

Micro-level policies and practices regarding plagiarism in Advanced Reading and Writing Courses

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Abstract:

A growing body of literature shows that plagiarism has become a widespread student behavior at tertiary level (Gullifer, 2010; Hosny & Fatima, 2014; Underwood & Szabo, 2003). Yet, there is scant research on how members of academic staff prevent and manage academic dishonesty at course level (Ayon, 2017; Wilkonson, 2009). Thus, this study reports on a small scale qualitative research regarding academics' individual policies against plagiarism and their gate-keeping practices and behavior in a year-long, compulsory "Advanced Reading and Writing" course at pre-service English language teacher education in Turkey. Five lecturers from five different universities participated in the study. The data were collected via document analysis and an online survey and submitted to inductive content analysis. The document analysis of the course syllabi has revealed that there are no plagiarism statements, warnings or possible repercussions of unethical conduct, or an explicit section allotted to Academic Integrity as part of the content. As for the findings of the survey study, three major themes were identified: awareness on plagiarism, individual policies, and departmental awareness and policies. The findings have indicated that the lecturers have a similar understanding regarding plagiarism and they pay attention to it. Yet, despite this common view, their individual policies and behaviors about preventing, detecting plagiarism and imposing sanctions on students vary due to such reasons as not having similarity detection software, high numbers of students taking the course and lack of institutional/departmental awareness. Finally, the study has shown that there are no departmental written policies or guidelines to prevent or manage academic misconduct. The study maintains that institutional, departmental and individual policies need to be clarified to make students become aware of this issue and avoid it.

Keywords: Academic dishonesty, academics, advanced reading and writing skills course, micro-level policies, plagiarism.