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The politics behind the library plagiarism tutorial: a case study

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The politics behind the library plagiarism tutorial: a case study

Abstract

This article describes the educational politics and processes involved in vetting the creation of an online plagiarism tutorial at a small Liberal Arts college in the Midwest. The first three phases of the ADDIE Instructional Design model was used to develop the course, but its rollout was indefinitely suspended, awaiting a faculty vote. The plagiarism course modules are described along with the pending review which has led to a redesign of the course modules in favor of implementing a reflection course module.

Keywords

Plagiarism; Academic Dishonesty; Library Tutorials; Information Literacy

Introduction

“Plagiarism is a complex multi-faceted phenomenon” that “calls for a multi-faceted holistic approach, beyond” mere student deterrence policies and “sanctions” (Dalal, 2016, p.78) to be implemented in an attempt to curtail it. Plagiarism is an ongoing concern for members of the faculty, resident at a small Liberal Arts College in the Midwest. There are academic integrity policies, developed over the years at the university, because of plagiarism battles, yet these policies, even when enforced, seldom have had lasting effects on student disposition.

Plagiarism and Higher Education

Plagiarism is defined by Dictionary.com (2018) as “the practice of taking someone else’s ideas and passing them off as one’s own”. The Merriam-Webster Dictionary (2018) expands this definition by saying plagiarism means “to commit literary theft”. No matter how succinctly plagiarism is defined, Gomez-Espinoza et al. (2016) aptly points out that since the Internet has entered into all aspects of our lives, plagiarism is a major concern in academia because of its growth. Belter & du Pre (2009) stated that faculty should be aware of the most common forms of student plagiarism: purchasing class papers on the Internet, copying verbatim from sources in papers without proper citation, and inadequately paraphrasing and citing sources. Citing the Internet as the main source of documentation for students who seldom cite their sources, Gomez-Espinoza et al. (2016), Hall (2011), Probett (2011) & Davis (2011) suggested that students plagiarize because of naïveté about avoiding plagiarism, while others err because they struggle to follow writing conventions e.g. citing sources. Klein (2011) cites McCabe & Travino (1993, 1997, 2002) who stated that “learner cheating is becoming a campus norm...due in part” to “lack of faculty support for academic integrity policies” (p.97), resulting in more student plagiarism because of their limited knowledge of university academic integrity policy, enforcement and the repercussions following acts of plagiarism. In many situations, students may not have had any or ample instruction in this regard. As a result, it is vital that faculty make time to teach students prior to their submission of assignments about academic integrity and the repercussions of academic dishonesty as it pertains to their specific academic institution. Probett (2011) also suggested that faculty should take their own preventive measures against plagiarism, by regularly changing their class assignments, making them unique, and teaching students about plagiarism tools such as Turnitin and SafeAssign, encouraging students to submit drafts of their papers through these prevention tools, thereby discovering for themselves how these tools work and identifying their plagiarism problems before a paper was submitted. If more students had opportunities to understand plagiarism tool reports, then many more students might find ways to fix their problems, prior to submitting plagiarized papers.

Belter & du Pre (2009) stated that faculty should be more proactive with students regarding plagiarism prevention, suggesting also that the production of a positive university culture around academic integrity rooting out plagiarism, might help to reduce academic misconduct on a Campus. MacLennan (2018) concurred with Belter & du Pre (2009) that “the reliance on reactive measures alone cannot alleviate” plagiarism, and offered that “instead, a comprehensive approach focused on instruction may serve to more adequately reduce plagiarism” (p.59). Faculty “across disciplines should begin by evaluating existing practice” (p.58), “changing and improving the current practice of teaching” (p.59) at their campuses by breaching the “gap between the information literacy skills” that they actually “want their students to have and those that they actively support and develop” (p.60). It stands to reason, therefore, that administrators and faculty should collaborate with librarians on their Campuses, to develop and teach information literacy classes that include discussion and assignments about academic integrity and plagiarism avoidance, fostering more collaboration for creating tutorials that attempt to combat plagiarism.

Bare-bones description of processes involved in moving the Plagiarism Tutorial forward

The Plagiarism Tutorial described in this paper was developed, after a lively discussion about plagiarism concerns at a Faculty Bakery meeting, led by the College Provost. Monthly Faculty Bakeries were designed for faculty to “bake” and bring their ideas, serving them to their colleagues for further consideration. The meeting ended with a request that the library director submit a proposal for the creation of an online plagiarism tutorial built to affect change to student thinking and faculty dealings with plagiarism at the university.

The library director conducted research about plagiarism tutorials and proceeded to create a *Plagiarism/Academic Integrity Course Proposal* that was presented to the College Academic Council chaired by the Dean of the College and defended

during the meeting. The College Academic Council members, faculty representatives of each of the Schools at the College deliberated and the proposal was voted on, passing through Academic Council to the Faculty Meeting.

After the presentation of the *Plagiarism/Academic Integrity Course Proposal* to members of the university-wide Faculty Meeting, which included faculty members teaching at the College and at the university's seven sites, a decision was made to suspend a vote on this proposal. This suspension occurred because changes had to be made to current university academic integrity policy and procedure before the plagiarism proposal could be moved forward. Thus, the proposal was sent to the faculty standing Committee on General Education Requirements, Academic Standards and Academic Policies. The library director was invited to meet with the standing committee, where current academic integrity policy was examined and the following recommendations were made to be taken back to the Faculty Meeting.

Due to "the rampant increase in plagiarism activity amongst residential students, past policies that addressed plagiarism had proved to be ineffective". It was proposed that "in order for the university to gain the ability to address plagiarism in an effective and meaningful manner... four stages" would "be followed" by the administration and faculty on implementing the online Plagiarism Tutorial at the university:

1. **Education:** Every residential student informed as to what plagiarism is, why plagiarism it is unethical and why plagiarism is harmful. A component covering these concepts will be placed in our "College Life" Orientation course.
2. **First Offense:** Upon the first offense, the guilty student will take our Academic Integrity/Plagiarism course through Blackboard. This one-credit hour course is self-study. Our librarian will monitor and report satisfactory completion. Guilty students will repeat the course as necessary until completed successfully.
3. **Second Offense:** Students caught plagiarizing after successfully completing the Integrity/Plagiarism course will automatically fail and be administratively withdrawn from the course.
4. **Third Offense:** Students caught plagiarizing after successfully completing the Integrity/Plagiarism course and reprimanded for plagiarizing a second time will be subject to our Academic Grievance Policy. Such students automatically fail the course and are administratively withdrawn. (Plagiarism/Academic Integrity Proposal, Ottawa University Committee on General Education Requirements, Academic Standards and Academic Policies, April 2018).

According to the Proposal (April 2018) it was suggested that: "Discussion between instructor and student suspected of plagiarizing should occur before any further action takes place. If the instructor infers unintentional plagiarism has occurred, addressing the matter with the student should suffice. If the instructor infers that plagiarism has occurred, addressing the matter with the student should suffice. If the instructor infers the plagiarism is intentional, enforcements of policy is mandated". As a result, the "Integrity/Plagiarism course" was described "as a series of modules addressing issues of plagiarism", where by the "subjected students" would be "charged a one-credit hour tuition each time the student takes the course, and the registrar would then see to it that "the course stays on the student's transcript" (Plagiarism/Academic Integrity Proposal, April 2018).

As members of the Faculty Meeting continue to deliberate, permission was obtained for the library director to create a Plagiarism Tutorial. A blackboard shell was granted, and a course number allotted to the tutorial, placing it within the Library, as opposed to the Liberal Arts, as a special course offering.

Koyama (2013) suggested that education policy has become a "technical, rational, comparative and quantified... evidence-based approach" with "a focus on 'what works' "(p. 548). But when education policy, is in place and ineffective, or broken and does not work as it should in "necessary practice" (p.548) then "the practices they aim to influence" need to be re-examined and "assemblage" in the format of the regular faculty meeting or the committee which is an "emergent and fluid network of material objects, discourses, practices and people "must be effected in order to "challenge, disrupt, reconstitute and undo policy" as it is required (p.548).

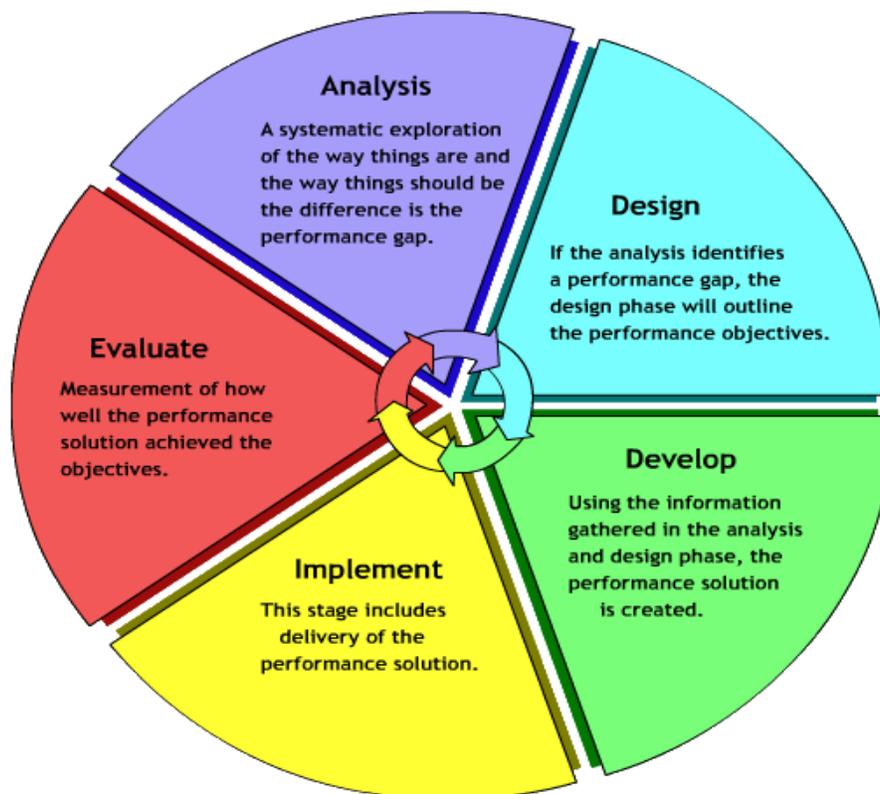
In a complex university setting, consisting of seven sites and distributed faculty, staff, students and administrators, the best way to ensure that the online plagiarism tutorial be acceptable to an interdisciplinary faculty across campuses, was to make it available to an assorted mix of university-wide observers, prior to the start of the Fall 2018 semester. Twenty-one

university-wide observers were added to the course, providing digital notes suggesting course revisions and improvements prior to course rollout.

The ADDIE model and the development of the Plagiarism Tutorial

The Plagiarism Tutorial was created following the ADDIE Instructional Design model which included five phases of instructional design: analysis, design, development, implementation and evaluation. Thus far, only three phases of the model have been implemented, the analysis, design and development phases of the process, since the faculty must still discuss the proposed policy changes, and administrators must make decisions about the future of the course, prior to its rolled out.

Davis (2013) described the first ADDIE phase, analysis, as the step where a blueprint for the course process was determined. The researcher explored as many plagiarism tutorials as could be found, collected information about each, determined course and module goals and objectives, structure, subject of modules, organization and fit for a small Liberal Arts college. This research also helped to determine whether there were any gaps that existed on the topic, based on what the literature on plagiarism suggested. Finally, a tutorial layout was created and a barebones tutorial emerged. The online plagiarism tutorial was created in Blackboard, as a one-credit hour, self-paced tutorial with a built in certificate of completion, triggered, once a student had attained an overall passing grade in the course gradebook. During the second and third phases of the ADDIE model, the design and the development phases, four content modules were completed, consisting of subject-specific tutorials and web links and topical video tutorials. The course itself had overarching goals that were connected to the objectives for each one of the modules.



ADDIE Model (Chico State IDTS, n.d.)

The first course module defined plagiarism and academic integrity, while the second described the consequences of plagiarism, providing students with video plagiarism case studies needing consideration. The third module emphasized plagiarism prevention procedures, describing the research process and how correctly citing sources in academic papers could prevent plagiarism. Students were also provided with the university's academic grievance policy and procedures training. The fourth module included plagiarism prevention resources, e.g. libguides on citing and other topical links that encouraged students to take preventative measures against plagiarism. Each module concluded with a module test, designed so that students could take each test twice, with the opportunity for retaining the best of the two scores in their Blackboard gradebook.

A plagiarism pre- and post-test was built into the course. The pre-test, taken prior to the first module determines the student's prior knowledge of plagiarism, academic integrity policy and citing sources. The post-test ended the four course modules. Students were given only one opportunity to take the final post-test and achieve a score of 70%/C grade, to pass the course. The post-test was built from random test questions asked in the four course module tests. A course evaluation survey was created on SurveyMonkey and linked for completion, following the final examination in the course. The survey was created to gather information and comments about the student course experience and as an aid in evaluating and revising it for future use.

Following the design phase of the course, the implementation and evaluation phases of ADDIE model were indefinitely suspended, as the course still awaited a faculty vote.

Course redesign due to continued librarian research

With the online plagiarism tutorial currently under review, the researcher continued to conduct additional research about plagiarism course content and probable improvements that could be made to the course.

MacLennan(2018) 's study which used the CRASP theoretical framework model, suggested that critical attitude, research in teaching, accountability, self-evaluation and professionalism should play an active part in designing a viable strategy to drive the pedagogy that would increase student information literacy competencies, thereby avoiding plagiarism. MacLennan (2018) asked eleven students in their study to complete the Plagiarism Attitude Scale and also provided them with a two hour library instruction session that discussed plagiarism and taught students how to cite their sources in their academic papers.

Dalal (2016) suggested that transformative learning theory and reflection be included in the teaching process when students were instructed about plagiarism. According to Dalal (2016) "reflection is an aspect of learning and self-understanding that we engage in frequently...individuals are capable of transforming their frames of reference by critically reflecting on their assumptions and beliefs" (p. 175). Thus, students facing embarrassment, experiencing the repercussions of plagiarism could be approached by providing them with instruction that involved assignments focused on "self-knowledge acquisition and exploration, to possibly end with a new perspective integrated into" (p.175) their lives. Dalal (2016)'s study suggested that faculty made use of reflective writing, where the student could "analyze, reflect and contemplate their personal experiences and beliefs" (p.176). It was further suggested that faculty following Dalal's (2016) reflective approach included several reflective components in building their assignments: teaching students about academic integrity; providing self-assessment materials on academic integrity, initiating reflective dialogues about academic integrity; providing students with directions to write short reflective essays examining academic honesty and originality; and if they were caught plagiarizing, having them reflect on their actions and how understanding the repercussions faced, would affect change. Dalal (2016) stated that "the focus of the reflective dialogue was to get" students "to acknowledge their 'wrong' actions without being accusatory and judgmental of the whole person"(p.177), the latter being very difficult, if faculty made a decision that students would be fined as a repercussion of having been caught plagiarizing.

Reflective Module

In response, to reading MacLennan (2018) and Dalal (2016) 's research, the researcher deemed it necessary to design a Plagiarism Tutorial: a Reflective Module. The Reflective Module would include the following content: a reflective discussion board assignment defining plagiarism, a one-two page essay assignment, written in the first person reflecting on what led to the acts of plagiarism, the student's feelings about this, or if they did not plagiarize but had thought about it, what were their

thoughts and feelings about this; what was learned about originality and authenticity in terms of writing and what will the learner take away about writing as they move forward. The module will conclude with the student taking the Plagiarism Attitude Scale and signing a University Student Academic Integrity Pledge.

Librarians must understand that their willingness to meander through the political pitfalls at any university is well worth it, if in the end, curriculum is developed to improve the information literacy skillset, combatting plagiarism.