LECTURERS’ VIEWS ON PLAGIARISM AND PRACTICES TO HELP STUDENTS TO AVOID PLAGIARISM

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LECTURERS’ VIEWS ON PLAGIARISM AND PRACTICES TO HELP STUDENTS TO AVOID PLAGIARISM

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This project is submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for a Bachelor of Education with Honours (English as a Second Language)

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This project entitled “Lecturers’ Views on Plagiarism and Practices to Help Students to Avoid Plagiarism” was prepared by Ross Ardiana Mohd Ali and submitted to the Faculty of Cognitive Sciences and Human Development in partial fulfillment of the requirements for a Bachelor of Education with Honours (TESL).

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The work described in this Final Year Project, entitled “Lecturers’ Views on Plagiarism and Practices to Help Students to Avoid Plagiarism” is to the best of the author’s knowledge that of the author except where due reference is made.

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ABSTRACT

LECTURERS’ VIEWS ON PLAGIARISM AND PRACTICES TO HELP STUDENTS TO AVOID PLAGIARISM

Ross Ardiana Mohd Ali

Plagiarism is a crucial issue in all areas of education regardless in school or institution of higher learning. A survey was conducted on UNIMAS lecturers to investigate their views on plagiarism and practices to help and educate students to avoid plagiarism. The following research objectives were investigated namely; (i) number of plagiarism cases handled by UNIMAS lecturers within the last two years, (ii) types of plagiarism committed by students, (iii) methods used by the lecturers to detect plagiarism in students’ assignment, (iv) actions taken against students who plagiarized other’ works, and (v) practices employed by the lecturers to help students to avoid plagiarism. An adapted questionnaire was administered to 348 UNIMAS lecturers in nine faculties including the Centre for Language Studies. Analysis of data was done quantitatively which frequency and percentage of the data collected were calculated. The findings of the study revealed that 42 participants (45.2 %) dealt with less than five students’ plagiarized works within the last two years or last four semesters. Besides, 50 participants (76%) stated that the most reported type of plagiarism was The Photocopy (the writer copies significant portions of text straight from a single source, without alteration). The findings of this study also indicated that majority of lecturers chose manual detection method rather than available electronic detection technology or service. In addition to that, 50 participants (76%) reported that students should be given second chance. It was indicated by their option of ‘give an advice or a warning’ to students if they found plagiarism in the students’ work as it also works to inform students who committed plagiarism out of ignorance. Lastly, 52 participants (80%) chose to make the consequences of plagiarism clear to students as the main approach to help students to avoid plagiarism. One of the implications from the study suggests that each effort or practice taken by the lecturers to help students to avoid plagiarism must closely address the types of plagiarism committed by them. Generally, the effort in educating students to avoid plagiarism should focus on writing skill as well as making appropriate citation, paraphrasing, and summary of the sources used.
ABSTRAK

PANDANGAN PENSYARAH UNIMAS TENTANG ISU PLAGIAT DAN LANGKAH-LANGKAH BAGI MEMBANTU PELAJAR MENGHINDARI PLAGIAT

Ross Ardiana Mohd Ali

Plagiat merupakan isu penting dalam bidang pendidikan samada di sekolah atau institusi pengajian tinggi. Satu kajian telah dijalankan ke atas 348 pensyarah di 9 fakulti termasuk Pusat Pengajian Bahasa di UNIMAS bagi mendapatkan pendapat mereka tentang isu plagiat dan langkah-langkah yang diambil bagi membantu dan mendidik pelajar untuk mengelak daripada terlibat dalam plagiat. Objektif-objektif penelitian ini ialah: (i) jumlah kes plagiat yang dikendalikan oleh pensyarah UNIMAS sepanjang dua tahun lepas, (ii) jenis plagiat yang dilakukan oleh pelajar, (iii) kaedah yang digunakan oleh pensyarah untuk mengesan plagiat dalam tugas pelajar, (iv) tindakan yang diambil terhadap pelajar yang memplagiat kerja orang lain, dan (v) amalan yang diwujudkan oleh pensyarah untuk membantu pelajar untuk mengelak plagiat. Analisis data dibuat secara kuantitatif dimana frekuensi dan peratusan bagi setiap data telah dikira. Hasil kajian ini menyatakan sebanyak 42 orang pensyarah (45.2%) mengendalikan kurang daripada lima tugasan yang dilaplai sepanjang dua tahun lepas. Selain itu, 50 orang pensyarah (76%) melaporkan 'The Photocopy' sebagai jenis plagiat yang sering dilakukan oleh pelajar. Hasil kajian ini juga menunjukkan bahawa majoriti pensyarah memilih kaedah manual daripada teknologi pengesan elektronik. 50 orang pensyarah (76%) pula melaporkan pelajar seharusnya diberi peluang kedua. Ini ditunjukkan oleh pilihan mereka iaitu 'memberi nasihat atau amaran' kepada pelajar jika mereka mendapati pelajar memplagiat kerja orang lain. Akhir sekali, 52 orang pensyarah (80%) memilih untuk menjelaskan akibat atau kesan plagiat kepada pelajar sebagai pendekatan utama untuk membantu pelajar daripada terus memplagiat. Salah satu implikasi daripada kajian ini mencadangkan bahawa setiap usaha atau praktis yang diambil bagi mencegah plagiat dikalangan pelajar haruslah merujuk jenis plagiat yang dilakukan oleh pelajar. Secara amnya, usaha dalam mendidik pelajar bagi menghendari plagiat harus tertumpu pada kemahiran penulisan tugas serta teknik membuat petikan, pengubahan ayat dan rumusan yang betul bagi artikel yang digunakan.
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SPSS          Statistical Package for Social Science

UNIMAS        Universiti Malaysia Sarawak
CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

1.0 Chapter Overview

This chapter presents the introductory contents of the study. It starts with the background of the study. It is then followed by statement of problem, objectives of the study that highlight on what the researcher wants to find out from this study, and research questions which the study addressed. Then, significance of the study is presented and some of the terms used in this study are defined. Finally, reviews on the scope of the study, which states some of the variables that this study does cover and not cover.

1.1 Background of the Study

Students in institutions of higher learning are not only being assessed in the examinations but in both oral presentations and written assignments. The main reasons of implementing these types of continuous assessments are “to ensure
fulfillment of learning outcomes” and to compensate for a flaw of examinations, which only “assess limited range of students’ knowledge or skills” (Dawson & Overfield, 2006). Generally, oral presentation is presented in the class after the written assignment is completed so that the whole class including lecturer will be able to listen to the presentation, give comments and discuss on the topic or issues being presented. Then, the written assignment will be submitted to respective lecturer as a reference to be read and evaluated later.

As completing the written assignment is a tedious and time-consuming task compared to oral presentation, there is an opportunity for students to involve in academic misconduct - plagiarizes from books, journals, newspaper or magazine articles, and recently; websites on the Internet. The use of Internet as the world’s largest source of learning materials has enabled students to plagiarize online materials easily (Wang, 2008, p. 744; Dawson & Overfield, 2006, p. 1; Baty, 2000 as cited in Jones, Reid & Bartlett, 2005, p. 2-3; Kennedy, 2004, p. 2; Szego, 2000 as cited in Sheard, Dick, Markham, MacDonald & Walsh, 2002, p. 183). Acquiring the material from the Internet with just a few mouse clicks proves that students do not have to spend their time to go to library and go through hassle in the library in searching for materials manually (Wang, 2008, p. 744). Once the material undergone some modification, editing and compiling stages, the assignment is ready to be submitted to the lecturer.

Unfortunately, students may overlook the fact that plagiarism can be detected in two ways: manually and by using electronic detection system (Parmjit, Chan & Gurnam, 2006, p. 97; Jones et al., 2005, p. 4). Lecturers can detect plagiarism manually either by lecturers’ experience and instinct, manual checks of written assignments by comparing similarity between content of websites, books, or journals referenced by the students, comparing a student’s work to other students’ work, and looking at the coherence and writing and reference styles of the work. Another
method of detection is through informants in which a student’s friend informs the
lecturers about the plagiarism committed by a particular student. Besides, automated
checking that involves the use of plagiarism detection technology or system such as
Turnitin Detection System, EVE (Essay Verification Engine) and Glatt Plagiarism
Screening Program also “make plagiarism detection easier” (Jones et al., 2005, p. 4).
Jones et al. (2005, p. 4) and Parmjit et al. (2006, p. 97) also stated that search engine
such as Google also can be used as a tool to detect plagiarism in students’ work.
Obviously, evaluating students’ assignments is not merely to read and award marks.
It also causes a great pain at lecturers’ part to check each student’s assignment to
ensure it is a student’s original work.

Thus, it is the responsibility of students to acknowledge accurately and clearly
any information they paraphrased, summarized or quoted from other sources in their
assignments (Dees, 2003, p. 164). Being careless about the sources used can lead to a
serious academic offense called plagiarism. There are serious consequences for
students who plagiarized such as failing grade or obtaining zero mark on the
assignment, failing grade in the course, and in extreme cases students will be expelled
from the colleges or universities. They may even be prosecuted because they against
the copyright law (Parmjit et al., 2006, p. 97; Dees, 2003, p. 164). Needless to say, it
is important for students to be systematic and clear about the use of citation and
references in their written assignments.

Indeed, plagiarism is on rise in the field of education (Sheard et al., 2002, p.
183). There are few studies reported on various reasons why students plagiarized
either intentionally or unintentionally, but the fact remains that using one’s words,
ideas, or opinions without recognition and claiming them as students’ work is
immoral and illegal. Franklyn-Stokes and Newstead (1995, p. 166), Kennedy (2004,
p. 2), Beasley (2004, p. 4), and Harris (2004) reported some of the reasons why
students plagiarized for example; fear of failure, bad time management practices,
desire a better mark, do not fully understand the question of the assignment, poor language command, lack of confidence in their ability to write the assignments, and laziness. In addition, Harris (2004) and Beasley (2004, p. 4) also mentioned that some students involve in plagiarism because of they like the thrill of breaking the rule. The more the lecturers angrily refrain students from plagiarize, the more students want to do it. Apart from that, other students do not sufficiently understand about referencing and citation in writing their assignments which then leads to their unawareness of the implications of plagiarism (Phan Le Ha, 2006, p. 77; Kennedy, 2004, p. 2).

Surprisingly, most of the studies focus on students’ awareness and practices of plagiarism but somehow did not address this issue from lecturers’ point of view. Lecturers’ views are important in this issue of plagiarism as they deal with students’ plagiarized work and they are the potential helpers to reduce students’ tendency in committing plagiarism.

Therefore, this study is interested to look into UNIMAS lecturers’ views on plagiarism and their vital role to help and educate students about plagiarism so that students can develop a skill to integrate various sources of information into their written assignments without failure to show regard to the original authors or sources. Perhaps, explanation on what plagiarism means, continuous practices, and exposure on appropriate paraphrasing, summarizing, quoting, citation, and referencing would help students to write their assignments efficiently.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Plagiarism is common situation in institutions of higher learning. McCabe (2001) in his study of over 4500 high school students in US reported that 84% students admitted plagiarized their written assignments. Due to this problem, lecturers are burdened with a demanding task when assessing students’ work, which they need
to ensure the work handed in are fully students’ effort not just use cut-and-paste technique from other sources. As lecturers are responsible for large number of students in a class at one time, it is impossible for them to know and distinguish the capabilities and performances of each individual student. This opportunity has used by students to commit in plagiarism while completing their assignments with an assumption their lecturers would not be able to detect it.

Indeed, lecturers are really concern on this issue and they carefully assess students’ work for each course they teach. Some lecturers might prefer to detect plagiarism in students’ work manually even it is time-consuming and less effective than an automated method. Experienced lecturers might rely on their own instinct in detecting students’ plagiarism. On the other hand, other lecturers might choose to use automated checking software such as Turnitin Detection System, EVE or Glatt Plagiarism Program in helping them in detecting the plagiarized work by the students (Parmjit et al., 2006, p. 97; Jones et al., 2005, p. 4).

Regardless of which method employed by the lecturers, they actually want to promote academic integrity in students or in another word to help students to study or do research in an honest way in order to complete their work. Perhaps, academic integrity cultivated by the lecturers helps to instill appreciation of other’s work in students and promote fairness among students especially towards students who have worked hard for their assignments. In addition, students will get many benefits as writing involves analytical and critical thinking about the relevance of information they gathered. In return, it minimizes the occurrence of plagiarism at hand (Kennedy, 2004, p. 4-5).

Since many students seems not to fully understand and are not aware of what plagiarism is, it is important to educate them on types of plagiarism, severe implications of plagiarism, and develop their skills in paraphrasing, summarizing, quoting, and making referencing and citation accurately to avoid plagiarism.
1.3 Objectives of the Study

This study intends to investigate lecturers’ views on plagiarism in UNIMAS and practices of helping students to avoid plagiarism. The objectives of the study are to find out the:

i. number of plagiarism cases handled by UNIMAS lecturers within the last two years
ii. types of plagiarism committed by UNIMAS students
iii. methods used by UNIMAS lecturers to detect plagiarism in students’ assignments
iv. actions taken by UNIMAS lecturers towards students who plagiarized others’ work
v. lecturers’ practices to help students to avoid plagiarism

1.4 Research Questions

In line with the objectives stated above, this study therefore attempts to answer the following research questions:

i. how many cases of students’ plagiarism have lecturers dealt with within the last 2 years?
ii. what types of plagiarism are committed by UNIMAS students?
iii. what methods are used by UNIMAS lecturers to detect plagiarism in students’ assignments?
iv. what actions are taken by UNIMAS lecturers towards students who plagiarized others’ work?
v. what do lecturers do to help students avoid plagiarism?
1.5 **Significance of the Study**

The findings of this study, may offer insights on how UNIMAS lecturers view the issue of plagiarism committed by students and may offer a better understanding on how serious this academic offense takes place in UNIMAS. Perhaps it can awaken lecturer’ awareness to review their current effort and practices whether it is enough in educating students to avoid plagiarism and in promoting academic integrity in students’ learning process. By having such awareness, lecturers may use the findings as a guideline and useful information in formulating suggestions, practices, or organizing workshop in helping students to avoid plagiarism or other academic cheating because students who plagiarize in their learning are more likely to repeat such behavior in their workplace. Apart from that, the findings may offer suggestions to new lecturers on how to handle plagiarism in terms of best methods of plagiarism detection and practices in helping students to avoid plagiarism. Faculty or university also can use the findings as useful information to revise and improve the policy on plagiarism.

1.6 **Operational Definition of Terms**

It is essential to define some of the terms used in the study. The terms are defined explicitly in their meaning and the use of those terms in this study:

1.6.1 **Plagiarism**

Plagiarism is “intentional and unintentional use of others’ work or ideas, published or unpublished, without clearly acknowledging the source of that work or idea” (Dobrovksa, 2007, p. 1). In this study, when students use any chunk of word or idea from an original source
without properly acknowledging or quoting it, it is defined as plagiarism.

1.6.2 Methods of Detection

Methods of detection refer to the approaches employed by the lecturers in detecting students’ plagiarized work (Parmjit et al., 2006, p. 97). In this study, two methods are used which are manual (i.e. lecturers’ personal experience, manual checks) and automated (i.e. plagiarism detection technology or service).

1.6.3 Lecturers’ Actions

Actions taken by the lecturers towards their students who committed in plagiarism are varied in level (Dees, 2003, p. 164). In this study, lecturers’ actions lead to various consequences for students who commit plagiarism such as awarding low marks for the plagiarized work or requiring the students to redo the assignment.

1.6.4 Lecturers’ Practices

Lecturers’ practices refer to specific strategies employed by the lecturers to prevent students from committing plagiarism (Harris, 2004). In this study, the actions taken by the lecturers come with the purpose to encourage students to do their work in an honest way.
1.7 Scope of the Study

The study focuses on the lecturers’ views on plagiarism and practices in helping students avoid plagiarism. However, other related variables such as lecturers’ reasons of choosing certain methods in detecting plagiarism, reasons of taking certain actions against students plagiarism, and reasons for employing certain approaches or practices in helping students to avoid plagiarism are not included.

1.8 Chapter Review

This chapter covers the introductory part of the study in which the problem related to the subject is established and the significance of the study identified. The next chapter reviews the types of plagiarism, detection methods, severe implications of plagiarism, and a few other related issues and studies.
2.0 Chapter Overview

This chapter presents some of the existing works in the field of plagiarism. It starts with the discussion on promoting academic integrity and related studies. Then, it is followed by an overview on students’ reasons on committing plagiarism and eleven types of plagiarism are elaborated. Next, the detection methods for plagiarism are explicitly discussed. It is then followed by the explanation on lecturers’ actions against students’ plagiarized work. Finally, a review on the approaches in preventing and minimizing plagiarism cases is elaborated.

2.1 Plagiarism vs. Academic Integrity

Completing written assignment is a part of learning experience in higher learning institutions. Working on assignments requires students to demonstrate their