Impact of Policies for Plagiarism in Higher Education Across Europe

Plagiarism Policies in the Republic of Cyprus (Cyprus)

Executive Summary

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ES 1   Background

ES 1.1   Data was collected through a survey that took place during the Spring and Fall semesters in 2012 using questionnaires for participants (students, faculty and senior officials in academia). In addition, there were structured interviews with senior management and national representatives in Cyprus, a student focus group and data collected from articles, web sites and web 2.0 media. The survey examined the extent and effectiveness of policies and procedures implemented nationally and at Higher Education Institutions (HEI) in Cyprus with regards to aspects of academic integrity and specifically plagiarism and academic conduct. The research was focused on relevant aspects at first and second cycle studies (bachelor's and master's levels); doctoral students were not included in this research.

ES 2   Findings

ES 2.1   The institutionalization of a Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education in Cyprus has been delayed due to a number of issues primarily raised by state universities. In Cyprus, there are concerns about academic misconduct and breaches in academic integrity because of:

- Lack of appropriate measures and dismissal of proven cases of plagiarism
- The number of project reports, postdoctoral or doctoral thesis written by faculty for students studying abroad for payment.
- The punitive measures for student plagiarism, which do not reflect the severity/degree of plagiarism.
- The lack of policies at the HEIs of Cyprus regarding plagiarism.
- The inability of students and faculty to recognise cases of plagiarism

ES 2.2   More students than faculty are ready to admit that they may have plagiarized. When a case of student plagiarism is identified, the majority of faculty may choose a no action approach, most likely because they need to be trained in plagiarism detection and punishment and to know what policy and procedures to follow.

ES 2.3   Although anti-plagiarism digital tools are used by all universities that participated in this study, universities differed in policies regarding student access to the tools, and the provision of faculty training to interpret digital output and to support students learning using these tools.

ES 2.3   About 43% and 45%, respectively, of the faculty did not understand the procedure to be followed or were uncertain about the consistency of applying policies in cases of plagiarism. Students were (41.8%) not certain if the same procedures were followed by the teachers but some (37.8%) thought that their teachers were consistent in applying the policy/procedures (Annex Cyprus-Students T5r).

ES 2.4   According to faculty and students the factors that contribute to plagiarism were ranked in terms of descending popularity as follows:

- the belief of not getting caught,
- the interest to pass rather than learn,
- the ease of copying and pasting from the internet.

It was encouraging to know that 79.2% of teachers and 74.4% of students agreed that it is possible to design coursework to reduce student plagiarism (Annex Cyprus-Students Qu 5o, Cyprus-Teachers 5t).

ES 2.5   Although a significant percentage of students (76%) and teachers (56%) responders had received guidance in techniques for scholarly academic writing and anti-plagiarism issues (Annex Cyprus-Students Qu S5a, T5a), there were just as many that said they needed more training (Annex Cyprus-Students Qu S5b, T5p).

ES 3   Recommendations

ES 3.1   *Nationally and internationally*

Upon establishment of a Cyprus Agency for Quality Assurance and accreditation in Education it is important that policies and procedures on anti-plagiarism and on academic integrity are established for programmes conducted in Cyprus, for programmes that are dual partnerships between local and other Universities abroad as well as for programmes that are offered online. Students and faculty must be informed and educated on plagiarism, through publications and/or links to sites on the web and/or to the AQ Agency's sites. Reforms should be applied across all levels in higher education not only graduate level and research and any issues raised should be given the opportunity to be discussed using ICT advancements as facilitators.

Digital tools with policy and guidelines for access and use for faculty and students should be adopted and their use promoted. Costs could be shared through the formation of a consortium of Universities with more negotiation power for favourable terms of costs.

ES 3.2 Institutionally

Institutional recommendations need to echo each of those outlined above at national level. Promote change of culture and attitudes regarding anti-plagiarism measures like the set up of policies and procedures to achieve faster and more sustained changes at institutional level.

Establish professional development and training courses for academic staff to inform and promote good practice examples of assuring high standards in academic integrity and for training in anti-plagiarism software tools.

Empower faculty and administrators for dealing internally with cases of academic dishonesty in faculty and students in a consistent manner employing a set of fair sanctions.

ES 3.3 Individual academics

Promote standards and quality in all aspects of academic activity, including teaching, setting assessments and examination papers, grading of work, providing support, guidance and advice to students. Empower faculty to:

- support students to improve independent study, research and writing skills;
- develop innovative assessments that challenge students and make plagiarism or cheating difficult;

- respond to suspected cases of student plagiarism and cheating according to policies.

ES 4 Conclusions

This report presents findings on plagiarism in Cyprus, identifies gaps and challenges in promoting and implementing policies, procedures, competences and attitudes among multiple stakeholders in HEI in Cyprus.

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Annex Cyprus Republic 1: Responses to question 5: (1=strongly disagree – 5=strongly agree)

Qu	Disagree (1,2)		Don't know		Agree (4,5)		Question
	student	teacher	student	teacher	student	teacher	
S5a T5a	13%	16%	11%	28%	71%	43%	Students receive training in techniques for scholarly academic writing and anti-plagiarism issues
S5b T5p	13%	33.3	11%	16.7	72%	37.5	I would like to have more training on avoidance of plagiarism and academic dishonesty
S5c T5b	7%	20%	25%	12%	64%	68%	This institution has policies and procedures for dealing with plagiarism
T5c		25%		12.5%		62.5%	I believe this institution takes a serious approach to plagiarism prevention
T5d		32%		29%		38%	I believe this institution takes a serious approach to plagiarism detection
S5d T5e	35%	8%	22%	33%	19%	58%	Plagiarism policies, procedures and penalties are available to students
T5f		21%		33%		46%	Plagiarism policies, procedures and penalties are available to staff
S5e T5g	8%	25%	76%	25%	41%	50%	Penalties for plagiarism are administered according to a standard formula
S5f T5h	25%	21%	43%	25%	24%	50%	I know what penalties are applied to students for different forms of plagiarism and academic dishonesty
S5g T5i	13%	8%	57%	38%	27%	54%	Student circumstances are taken into account when deciding penalties for plagiarism
S5h T5m	9%	21%	37%	42%	52%	37.5%	The institution has policies and procedures for dealing with academic dishonesty
T5j		12.5%		50%		33.4%	The penalties for academic dishonesty are separate from those for plagiarism
T5k		33.3%		54%		12.5%	There are national regulations or guidance concerning plagiarism prevention within HEIs in this country
T5l		50%		42%		8%	Our national quality and standards agencies monitor plagiarism and academic dishonesty in HEIs
S5i T5n	23%	4%	31%	38%	38%	54%	I believe one or more of my teachers/colleagues may have used plagiarised or unattributed materials in class notes
S5j	30%		25%		24%		I have come across a case of plagiarism committed by a student at this institution
S5k T5o	21%	54%	26%	25%	43%	8%	I believe I may have plagiarised (accidentally or deliberately)
S5l T5q	17%	46%	42%	38%	38%	12%	I believe that all teachers follow the same procedures for similar cases of plagiarism
S5m T5r	26%	30%	32%	44%	38%	26%	I believe that the way teachers treat plagiarism does not vary from student to student
S5n T5s	16%	21%	40%	46%	40%	33%	I believe that when dealing with plagiarism teachers follow the existing/required procedures
S5o T5t	7%	13%	17%	8%	74%	79%	It is possible to design coursework to reduce student plagiarism
S5p T5u	9%	0%	33%	18%	56%	82%	I think that translation across languages is used by some students to avoid detection of plagiarism
S5q	19%		22%		28%		The previous institution I studied was less strict about plagiarism than this institution
S5r	5%		41%		80%		I understand the links between copyright, Intellectual property rights and plagiarism

Table 16: Student and teacher responses to questionnaire Question 5 (percentages) (S n=129; T n=8)