The Internet as a Challenge to HE: Implications for Plagiarism & Information Literacy

The Internet as a challenge to HE

1. Online Plagiarism

Plagiarism increasing (Dahl, 2007; Duggan, 2006)
Internet allows "copy and paste" generation

2. Poor academic referencing

Academically unreliable sources selected due to:
1. easy access to the internet
2. huge amounts of information available online

Why is this an Issue?

❖ **Lack Awareness?** (Park, 2003; Yeo & Chien, 2007)
❖ **Cultural differences?** E.g. Hayes & Introna, 2005
❖ **Growth of Distance Learning?** (Robinson-Zañartu et al., 2005)
❖ **Morality and Ethics? Utilitarian Learners? Social Desirability? Cultural Relativism?** (Klein, 2011)
❖ **Difficulty distinguishing between reliable and unreliable sources?** (Levin, 2004; Wiley et al., 2009)

Is this is an issue at Staffordshire University?

Psychology department recognises it is an issue:
- *Handbooks – section on referencing*
- *Level 4 seminars on plagiarism*

Yet it continues to be an issue!

Can Turnitin Improve the Issue?

Turnitin is a plagiarism detection software that produces an Originality report

Originality Report :

- *similarity (0-100%) between report and existing sources (internet, publications, student papers).*

Turnitin was introduced within Psychology this year

Part 1: Examining Turnitin Reports

115 students' final year dissertations analysed using originality reports produced by Turnitin

➤ *levels of plagiarism? Is plagiarism linked with academic performance?*
➤ *Is plagiarism more prevalent from internet sources?*

Similarity between dissertations and different types of sources according to grade obtained
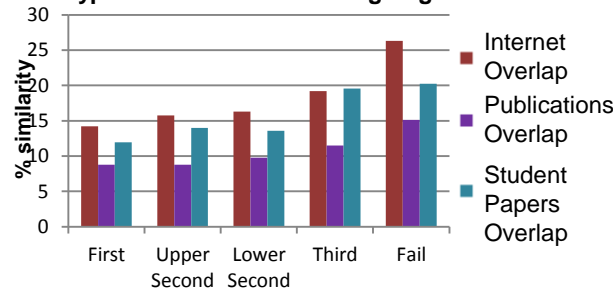
Similarity of one student's dissertation with different types of sources
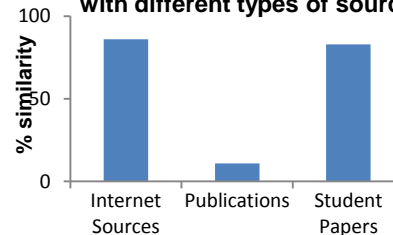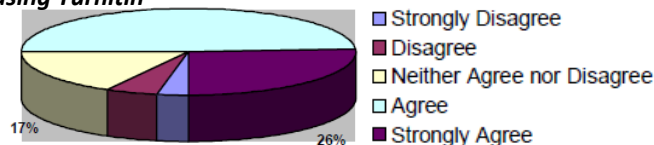
Part 2: Student Perceptions

Examination of report produced by Psychology
➤ 88 students' responses to a series of questions

Q. My knowledge of plagiarism has increased through using Turnitin

49% 17% 5% 3% 26%

Strongly Disagree
Disagree
Neither Agree nor Disagree
Agree
Strongly Agree

Positive views: increased knowledge of plagiarism, easy to use, convenient, prefer electronic feedback
Negative views: feedback for group work

Summary and Evaluation of Findings

❖ **Investigation useful in showing where students take information from**
- *Plagiarism from internet sources more common than from more reliable sources*
- *Difficultly accessing journals online?*

❖ **Students find it easy to use and can help their awareness of referencing**

BUT
❖ **Turnitin can't help students decide what is a reliable source**
❖ **How do students search for information?**
❖ **Need to consider many factors!**
- *E.g. Academic internet use related to gender & subject-specialism (Selwyn, 2008).*

Solutions & Implications

Turnitin should be used not only to detect plagiarism but as a way of educating students
- *increasing their knowledge of plagiarism*
- *highlighting their use of internet sources*
- *interim assessment?*

Contemporary solution to solve contemporary problem? Or 'back to basics'? i.e. Library sessions

Additional Support needed for academic referencing
- *additional sessions needed at level 4*
- *literature searches incorporated into seminars – at all levels*
- *library sessions*

Open university website - constructivist approach emphasising academic skills rather than focussing on plagiarism

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