

Addressing plagiarism

through

formal and informal requirements in
scientific journals:
empirical findings from journals published in Lithuania

Dr. Aurelija Novelskaitė & Dr. Raminta Pučėtaitė

Institute of Sociology, Lithuanian Social Research Center, Vilnius, Lithuania

The international conference *Plagiarism across Europe and Beyond*

Mendel University in Brno, Czech Republic, 10-12 June, 2015

- Diverse forms, different approaches to prevention and institutional practices for handling (or tolerating) the cases, multiple actors and their difference in functional potential (Nazir and Aslam, 2010; Seadle, 2008).

Considering peculiarities of national science structures as well as national (and organizational) cultures (Ehrich et al., 2015), a research question is formulated: *what is the role of scientific journals in preventing plagiarism?*

PLAGIARISM.

Multy-dimesionality of the phenomenon

Procedure I: *Formalized approach*

Lithuanian (international) science journals' requirements to authors

- The documents (requirements): n=219

86% of N=266 of library of Lithuanian Academy of Sciences, <http://www.mab.lt/lt/istekliai-internete/mokslo-zurnalai>

- Content analysis: *plag**... ; context

Exclusions: COPE; e.g. "All publications cited in the text should be presented in a list of references"

Procedure II: *Informal approach*

- Chief editors: n=25, convenient experts' sampling
- Semi-structured interviews: *confidentiality; experience, practices; authorship; citing other sources, including plagiarism; authorship rights; reviewing; the main problems/challenges.*
- Content analysis: meaning condensation approach

Methodology

10 journals (5% of all analyzed) mention term ‘plagiarism’

- Context 1: editors’ position

“The journal’s editorial board fight against plagiarism actively”

- Context 2: authors’ responsibilities

“... authors confirm that their paper is their own; that it has not been copied or plagiarized, in whole or in part, from other works ...”

- Context 3: the journal’s practices and tools used to prevent plagiarism

“manuscripts are to be submitted to the plagiarism checking system”

→ The fields: Social sciences & Humanities

The findings I: *Formalized approach*

- Topic 1: Absence of plagiarism policy
 - It is not necessary as *“the question will resolve by itself when it arises”*
 - Situation is deficient: informal discussion of possible models of actions in the case of detected plagiarism
- Topic 2: Plagiarism check systems
 - Prevention: *“formerly, cases of plagiarism were frequent; now, when there is a check system of databases, cases of plagiarism are rare”*
 - Deficiency: *“there are a number of refined ways of evading the red-light percentage”*
 - Resolution: professional editorial board and reviewers
- Topic 3: Motivation - justification for plagiarism
 - A lack of knowledge and experience, a low level of academic literacy: *“people do not know that such an action is not acceptable”*
 - Superficiality, rush to publish as much as possible because of too high requirements for researchers in terms of a number of publications
 - *„a typical plagiarist is someone in the position between associate professor and professor”*

The findings II: *Informal approach*

- Identified practices of Lithuanian journals editors' work and plagiarism are similar to the ones elsewhere: cases of plagiarism happen, a systemic check of plagiarism before accepting a paper for publication is a usual practice, editors use reviewers not only for general reviewing of the papers, but also for detection of plagiarism.
- Journals' tactics regarding plagiarism differs depending on the journal: although most of them do not raise their authors' awareness of potentially unethical actions, some journals tend to prevent plagiarism by warning the authors that their texts will be checked or simply by drawing authors' attention to the issue.
- Editors of different journals report existence of a different extent of plagiarism; the perceived quality of a scientific journal is negatively related to the extent of plagiarism: the higher the quality, the lower the amount of malpractice.

conclusions & discussion

A paradox:

- one of the main causes lurking behind the cases of plagiarism is lack of awareness what plagiarism is.
 - analysis of the requirements for authors and the editors' reports: clear definitions as well as general policy against the malpractice are absent.
 - intentions to initiate educational initiatives for deepening the understanding of publication ethics are absent.
- Role of scientific journals in respect to plagiarism is ambiguous:
- efforts for avoiding plagiarism in publishing is a part of a common procedure of the review;
 - it is accepted that the technical check against plagiarism is not efficient enough.

conclusions & discussion

The need for development of other measures and tools for not only detecting, but also preventing plagiarism in Lithuanian scientific journals.

- Defining plagiarism; describing the anti-plagiarism procedures to be applied by the journal and how the journal deals with the detected cases of plagiarism.
- Internal (institutional) communication with a message focusing on honour and reputation, strengthening students and researchers' determination to maintain it at high levels.
- Efforts of multiple stakeholders:
 - Role of institutional Ethics committees developing and applying procedures for investigating the cases and responding to the malpractice.
 - Role of incentives by academic institutions to their researchers to publish in international journals issued by independent publishing houses rather than their universities, unless they are recognized editions in the field.
 - Role of academic institutions protecting whistleblowers (cf. Fox & Jeffrey Beall, 2014).
 - Role of high schools in developing awareness of plagiarism and stimulating respect to intellectual property at young age. Relying on experiential learning in addition to defining the phenomenon could be a solution (Risque et al., 2013), fostering empathy and deepening understanding of multiple harm by plagiarism.

conclusions & discussion

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT: the study is based on preliminary results of a research project “Academic authorship: normative definition and empirical reality”, funded by Lithuanian Research Council (no. MIP-082/2013), 2013-2015.

THANK YOU FOR YOUR ATTENTION

Dr. Aurelija Novelskaite <novelskaite@ktl.mii.lt>
