A Path to Non-Plagiarism

Key Words

plagiarism, academic writing, detecting software, ethics, research, higher education

Abstract

Even though college students have been encouraged to use the Internet for reading, writing and research, it is however a controversial issue in the academic community. The arguments are that it offers the convenience for a student to 'copy and paste' information from the electronic sources to their work. It is also blamed for alluring students to plagiarize from the outside sources available on the network rather than to write with their own views and thoughts. The Internet has recently been accused as a potential tool for plagiarism in the academic community. This study investigated plagiarism in 23 Undergrad students' papers. Research instruments were a test on participants' knowledge and attitudes on this issue, research papers written by the participants and the interviews. The findings showed that the participants were uncertain on how to cite outside sources in their writing, nor did they understand the importance of the citation in writing. It was also found that even though the participants showed negative attitudes on plagiarism, they tended to unintentionally copy and paste others' work in their writing due to several reasons. The findings also revealed that the participants were not capable at using the outside sources in their writing. Also the low confidence in using the academic English was found one of the main reasons spreading the 'copy and paste' culture among them. Even though the students grew insights and understanding on plagiarism during the class activities addressing on the issues, only a low percentage of these participants made significant improvement in their work. The author therefore proposes that ethical values on plagiarism should be addressed by all subjects and all lecturers to decrease the plagiarism rate among college students. The library should strengthen its roles on how to use information and source appropriately. Most significantly, the institutions should develop a systematic plan to deal with the issue. In addition, plagiarism could be decreased as a result of fostering ethic in academic rather than relying on detecting software.

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