

Plagiarism: impact on academics assignment



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This is a true statement; however these terms mask a bigger issue ? the issue being the commission of literary theft that amounts to fraud. While this may seem extreme and overly critical, to steal another's work and claim it as original material disdains the time and energy with regard to the research effort put forth by the original author and exhibits a lack of respect for research material in general. If plagiarism is the root of academic dishonesty, why is it so prevalent?

Many factors set the stage for plagiarism to occur in an academic setting. They range from pressure to meet an assignment deadline, the tool as a means to remain academically eligible for athletics, procrastination, and the ease with which the internet enables one to download portions, if not the entire contents of a paper. In a review study conducted by Park (2003), the motives for plagiarism included a lack of understanding, poor personal values, denial, opportunity and lack of deterrence (Park 2003, 479).

By and large, academic dishonesty lies in the passive deception of knowledge. This occurs when the passive deceiver allows another to copy material be it an assignment or a whole paper. The passive deceiver uses the logic that they are helping a friend, when in reality they are s culpable of fraud as the person copying the work. In a study done by Waistcoat (2008), academic dishonesty was regarded as the student's attempt to appear more knowledgeable or skillful than was really the case.

Students who reach levels of higher education do not wish to appear as though they don't belong. This desire to perform well in the classroom nurtures the condition whereby control is shifted from student to external

sources. It has been shown that a substantial number of university students have committed plagiarism to some extent; either 'cutting or pasting parts of papers to archiving an entire ghost-written paper from an online 'paper mill' source (College and Flint 2006).

Even as the internet is recognized as an easy way to find and copy material, the temptation to plagiarism encompasses the 'old fashioned' format of printed matter. Students view books as a covert way to plagiarism and not get caught; however many, if not all printed books are now available online. Whilst these practices may be seen as having a negative affect on students alone, the bigger picture shows a different perspective.

In an effort to combat plagiarism, universities have invested much in the way of racking and monitoring academic dishonesty. The consequence comes in the form of substantial monetary and physical resources directed towards the development and implementation of online plagiarism detection tools. This has resulted in what Young (2001) labels as a 'cat-and-mouse game of plagiarism detection' between universities and students that now constitutes a multi-million dollar time consuming enterprise of university administration.

The end products of this venture are online tools such as[(#)], My Drop Box, EVE, Wisconsin and Workforce available as either free or commercially sciences products. Although these tools can be an effective means of detecting where plagiarism is occurring, the onus remains with the teaching professional to determine if plagiarism exists within the context of his or her students by way of experience, depth of knowledge of the subject

matter and familiarity of the students. The philosophical and practical debate rages on with regard to the ethical usage of detection software.

Opponents contend that if plagiarism is to be clearly understood, simply using a software program to detect verbatim copying of words rather than understanding plagiarism in the broader context of misappropriation of ideas signals a fallacy in the reliance of technology to distinguish academic dishonesty. Insofar as cheating remains at the forefront of academic integrity, it can be argued that the possibility exists for dishonest behavior to extend beyond the classroom. A person may learn that cheating and suffering no repercussions equates to dishonest behavior being acceptable.

This behavior modeled early on in a student's life tends to carry over from one environment to another. The student who cheats in high school and receives no reprimand will likely intention the behavior in college. More so, the behavior, once established has the potential to permeate into the workplace. A survey facilitated by (Harding, Carpenter, Finely and Passes 2004) attempted to identify a link between dishonest behavior in school and the same dishonest behavior in the workplace. Of those surveyed, 80% admitted to cheating at least once in college (p. 14) while only 30% thought about dishonest behavior at work. Sims (1993) does not view the data as being accurate because employees don't view themselves as violating company policy even when they do so. Though the majority of employees would consider it stealing for someone to take a box of stationery, they themselves see nothing wrong with using an occasional piece of paper for their own personal use. This occasional piece added up and multiplied by the

entire work force turns out to be a much greater total loss than the “stealing” that rarely happens” (Sims, 1993, Dishonesty).

There also seems to be an unawareness of respective university policies regarding plagiarism. Notwithstanding an institutions policy on dishonest practices, the fear of being caught does little to dissuade a student from cheating. On the contrary, students polled in the united Kingdom stated that with the dawn of the internet, it has become morally acceptable to copy information and pass it off as original work. Most students surveyed proffered that online plagiarism is “ not necessarily a bad thing, unless I get caught” (Selwyn, 2008).

Whereas plagiarism is widely perceived as fraud, students in today’s academic arena make a good case that while cheating is not an acceptable practice; universities have not done an adequate job of defining exactly what plagiarism constitutes. Some students interpret a cheaters request for facts in a paper to mean that they need to copy verbatim from a source in order to receive credit. One response from a student elicited an alleged ignorance of teaching material: “ I did not know we had to use what we learned in tutorials.

You know, we just do the tutorials and then forget about them” (Leery, 2008). In conclusion, it is clear that academic dishonesty remains an issue of both student ignorance and university clarification. Students are at fault for failing to take teaching materials as serious tools towards higher learning. The institution can likewise be faulted for failing to provide clarity with regard to plagiarism in its all-encompassing form. The best way in which both

parties can bridge this gap is to view academic writing as a process and not merely a product to gain a degree.

Although there exist writing programs, university workshops, peer review and other tools to assist in preventing plagiarism, there must be continued support for inexperienced writers to gain the skills necessary to communicate clearly and effectively in both the academic and professional world. If we are serious about avoiding plagiarism and improving the writing skills of students, there need be reference assessments incorporated in all levels of study.