

*Thinking Economically About Plagiarism*

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- **WHAT IS THE PAPER ABOUT?**

**Plagiarism and cheating.** The focus is on students.

1. Discuss some evidence on the phenomenon.

2. Propose likely motivations:

- Is time saving, i.e. frees up time for alternative activities
- Guarantees better outcomes

### 3. Develop (partial) equilibrium theoretical models:

- Part time work model (5 cases, where the models are gradually enriched)
- Mark enhancement model

### 4. Provide suggestions for reducing the phenomenon:

- Tuition fees premia contingent on plagiarism
- Yellow/red cards regime

- MAIN MESSAGE

Plagiarism is a growing phenomenon, costly for academic institutions.

- Can affect reputation of degree granting institutions (however, if the problem is widespread is going to affect only the perceived value of the degree by the market).
- Diverts scarce resources away from research and teaching.

- COMMENTS

1. A critical remark: how big is the phenomenon? Empirical evidence does not look sound.

More importantly: do we have to worry?

If we believe that education is a pure signal it might be efficient.

2. The authors rely on static models. It could be interesting to allow for a dynamic analysis. Parallel with crime: the gains are immediate, while the punishment and the costs are deferred in time (Davies, JPE 1988)

3. The models only look at one side of the "market": the students. To better understand the implications it would be interesting to model explicitly also the academic institutions (i.e. a game).

4. It would be appropriate to model the problem as a principal (the school) agent (the student) problem, with hidden action (moral hazard).

5.Parallel with Shapiro/Stiglitz efficiency wage model. If the market for higher education was competitive, in presence of imperfect monitoring, universities (firms) increase fees (pay a higher wage) which decreases the number of students (induces unemployment).

6.A remark. The notation is cumbersome. Skip all the derivations, put more emphasis on the economics of the analytical results.