

Perceptions and Concerns on Plagiarism and its Implications for Teacher Education: A Case Study of a South African University

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ABSTRACT The study, which was conducted in July 2010, sought to survey perceptions, concerns and means of deterrent employed at the campus of a comprehensive South African university which includes a teacher education faculty. Researcher-constructed questionnaires, which were modified through feedback from a pilot study, served as the data-collection instrument. These were distributed to 50 purposively-selected academics (teaching staff) and academic administrators. The data were analysed, and frequencies and percentages were translated into tables to facilitate interpretation. The main findings, amongst others, based on responses from the majority of respondents, revealed that most of the respondents had received pre-service training on referencing and ways of avoiding plagiarism. The levels at which they themselves had received training, as well as how they trained their students on plagiarism, and the time allotted for such training were not uniform; plagiarism occurred at all qualification levels and in all kinds of work submitted by students. Most of the respondents were confident of their ability to detect plagiarism and took either one or a combination of steps to deter the incidences. Several factors served as constraints into policing plagiarism: punishing students without first having provided training in referencing and on avoiding plagiarism was unfair. Despite stated limitations, the results and conclusions may stimulate further research at this and other universities within South Africa and elsewhere.