

Plagiarism: research findings; Richard Galletly

Students may plagiarise unintentionally, either because they are in a hurry, because they may not have used referencing in their first degrees, back home, or they may have been used to different referencing styles (Zafron, 2012); second year students find it difficult to find their own voice in their writing than first or third year students, this is called their 'authorial identity' (); what is plagiarism? it seems to range from minor to more serious cheating, there is some confusion over this; students need to find their own voices, to express themselves with an authentic identity (Ballantine, 2012), is it due to lack of confidence in treating the texts found? the practice of recreating that text now needs to change to interpreting the text and treating it critically.

Peer behaviour is more relevant to student behaviour than the punishments, and moral behaviour, integration into academic life and poor study skills may also be a cause (Ballantine, 2012 p292). Male students were found to engage in plagiarism more, and those who engaged poorly with academic life, as well as those with low levels of 'moral culpability' (Ballantine, 2012 p293). One problem is that students often don't really know what plagiarism means, hence they commit plagiarism unintentionally; it has been found that developing students ability to write with their own voice (authorial identity) has greater effects on reducing plagiarism than teaching specific skills such as paraphrasing skills (Elander, 2010 cited in Ballantine, 2012 p294).

Factors in this identity by the author, include confidence in writing, understanding what authorship is and knowledge to avoid plagiarism; students were helped to develop a pragmatic approach to writing, that is to do what works best, that which is practical and achieves the objective. It is not certain if this approach will work with this group, since they might expect to be taught paraphrasing skills, however at this stage they should already be able to paraphrase, and learning how to identify that personal voice, and to write to achieve an aim, might help.

for example students will strongly agree with the statement 'I know what it means to be the author of a piece of written work' and weakly agree with the statement: 'I am afraid that what I write myself about [my subject] will look weak and unimpressive' (Ballantine, 2012 p298); after being at university for a year, students tend to agree more with the statement: 'I get higher marks by writing more of my assignments in my own words', which indicates they are learning to write with their own voices. This shows students are growing in confidence when using their own words, plus they recognise this is what will get them higher grades.

Having a 'writing buddy' might help with the creation of a good essay (Humphris, 2010), where writing becomes a social practice, this is a positive development, but be careful not to copy! informal writing can also be used as a way to improve student writing on other tasks, and reflective writing on learning can also help; where both develop the students ability to write with authenticity (Hudd et al., 2011).

Also alternative forms of writing could be investigated to develop the written 'voice' such as poetry, journalling and narrative inquiry, where students reflect on their classroom experience to develop an authentic voice (Thorne, 2012). Assignments are often designed to include the students' authentic reflections, so as to avoid the plagiarism so common at university, after all let's not also forget that there are professional plagiarisers out there, who write student essays for a living. Should teachers have to then investigate these people? hopefully the development of more personal writing in assignments will make it unnecessary.

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