

Ethics and plagiarism

The editorial 'Plagiarism – A Spreading Infection'¹ has churned my mind. I confine myself to (a) the causes of plagiarism, (b) some remedial measures and (c) editorial ethics.

One of the causes of plagiarism is that without understanding our state of affairs, we have plagiarized from the West the concept of introducing project work in M Sc and even B Sc courses.

I wish to suggest some remedial measures to fight the trend of plagiarizing at many places: (a) To remove project work/dissertation at B Sc and M Sc levels, as maximum plagiarism is inevitable here, in view of lakhs of M Sc students who roll out every year. (b) For every funding agency to have research journals of its own (or a journal for a combination of funding agencies) and make it mandatory for every principal investigator to publish papers and project reports in the respective journals of the funding agency. Any ill reputation/low ranking of papers/reports can empower the funding authorities to

stop further funding for such investigators. This can also act as a credibility check for the funding agencies. (c) For CSIR to change the present policy wherein candidates can directly get SRF without passing the JRF entrance test, as this is creating a lot of pressure to publish papers. (d) For the Indian publishers to mandatorily get the books reviewed by specialists from developed countries before publishing them, as books by Indian authors, being published in huge numbers of late, seem to involve plagiarism from foreign works. (e) Instead of condemning the students copying term papers/assignments, teachers to concentrate on conducting a suitable written and/or viva voce exam on the respective topic, to judge whether students have understood the topic well or not. (f) Part time/external Ph Ds should be given leave officially at least for a period of three years to work as full time researchers. Further, all Ph Ds, regular or part time, should mention in their thesis full particulars of the funding and facilities utilized for the work.

As for the editorial ethics is concerned, I wish to relate a personal experience. Once I received a communication from a private group of people in USA, which said that as high as 90% of the papers are rejected and/or considerably delayed in publication, due to badly written manuscripts. So the group said that it would help authors in writing manuscripts and would forward the same to the required journal. The price for this service is US\$ 50–100 per page, with additional charges for tables, diagrams, graphs, etc. Is this ethical?

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1. Balam, P, *Curr. Sci.*, 2005, **88**, 1353–1354.
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Science funding and follow-up actions

Comments of Roy¹ and Herndon² force me to voice the following thought relative to science funding in India.

One element that has always struck me in science funding in India is that we never follow up whether the indicated milestones have been achieved by the project proponent, especially after the completion of the project. We also never follow up whether massively funded institutions have returned new knowledge and new information in proportion to the investment (am I correct in referring to it as 'investment', because in business language an investment provides appropriate returns to the investor?) made by the

people of India through the Government. [In many national institutions expensive equipment lie unpacked in the corridors.] The key question here is 'are we doing a disinterested audit of the money provided by the Government in terms of the outcomes achieved, be it for an individual or for an institution?' Even if an audit is done, do we ever measure whether the money input matches the outcomes in equal terms? Do we have any standards for the audit of science projects and of funded institutions? If an audit is done in an unbiased manner, I am sure India will be one of the toppers in world science and Nobel prizes will be flowing into our

nation. Someone jocularly remarked to me when I was in India that no science exists among politicians, whereas plenty of politics prevails among scientists! Pity, indeed.

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1. Roy, R., *Curr. Sci.*, 2005, **89**, 424.
 2. Herndon, J. M., *Curr. Sci.*, 2005, **88**, 1714.
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