Report about plagiarism is one form of academic dishonesty, although it cannot be...

Reasons for Plagiarism By AbdulazizSalimAlzahrani For Heather Carlile

Academic & professional skills Develop for science &technology, QIBT 22/12

Letter of Transmittal

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To,

Heather Carlile

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Dear Heather,

I am please to be able to present to you a report about the reasons for

plagiarism. This report includes summary, introduction, literature review,

methodology, analysis, conclusion and recommendation.

Sincerely yours

Abdulazizalzahrani

Signature

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Acknowledgment

Before getting into the details of the project it is very crucial to express gratitude to all those individuals who have helped me in making this report. I would like to thank my teachers who have provided excellent assistance in understanding the project topic and its requirements. My father is a great source of motivation for me and hence I like to thank him too. Furthermore, I am also thankful to all my friends who have helped me throughout the project.

Terms of Reference

Three major objectives of this research report are as follows-

1. Gaining insight into the different forms of academic dishonesty

2. Identifying the principle reasons behind students' involvement in plagiarism

3. Analyzing the results of secondary and primary research and drawing conclusion regarding plagiarism and finally making recommendations

Executive summary

Plagiarism involves using ideas, expression or thoughts of another person in an original work without proper acknowledgement of the original author. It is basically copying and pasting ideas from an original work of another person.

Murdoch University (2004) defines plagiarism as:

Plagiarism constitutes using the work of another without indicating by referencing (and by quotation marks when exact phrases and passages are borrowed) that the ideas expressed are not their own. ... Plagiarism and collusion apply to work in any medium (for example, written or audio text, film production, computer programs, etc.) (p. 20).

Most universities tend to believe that students plagiarise simply because they want to cheat, however an analysis of a qualitative study done on 12 students revealed that there are other factors that influence a student in plagiarising. Such factors range from poor academic skills, self esteem to social and cultural factors. Research findings from other parts of the world are also comparing positively with these research findings and these findings can go along in generating ideas for universities to look into in solving this issue.

1. 0 Introduction

Several studies all over the world have been conducted to find out what influences students to commit plagiarism. Initial researches have often used the assumption that plagiarism as a form of cheating is done deliberately by students for selfish gain however recently other research institutions have deviated from this assumption to other qualitative views that propels students to plagiarise (MurdochUniversity, 2004). Certain factors associated with education such as academic skills, social pressures, cultural pressures have also been found to contribute to plagiarism without the student necessarily intending.

Although in most universities plagiarism is often equated with cheating.

Cheating such as taking notes to an exam room, lying so as to get consideration and intentionally coming up with a fake bibliography is more intentional than plagiarism therefore plagiarism should be given a different approach in order to understand the circumstances that lead to it.

1. 0 Literature review

The thin line between plagiarism and cheating led to a study conducted on the UKuniversities by Franklin- Stokes and Newstead (1995) that did a research on plagiarism and cheating and found out that while cheating is more intentional. Plagiarism is intentional and unintentional in other circumstances although they are all governed by certain types of behaviour such as; to assist a friend, time pressure, peer pressure, to increase marks, laziness, fear of failure, everybody is involved.

Other researchers have faulted this list because it does not address holistically reasons for plagiarism in that there are other factors that are involved too. Chester(2001) in his article on reasons for plagiarism went further and included other factors such as cultural expectations, inadequate academic skills in research writing, the cost of the course and intentional risk taking.

A researches done by the Australian Department of Education, science and Training(DEST) between 2001 and 2002 looked at plagiarism from a broader point of view by including the university staff, the students and other collected data from Australian Universities instead of focusing primarily on the students (Devlin and Gray, 2007). Although the specific reasons for plagiarism students was not fully addressed it however concluded that unintentional plagiarism is influenced by factors such as inadequate grasp of

plagiarism and what it entails and the different citation and referencing styles. The students lack understanding on why plagiarism is unacceptable and ho w to avoid it inadequate academic skills in critical thinking, presentation of an argument, researching and learning skills such as group work. The results from the research also included intentional reasons such as laziness, personal gain and pressure as a result of procrastination and work load (Devlin and Gray, 2007) cited from James et. al (2002).

2. 0 Reasons for plagiarism

From a generalist point of view there are various reasons that have been generated by researchers to support the unintentional reasons behind plagiarism by students. The reasons range from broader perspectives to narrower perspectives. While most researches tend to look at plagiarism on a broader context there are specific reason behindplagiarism that cannot be overlooked.

Inadequate academic skills

Students with little research skills often have difficulties writing research papers. They lack skills in searching research sources and organising their papers hence they sometimes end up plagiarizing intentionally or unintentionally. Sometimes lack of adequate writing skills inhibits their ability to organise a paper and integrate ideas from different sources ending up with ideas grouped inappropriately. This inability might influence them to plagiarize their assessments. Colins and Amodeo (2005) in their article stated that students do not also fully understand what plagiarism is all about. The concept of plagiarism is not extensively taught in most universities. They further reiterated that disciplines have got different ways

of citations and reference styles and students are supposed to take many disciplines and this confusion precipitates plagiarism. There is little understanding on which sources to be cited, how to paraphrase and quote and at which stagein writing. Some may confuse common knowledge and citable materials. This confusion results into materials meant for citation plagiarised.

Pressure as a factor can be viewed from a social and education point of view. Students receive pressure from friends and family as well as from themselves to perform better academically. For those with scholarships that have a grade point threshold the pressure is exacerbated. These pressures translate into the urge to get good grades rather than learn which influence them to plagiarise (Colins and Amodeo, 2005). Poor organisation and time management encourages procrastination which puts pressure on the student to finish work withinthe limitedtime available. Sometimes the research papers may be given art ago from different disciplines. Sometimes the student may not be well conversant with the subject matter in question owing to poor learning skills on the side of the student and poor teaching skills on the side of the teacher. Chester (2001) cited little interest by both the teacher and the student on the course as reasons behind plagiarism. The availability of materials and sources from the internet has also precipitated laziness on the side of the student.

The cost of education has been increasing progressively after the recession period when most countries in the developed world decided to cut spending on education. The high cost of education may encourage the student to plagiarise to avoid failing which may force the student to repeat the course

or transfer to another institution. Chester(20010 also pointed out that poor understanding of the subject matter coupled with lazinessinfluences the student to copy and paste materials from online sources and finally cultural factors are also contributing factors. For instance in Asia using the ideas or expressions of another person without referencing is not considered plagiarism. International students from these Asian countries are affected by plagiarism when they study abroad.

Reasons why students plagiarise still require more studies to be doneUniversities have software packages that detectsplagiarism unfortunately they are based on a rather narrow definition of plagiarism as a concept (Devlin and Gray, 2007). New approach that holistically view plagiarism and can help universities come up better ways of helping students in the changing world should be looked into.

3. 0 Methodology

A qualitative method of data collection whichentailed a group interviewing of 12 students randomly selected to represent six disciplines was used. Each discipline was provided with two students with the international students also taken into account by inclusion of at least one in a group. Thedisciplines chosen were engineering, social science, informational technology, health sciences and Arts. A semi structured interview was used on these groups each a time to gauge their understanding on plagiarism. Questions on whether the students have plagiarised before were avoided. Data collected were therefore grouped in broad categories of social, cultural and academic factors depending on the response.

4. 0 Analysis and discussion.

Analysis of the data revealed that inadequate academic skills, lack of knowledge on the concept of plagiarism, poor teaching and learning skills were some of the issues associated with academic factors while pressure from family, friends and from oneself, the urge to show off were some of the social factors. Education costs especially on the side of the international students and little understanding on plagiarism were some of the cultural factors. It follows therefore that apart from the intentional plagiarism by students there are other factor such as the ones mentioned above that influences students to commit plagiarism. In the academic related category some complained of unprepared ness on both their side and the teachers in course work while others blamed poor academic skills that they were taught while others see the enormous work load as the reason behind plagiarism. On the social category blame is put on peer pressure and inefficient time management while others especially the international students blame the lack of understanding on what constitutes plagiarism and the cost incurred in enrolling for a course these issues re not far from what other scholars such as Colins and Amodeo (2005) suggested.

Although statistically the survey had limitation owing to the limited representation, the results portrayed a picture that almost resembles the suggestions of researches that have been done by others. The results suggest that student plagiarism is affected by many variables and universities should therefore give it a new approach in dealing with plagiarisms (Devlin and Gray, 2007). It further confirms the evidence that sometimes students unintentionally plagiarise. A larger sample survey in further researches is recommended so as to come up with a uniform

conclusion.

5. 0 Conclusion& recommendation

Plagiarism as a concept is therefore both intentional and unintentional. Universities are requiredto come up with new approaches in addressing it. This study therefore proposes other important areas that should be looked into in dealing with plagiarism. Lecturers should help students in improving their academic skills through discussion and frequent practice in researchandwriting skills. They should also eliminate the confusion that arises in citation and paraphrasing and to reduce pressure on the students to perform they should emphasise learning at the expense of good grades and lastly they should develop a criteria for identifying plagiarism based on all the factors discussed. Steps that can be taken in avoiding plagiarism are listed below –

Students should try to appreciate ideas, theories and opinions of other individuals

Quotations should be used along with their authors' name

Sources should be properly cited

Ability of writing in students' own words should be improved

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Appendices

Sample questionnaire

Thank you for availing yourself. The group interview we have today is about your views on plagiarism, the major reasons behind plagiarism and the solutions. The interview is not concerned with whether you have plagiarised before but your views. Your names shall not be used in the final analysis.

1. Name

2. code

3. Gender

4. country

5. Course

6. Level

7. What is plagiarism in your own view?

8. In what areas do your definition differs from the one that is given by the

University?

9. What types of plagiarism are you conversant with?

10. Looking at your course which ones are common?

11. What are the reasons behind their commonness?

12. Expound on intentional and unintentional plagiarisms?

13. How can the plagiarism issue be addressed?

14. According to you what kind of penalties should be practiced?