguing with the world in which they live, by confronting what they learn at school with what they experience daily in a reflective way, which enables decision-making and the exposition of points of view. According to the teacher, some students participate in discussions at school.

What does it mean to be an author? For students, being an author consists of *doing something of their own*. However, students' statements lack clarity about what *something of their own* would be and how it would be expressed. According to what we found during the interviews, the creation of diverse results followed by the critical exposition of their thought on a given theme would define the authorial role of our interviewed students.

When they create one thing that is different from the others. Even though they look alike, everything came from themselves, without copies … (Std20, 2016).

Authoring, by themselves, shows autonomy. It shows something of their own. It's you showing something that you find, you believe. It's what you think. It's yours! 'Author' I believe is like a synonym to oneself (Std4, 2016).

We found that students show their need to express their feelings, ideas, and doubts, pointed out during the interviews as a way to become authors. The examples below elucidate this positioning.

STD3: *There's another point too, because not every teacher gives you the right to express yourself.*

GROUP: *Yes…*

STD2: *Yeah … It depends on the teacher as well.*

RESEARCHER: *So, if you have the freedom to express yourself, do you feel like an author?*

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GROUP: *Yes…*

STD2: *Because what you wrote comes from you.*

STD5: *It means that you matter, that you have a voice.*

RESEARCHER: *How is it like? Repeat it to me loudly.*

STD5: *It means that you matter, that you have a voice. That you can show your opinion on everything.*

RESEARCHER: *Got it …*

STD1: *When he gives his opinion, his opinion will express what he feels or what he thinks … (Excerpt from Interview, 2016).*

The above statements demonstrate a critical thinking and mastery of the addressed subject. In the simplicity of their words, these students describe, define, and suggest actions that can help them and exemplify the need to be perceived as acting beings in the world who matter as they position themselves. We must pay attention to the statement that highlights that not every teacher gives space to this process of authorship construction. Once again, these young students seem to claim for urgent answers to their needs.

In the following examples, students point out that being an author is related to mastering a given subject. Based on the examples, we can suggest that authorship exist when the research theme is well assimilated, enabling students to create discourses and express themselves about it. In the second answer, the student addresses plagiarism by stating that copying is not all the rational work and that it is necessary to express one's own thoughts and words.

Exactly. I think that when ones knows the material, understands it properly, one can do something with their own thoughts or words. Thus, it can make them an author (Std28, 2016).

The student can even read it, understand it, but, for me, they have to give their opinion about it. Tell what they think about it, not just copy it. Even reading and understanding (Std18, 2016).

In total, two statements stress that writing texts is a way of constituting oneself as an author. However, we find no clarity about this type of text and from what motivations it is built. Thus, we cannot make more objective statements about this construct. We can neither know

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whether students refer to authorship in scientific texts, summaries, reviews, or literary texts nor say how writing a text defines someone as an author.

> **RESEARCHER:** *What do you think an author is?*
>
> **STD18:** *When someone writes a text?*
>
> **STD21:** *Compositions! (Excerpt from Interview, 2016).*

In teachers and students' view, authorship configures the exposition of opinions, questions, or reflections that mark a different view of students on an issue. These positions, in turn, even if presented in different means, should express one's reflections. Making an analogy with what we hear about plagiarism, plagiarizing students are unable to even comment on the topic of their research, which denotes their total silencing, as defended by Orlandi (1995).

Space for authorship construction in school research

Our data indicate that, based on how the surveyed schools understand school research, it is possible to say that they offer room for students to position themselves in a critical and authorial way. The interviewed teachers clearly understand that research must pave the way for critical-reflective thinking, thus opening several possibilities for students to express themselves. The creativity in requesting different models of schoolwork dialogues with the ideal that research must be drawn closer to what is interesting to the students. Creativity, in the view of the interviewed teachers, fosters authorship.

In students' view, it is easier to be an author in Portuguese classes, because *composition allows one to create stories*. In students' view, literary texts enable originality and expression of thoughts and sensations, as do research papers as long as teachers ask students to position themselves or elaborate a command that prevents students from merely repeating easily accessible information. This leads us to reflect on Marcuschi's (2008) line of thought, when he addresses what he calls "textual production." For the author, writing would imply situational understandings that insert authors in a cultural, social, historical, and cognitive context (regardless of the type or size of a text) by considering what it expresses within a circle of speakers who interact and produce meanings with the same language. Thus, writing at school may integrate student-authors into the society of which they belong.

We stress, however, the idea that it is necessary for the writing space to be problematized and discussed so students avoid writing papers as a set of creative exhibitions devoid of critical and reflective positions.

Research limitations

Firstly, we emphasize that this study cannot be generalized. The content of the transcribed speeches should preclude generalizations since they are part of a spectrum of our population, a specific locus, and a delimited time. Regarding authorship and its concept, this study only answers how to be an author of a school research, which, under our lens, must be linked to a commitment to what is said and to the dialogue that is established with other voices under the pretext of avoiding plagiarism and creating knowledge. Authorship in the field of cognition could have other meanings, fostering further investigations. Moreover, this research cannot answer how and when students learn to relate to the writing of scientific texts. We believe that this topic is also open to further investigation.

Final considerations

Based on our empirical evidence, we can say that teachers offer a diffuse definition of school research, directly interfering in the results of students' research.

We believe that the commands for school research define whether students will author their work or merely repeat concepts. We become authors and agents in the world in a social, cultural, and historical context if we give meaning to words, dialogical meanings that resume the meanings other scholars gave in their investigative missions.

Teachers' statements answer problems identified by themselves. And who will teach? Who is going to make the ethical commitment without alibis (Bakhtin, 2010) of observing students' difficulties and solve them? Would not that constitute the role of teachers?

How can plagiarism be minimized without screening and controlling studies for plagiarism? Our research (Dias; Eisenberg, 2015) evinces that some teachers do not measure plagiarism. How will they help students if they fail to do so? We stress that not all plagiarism is intentional. Even in times of fast-paced information, some questions about what can be done

with internet material are observed. The same study suggests that teaching-degree students had doubts about using the internet in their research. What, then, of middle school students?

The investigated schools have opened their doors and given space for students' voices to be heard. Teachers from all schools had a remarkable concern for students properly constructing their reflective thinking and having voices to express such reflections. However, students claim that becoming an author requires special conditions: a challenging research question, an invitation to expressiveness, and the exchange of dialogues between what has been researched and students' social world, in order to create critical, ethical, and responsible thinking about their being and acting in the world. Authorship construction takes place when critical and reflective student guided by their teachers find ways to position themselves and creatively question what is presented to them as truth, following their own trajectory of relating to the world and the concepts surrounding them.

Although research at schools offer spaces for authorship construction in our empirical data, we found a lack of structuring of these spaces, i.e., (i) it is necessary to reflect on what research actually is; (ii) it is necessary that research may, at least, offer possibilities for dialogue and discussion of ideas; and (ii) research must be an activity designed to meet teachers' demands and students' needs. Research must put students, teachers, and researched topic in dialogue so that the systematized activity in fact reconstructs knowledge.

We tried to show that we start from what the school understands as research. The studied institutions deem any paper done by the students as research—perhaps because this concept finds itself emptied, perhaps because this paradigm stems from teachers' experience from their student days since our teacher training courses have focused more on theoretical, rather than practical, conceptions (Gatti, 2020).

Thus, we resume our data analysis when we address the ethical commitment to teaching. If teachers give plagiarized papers an F (or order students to redo them) but do not teach them how it should be done, teachers can be considered as unethical as the students accused of plagiarism. Given this, what do we consider unethical acts in a proposal to use research as an evaluation tool?

We deem the following behaviors as unethical in teachers' actions: (i) propose a research topic whose problem has already been discussed numerous times; (ii) not fostering critical thinking in students and the authorial exposition of their points of view; (iii) not expecting

students to go beyond the texts; (iv) not advising students' research; (v) not overseeing the research process; (vi) not reading the final paper; (vii) not giving feedback to students; (viii) not assessing plagiarism since not all students commit it in bad faith, but due to ignorance. In this case, assessing become an educational act because more worrisome than students who cheat are those who consider themselves authors doing so, plagiarize due to ignorance or lapses during writing; and (ix) value grades more than the learning construction process.

Students' unethical behaviors include: (i) plagiarizing; (ii) presenting someone else's research; (iii) purchasing research papers; (iv) paraphrasing without properly referencing sources; and (v) producing compendiums of quotations from less known works to ensure a good grade and deceive teachers. These assumptions (and thinking of education as an ethical act) equate plagiarizing students and teachers who fail to properly teach. According to Marcuschi (2001), retextualization—working the text from oral to written or from written to written—requires operationalizing the language and specific tools that enable students to give meaning and re-signify their writing. If a text is to be rewritten (retextualized), teachers should theoretically provide opportunities for this type of activity at schools.

In short, we understand plagiarism and authorship as two sides of the same coin. If students practice one, they exclude the other and vice versa. Therefore, if we teach students how to author, they will better understand what plagiarism is and know how to avoid it.

Notes:

i.   This research was supported by CAPES.

ii. The performance of the evaluated public schools was measured based on the Index of Development of Basic Education (Ideb/2013) and of private institutions, on results of the 2013 National High School Exam (Enem).

iii. For more details on Atlas.ti, see Dias (2013).

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