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Article · January 2009

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Pedagogy, Policing or Preventing Plagiarism? Experiences with facilitating Professional Development and Turnitin

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Abstract:

In an environment where global economy, global collaboration, and global 'knowledge' are the aspiration of many countries, the understanding of the complexities of plagiarism becomes a global requirement that needs to be addressed by all educators and learners. This paper considers a simple definition of plagiarism, and then briefly considers reasons why students plagiarise. At Unitec NZ, Te Puna Ako: The Centre for Teaching and Learning Innovation (TPA:CTLI) is working closely with faculty, managers, student support services and library personnel to introduce strategies and tools that can be integrated into programmes and curricula whilst remaining flexible enough to be tailored for specific learners. The authors therefore provide an overview of one of the tools available to check student work for plagiarism - Turnitin - and describe the academic Professional Development (PD) approaches that have been put in place to share existing expertise, as well as help staff at Unitec NZ to use the tool in pedagogically informed ways, which also assist students in its use. Evaluation and results are considered, before concluding with some recommendations. It goes on to theorise how blended programmes that fully integrate academic literacy skills and conventions might be used to positively scaffold students in the avoidance of plagiarism. Conference participants will be asked to comment on and discuss their institutions' approach to supporting the avoidance of plagiarism (including the utilisation of PDS and other deterrents), describe their own personal experiences, and relate the strategies they employ in their teaching practice and assessment design to help their learners avoid plagiarism. It is planned to record the session so that the audience's narratives can be shared with other practitioners.

Introduction

In an environment where global economy, global collaboration, and global 'knowledge' are the aspiration of many countries, the understanding of the complexities of plagiarism (Lynch, 2008) becomes a global requirement that needs to be addressed by all educators and learners. Research suggests that plagiarism could be on the rise (Carroll, 2009). However, it is recommended that "rather than focusing on catching and punishing [students who plagiarise], it might be more appropriate to provide genuine opportunities for these students to learn the appropriate academic conventions, and the rationale behind them" (Devlin, 2002, p. 5). Beverage (2009) makes the point that issues in education such as plagiarism are not

technology problems, but rather social problems. Plagiarism Detection Software (PDS) such as Turnitin may be developed to attempt to address the problem, but in fact what it needs is a recognition of the reasons behind the plagiarism, which tend to be academic literacy challenges and questions around ethics.

This paper considers a simple definition of plagiarism, and then briefly considers reasons why students plagiarise. At Unitec NZ, Te Puna Ako: The Centre for Teaching and Learning Innovation (TPA:CTLI) is working closely with faculty, managers, student support services and library personnel to introduce strategies and tools that can be integrated into programmes and curricula whilst remaining flexible enough to be tailored for specific learners. The authors therefore provide an overview of one of the tools available to check student work for plagiarism - Turnitin - and describe the academic Professional Development (PD) approaches that have been put in place to share existing expertise, as well as help staff at Unitec NZ to use the tool in pedagogically informed ways, which also assist students in its use. Evaluation and results are considered, before concluding with some recommendations.

The Issue

The results of research conducted in the States, for example, indicates that approximately seventy per cent of students have participated in some form of academic dishonesty (McCabe, 2005). When issues such as studying through the medium of English as a second language, diverse educational backgrounds, and alternative cultural views of what constitutes plagiarism are considered, the problem increases (Owen, 2007). Nevertheless, every educational institution that adopts Western-style principles toward plagiarism has the responsibility to equip their students with appropriate skills.

Although there are numerous definitions of plagiarism (Hexham, 1999), it is not the purpose of this paper to compare classifications and underpinning philosophies. A simple definition is, "In an instructional setting, plagiarism occurs when a writer deliberately uses someone else's language, ideas, or other original (not common-knowledge) material without acknowledging its source" (Council of Writing Program Administrators, 2003, p. 1).

Degrees of plagiarism are varied and can include:

- copying another student's work;
- paying someone to complete an assignment (or exam) on their behalf;
- having work done by another person and submitting it as their own;
- accessing notes or help during formal exams;
- using a bricolage of sources (without references);
- employing a combination of their own words and a writer's words;
- using words and ideas from synchronous and asynchronous interactions and personal conversations without acknowledgement (Martin, 2005);
- duplicating presentations, computer code, artwork, graphics , designs and / or charts from the Internet and submitting it as their own work
- following formatting and referencing conventions, but submitting the same piece of work for two different assignments; and / or
- paraphrasing / summarising / quoting inadequately (with or without references). (adapted from Young, 2005; Owen, 2006)

The reasons behind the plagiarism are complex, and might result from a break down in study or academic literacy skills, finding the topic challenging, lacking in confidence, assessment design, and/or peer example and pressure (see Figure 1).

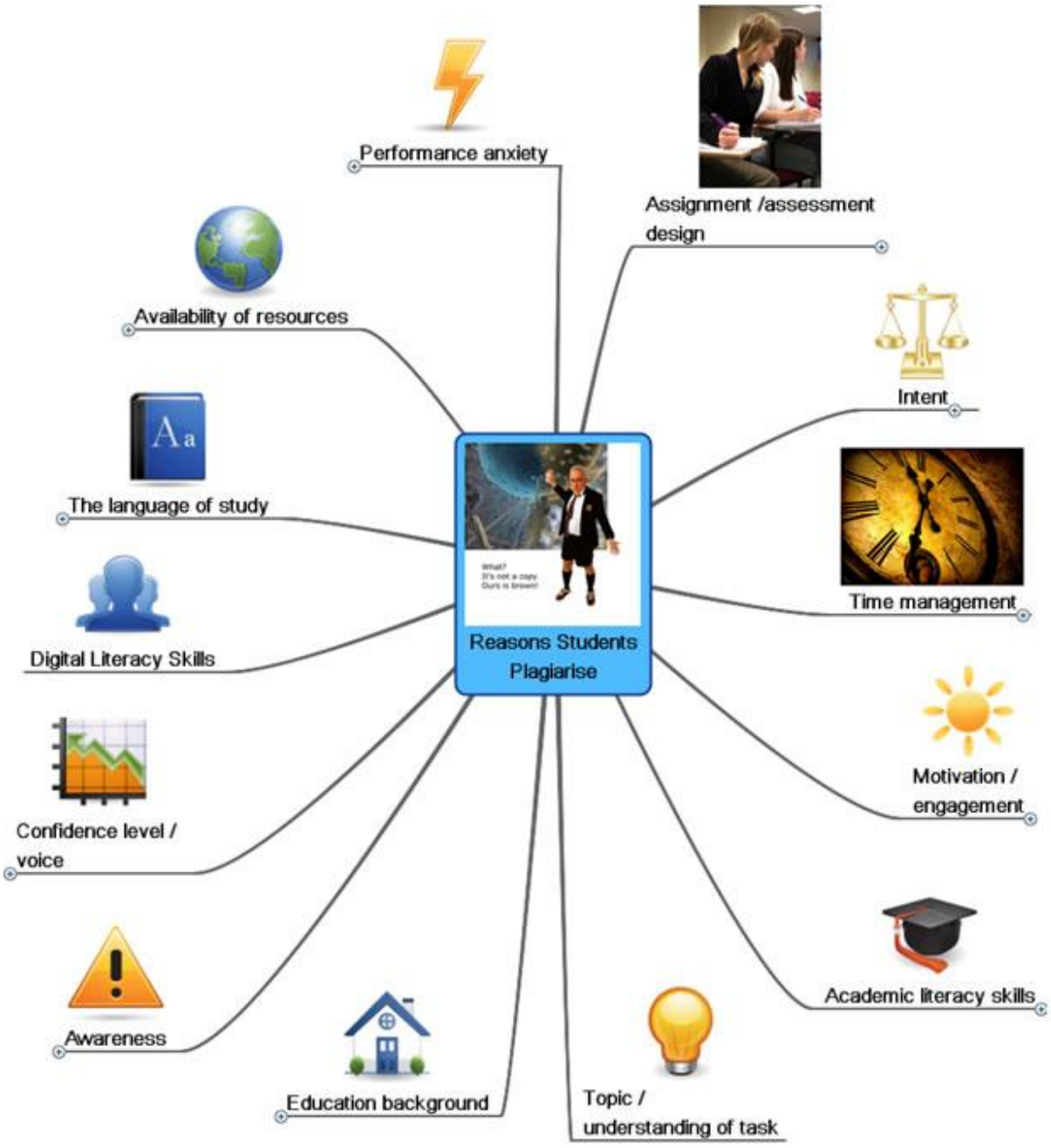

Figure 1: Reasons students plagiarise (Adapted from Owen, 2007)

Turnitin

One of the strategies that has been adopted by some institutions, including Unitec NZ, is the use of PDS (Allan, Callagher, Connors, Joyce, & Rees, 2005). There is an assortment of software available to detect plagiarism varying from free online applications, to enterprise software developed by corporations. In the case of Unitec NZ, Turnitin was selected.

The company iParadigms, who developed the tool Turnitin, was formed in 1996. Turnitin now has eight thousand, five hundred education institutions using it worldwide, who upload one hundred and thirty new papers daily (iParadigms, 2009). Submitted texts are added to the Turnitin database for future comparison. Turnitin matches text by comparing a 'submitted' text with student papers, Web sites, online journals, and other electronic text resources contained in its database. An originality report is produced for each submission whereby matching text is quoted and colour coded, along with a hyperlink back to the original document (Mulcahy & Goodacre, 2004). The default setup of assignment parameters in Turnitin does not allow students to view the report or to resubmit after making improvements, although these settings can be changed by the academic practitioner.

One of the limitations of the effectiveness of Turnitin is the database because not all cases of plagiarism are recognised, especially where paraphrasing is thorough. Furthermore, visuals, such as diagrams, are not included. Another drawback is that each report has to be checked by a human being to ascertain the extent of plagiarism committed and the reason behind it (Donnelly, et al., 2006; Lancaster & Culwin, 2004). However, Mulcahy & Goodacre (2004) suggest that more examples of plagiarism are identified than when PDS is not used.

PDS is used in a variety of ways, with the three most common being 1) as a tool for students to check their work before submission (Peacock, 2009), 2) as one of a suite of tools in a programme where academic literacy skills are fully integrated (Owen, 2007), and/or 3) as a tool for an institution to check for cases of academic dishonesty.

Background: Unitec NZ

Professional development

Key influences contributing to students' positive learning experiences and subsequent academic success (St John & Wilkerson, 2006) include teachers' discipline-knowledge, classroom practices and beliefs about learning, as well as their understanding of the nature of academic literacy and integrity (McKenzie & Turbill, 1999). As such, academic PD also needs to acknowledge personal teaching theories, while being cumulative, sequential, relevant, accessible, and allowing opportunities for discussion and knowledge creation (Yoon, Duncan, Lee, Scarloss, & Shapley, 2007, Owen & Schwenger, 2009). Staff may also be encouraged to adopt new pedagogies, technologies, tools, and vocabulary by the influence of 'champions', and the ‘viral’ effect of sharing effective practices (Moses, 1985).

Professional development at Unitec NZ has undergone a series of transmogrification. For example, in 2007 TPA:CTLI offered a series of generic, Unitec-wide workshops including 'Introduction to teaching and learning at Unitec', training on the Learning Management System (Blackboard), and the 'Exploring learning technologies workshop' series. Workshops were not discipline specific and took a more traditional format whereby disparate groups came together in a classroom setting for a period of time (ranging from an hour to several days) (St John & Wilkerson, 2006). Through the collection of feedback, reflection and observation TPA:CTLI identified a number of problems with these types of workshop:

- Short workshops did not encourage participants to form lasting learning communities;
- When a staff member became enthusiastic about an initiative or skill, occasionally lack of encouragement from peers led to a sense of isolation;
- Even when workshops used collaborative, group work there was minimal ongoing

collaboration and problem solving;
- Short exposure to a skill and/or tool gave a surface insight into how, when and where to apply it;
- Skills learned in the workshops were often not used and thus forgotten;
- Mixed ability participants (could lead to reduced or no engagement)
- Relevance was often not immediately obvious (for example, an architect may be shown how a tool could be used to support a learner studying horticulture); and
- Timetables, location and workload made it difficult for staff to attend workshops. (Adapted from Owen & Schwenger, 2009)

In response, in 2008 TPA:CTLI altered their approach. For example, a pair of academic advisors was nominated to Departments to work closely with faculty, encourage the formation of Communities of Practice (CoPs), and provide contextualised, discipline-specific workshops, 'just in time' training and support (Moses, 1985), team teaching, and forums for knowledge sharing/exchange. In 2009, in response to reflection on collated system-wide evaluations, there have been further modifications, in particular in the realm of Information Communication Technology Enhanced Learning and Teaching (ICTELT) where the focus is on creating engaging learning experiences. The tools are only taken into consideration at the end of a design process (i.e. after desired learning outcomes have been identified, activities and tasks selected, and finally the tools best suited to enhance this process are identified).

Plagiarism Detection Software

Unitec NZ began using Turnitin in early 2004, where its use was mainly limited to the Department of Computing and Information Technology. Over the past few years other Departments have acquired a license, with each respective Department paying the licensing fee out of their own budget. Based on perceived demand, the decision was made at the end of 2008 to purchase a Unitec NZ site license, thereby making Turnitin available to all staff for use with students. The consequent tight timeline for the semester 1, 2009 implementation required CTLI: TPA to develop a stop-gap measure, as opposed to a pedagogically informed, consistent approach to integration and support. For example, rather than having time to consult with with the Academic Literacies Team, who had been working with faculty to embed academic literacies into programmes, a one-off workshop was designed. A space for virtual communication, with an accompanying suite of online resources and tools hosted in the LMS, Moodle was also developed.

For faculty who wished to use Turnitin, it was strongly recommended that they attend the blended PD Avoidance of Plagiarism/Turnitin sessions, where the initial focus was skills, strategies, and issues surrounding plagiarism. However, an extra layer of complexity was created because those departments who had already been using the PDS were unlikely to attend training, although some were happy to share experiences with faculty who had not previously used the tool.

Design and evaluation, and results of the blended PD Avoidance of Plagiarism/Turnitin sessions

Rogers (1997) states, "the heart of all learning lies in the way we process experience, in particular, our critical reflection of experience" (Rogers, 1996 cited in Kelly, 1997, p. 2), therefore the authors wished to avoid generic workshops where the main focus was on the skills required to use the PDS. The design of the blended Avoidance of Plagiarism/Turnitin

sessions purposely included dialogue around what participants felt plagiarism comprised (initiated by postings participants made in blogs during the session), as well as the reasons they thought learners plagiarise, and how to assist the avoidance of academic dishonesty. The key aim was to stimulate discussion around these key concepts, and then, and only then, lead into a discussion of the features and how to use Turnitin. To introduce some of the underlying ethical questions of using PDS as punitive tools, we show a short video from Fox News (http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2N8ltZzVd-k) and then encourage a discussion that is inevitably lively, rich, and often passionate. Thus the sessions are structured to allow staff 'space' to reflect on their experiences with students and share their narratives. Allowing this time encourages faculty to deconstruct a complex problem that will not be solved by Turnitin.

All sessions were facilitated in either computer labs, or teaching spaces where the participants had laptops. The latter part of the workshop was centered around setting up a Turnitin account and assignment. Faculty were also encouraged to submit a piece of their own writing, and some of the participants describe in their blog postings feelings of fear, anxiety, and anger when they received the resultant report. Each session closed with a final discussion.

Prior to offering the sessions with faculty we piloted the workshop with CTLI: TPA staff, and received valuable feedback that we were able to apply in the first 'live' session. We continued to gather feedback through observations, participants' blog postings, evaluations, emails and personal communications. Feedback fell into four categories which are summarised in Table 1 below.

Category	Details
Affective factors	• appreciated time to discuss and reflect on concepts, issues and considerations • valued opportunity to consider strategies for helping students with concepts of academic integrity and skills to avoid plagiarism • found it a supported context in which to overcome fear of Turnitin as a tool • felt time spent discussing plagiarism/academic integrity was wasteful • relished opportunity to blog to each other • experienced high levels of anxiety when submitting a sample of own work (e.g. "nerve wracking") • valued opportunity to openly critique and discuss Turnitin, as well as use it
Design / facilitation of sessions (iterative cycle of evaluation, adjustment, and evaluation)	• suggested/appreciated email sent beforehand - set expectations and reminder of what to bring • found sessions well-paced, clear, precise, helpful, hand-on and practical • considered "team approach...enabled support to be actively supplied" - two facilitators • revisited concepts and definitions; considered differences between plagiarism and collusion; explored expectations of students in different level programmes

	• revised definitions in light of developments such as Creative Commons licensing; • instructions clear and easy to follow; • support/resources online in Moodle very useful • would like paper handouts as well as online manuals/multimedia (x 2) • found facilitators patient and supportive • suggested bringing in experienced user of Turnitin to share experiences • recognised need to apply and recycle skills • collated ideas of why students plagiarise
Practical considerations / skills	• support for students (academic literacy/avoiding plagiarism/Turnitin) • set up own account; set up assignment; uploaded own work • used blog to share comments and ideas - fuelled further discussion
Opinions of Turnitin	• not an intelligent tool • time consuming • can be formative/valuable teaching tool • ethical implications - complex and far-reaching

Table 1: Feedback from session participants

We applied the feedback to make several major changes, including a) altering the type of originality reports demonstrated and discussed; b) strongly encouraging staff to submit a piece of their own work to Turnitin; and c) taking five minutes before starting the hands-on session to discuss some system requirements and conditions (like the course start date, end date, and handling re-submissions).

Implications and recommendations

Myriad implications were highlighted in the Avoidance of Plagiarism/Turnitin sessions. Some participants see that potentially, if Turnitin were used in a pedagogically sound way, it might be a useful tool. However, many identify grave concerns around the ethics of its use and the message the use of PDS by an institution actually sends (Donnelly, Ingalls, Morse, Castner, & Meade Stockdell-Giesler, 2006). Participants furthermore identified that they needed a specific skill-set to use Turnitin and some felt that the investment was not warranted. Others were also keen to know if any alternative, openly available tool with similar performance, and less ethical issues, was available.

This section covers two approaches. The first offers recommendations based on experiences and feedback collected during the course of the Avoidance of Plagiarism/Turnitin sessions at Unitec NZ. The second focuses on a blended learning programme design where academic literacies are fully integrated - the latter being the preferred approach of the authors, had time and circumstances allowed.

Approach 1

Provide participants with meaningful, authentic opportunities to discuss, reflect, and use the tool; for example, experiencing the emotional impact of submitting their own work to Turnitin.

Include plenty of time for discussion about the wider implications of academic integrity thereby encouraging faculty to critique PDS, and formulate independent opinions.

Pilot the session (including any online resources and tools), and ask for feedback during every session, which is then subsequently applied.

The default setting for an assignment allows only one submission, and does not enable students to view the report. These settings can be altered so that students can make multiple submissions, and use the report to help them identify where, for instance, they have not used in-text citation protocols correctly. In addition, faculty may be alerted to learners who are facing challenges and submitting multiple times for every assignment.

Having key contact staff within a Department, as well as just-in-time training available during the implementation of an initiative, can reduce stress and a sense of risk.

Close collaboration with the library and other information literacy experts will assist in the rethinking of copyright, open source and Creative Commons.

Students require resources and support around the use of PDS. For example, faculty should be encouraged to have introductory sessions (similar to those described above for staff), where discussions around academic integrity are encouraged, along with recognition of the academic literacy skills required, and practical skills such as creating user accounts, submitting assignments and interpreting originality reports.

Approach 2

In institutions where the preference is for academic literacy skills to be fully integrated, implementation would involve a more collaborative, integrated approach as well. Initial academic Professional Development (PD), including, for example seminars and workshops for faculty, would be followed by a second stage where each Department (with support from education technology specialists) designs and adapts existing programmes to incorporate academic literacy, as well as ensuring that a range of scaffolding is provided in a blended learning environment, thus empowering both students and faculty. Scaffolding might take the form of:

- Use of multimedia to illustrate practical skills (e.g. referencing, use of PDS), and concepts (e.g. academic integrity); multimedia could be hosted in an LMS and accessed from anywhere, as many times as required;
- Initial suggested research resources, and discussion of these resources;
- Models and examples (made available online);
- Access to referencing software (e.g. Noodletools: http://www.noodletools.com);
- Close collaboration with the library/student support services;
- Tasks that foster familiarity with discipline specific vocabulary and enrich writing through the use of synonyms;

- Access to concordancers (e.g. TextSTAT: http://www.niederlandistik.fu-berlin.de/textstat/software-en.html);
- Tasks that recycle key skills and incorporate production for authentic purposes;
- Instructions and rubrics (made available online); and
- Where appropriate, encouragement of translation of key concepts into a learner's first language and links to online bilingual dictionaries/thesauruses.
  Adapted from Owen & Durham (2006)

Face-to-face sessions would thereby be complemented and supported by online, interactive tools, documents, models, explanations, instructions, learning outcomes and rubrics. The resulting integrated programme would guide students to reflect on the ethics of academic integrity, as well as providing opportunities to actively assimilate and apply the basic skills to avoid plagiarism (Hughes, Kooy, & Kanevsky, 1997). A particular academic department's existing tasks, activities and resources could be adapted to furnish experiential learning opportunities that would form part of an iterative cycle whereby results, feedback, and counselling are offered alongside opportunities to apply skills again. The process is iterative, thus the skills required to complete each assignment are repeated and developed as the support provided through scaffolding is reduced. Communication could be enhanced through information, communication, technologies, where students would be given opportunities (through tools such as group discussions, postings on bulletin boards, and blogs) to ask for assistance, peer tutor, and discuss the 'why, how, and what' of avoiding plagiarism. This 'tailored' approach would help guarantee that individual student needs and learning styles (Fleming & Bonwell, 1998) were catered for, and their feedback collected at intervals throughout the programme.

Completing tasks that are part of, for example, existing assessments, will be much more motivating than completing tasks that are perceived as 'add-ons' to content work. Students from the academic school could also be involved in a small-scale pilot of programmes, providing feedback before widescale use. This may give students more of a sense that they are valuable members of the learning community and that their voices are heard and valued.

Drawbacks to the fully integrated approach include greater budgetary requirements as staff involved with the development would require some incentive such as release time. There could also be problems with meeting deadlines, ensuring consistency, and sustained involvement from academics who may be used to working individually (Owen, 2006). Furthermore, as the programmes would require evaluation during and after implementation, there would be follow-up revisions that would require team agreement and effort. However, the alternative approaches stated at the beginning of this section also have inherent drawbacks, in particular in their impact on student motivation, and the creation of a positive, supported learning experience.

Conclusion

This paper has provided a brief overview of some of the challenges surrounding the issue of plagiarism in education, and suggests some strategies to scaffold students through blended programmes that fully integrate academic literacy skills and conventions. The background to the situation around the implementation and use of Turnitin at Unitec NZ, is described, alongside the evaluation and results of the PD sessions that were facilitated to help staff at Unitec NZ to use the tool in pedagogically informed ways.

The uptake of Turnitin at Unitec NZ has remained relatively low and can be credited to 1) a somewhat superficial initial needs analysis, 2) consequently rushed design of support and PD, 3) inconsistent implementation between departments, and 4) a growing realisation by many attendees of the workshop that PDS in not the panacea they had been searching for. CTLI: TPA are continuing to work with Student Support Services and the Library, as well as with Departments to provide initial foundation training, and to also design and develop blended programmes that fully integrate academic literacy skills.

During the implementation of any initiative the attitudes and practices of faculty and staff have to change if the results of the initiative are going to be effective and enduring (Geoghegan, 1994, Hagner & Schneebeck, 2001). Conversely, the PD sessions appear to have been extremely successful because faculty discussed anecdotes, experienced the high anxiety of submitting their own work to a PDS, shared good practice, and explored alternative contingencies to support their students in the avoidance of plagiarism.

PDS used as a punitive tool is not the answer to preventing plagiarism. It is essential that awareness is raised amongst staff around the far-reaching negative emotional aspect of using PDS as a policing tool, not least as it brands all students from the outset as having the potential to be dishonest. PDS can be an effective deterrent, but the wider issues around the complexity of plagiarism as an issue, as well as the necessity of providing incremental support and scaffolding learners to help them avoid plagiarising, are fundamental to high-quality academic research and writing.

Useful Resources

- Hosted by the Australian Universities Teaching Committee, this online resources includes thirty-six strategies for helping students avoid plagiarism. The strategies focus on positive intervention and education, rather than punitive action. (http://www.cshe.unimelb.edu.au/assessinglearning/03/plagMain.html#36)
- Plagiarism Advice. (2008). Developing assessment strategies which encourage original student work: An online guide. http://www.plagiarismadvice.org/documents/briefingpaper/#content_1.
- Carroll, J. & Appleton, J. (2001) Plagiarism: a good practice guide. [Online] Available at: http://www.jiscpas.ac.uk/documents/brookes.pdf
- Lee, A. (2008) Designing out plagiarism: a brief guide for busy academics. [Online] Available at: http://portal.surrey.ac.uk/pls/portal/docs/PAGE/CLD/PLAGIARISM1/GUIDE/DESIGNING_OUT_PLAGIARISM.PDF

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