

# GENERAL MANAGEMENT

## “A CRITICAL STUDY OF THE VALUE ADDITION TO EDUCATION BY ACADEMIC JOURNALS WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO E-PUBLISHING”

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### INTRODUCTION

Academic Performance Indicators (API) in Performance Based Assessment Scheme (PBAS) by University Grants Commission (UGC) proposes, research and academic publications as an important parameter in assessment of teachers. The All India Council for Technical Education (AICTE) has also used the 'cumulative impact index' in drawing equivalence to Ph.D. These and many other factors have resulted in almost every institute of higher and technical education, promote and publish academic journal. With this huge number of academic journals, in print, how can an academic researcher decide where to publish, as to which journal is good, as all these journals cannot be taken to be equal in quality. Academic publishing includes books, academic research findings, student's projects, theses, conference proceedings, grey literature etc. (This paper focuses more on journals and other publications than on books).

There were 612 colleges and 307 institutes affiliated to University of Pune, as per information on their website, March 2011. If these colleges or institutes on an average publish one Journal or a Magazine a year, huge paper gets consumed in prints, raises environmental concerns. How many of these journals are really getting the subscription or being read by intended audience.

Mackenzie, C.J. et al 2001, 'The current environment in higher education drives faculty members towards research and publication'. 'But who benefits?' Their research included marketing practitioners and the work stated 'Clear evidence was

obtained that academic marketing journals are neither read nor recognized by the great bulk of the sample'. Then what value do they actually provide, and to whom? How can and how much value, the academic journals add to existing knowledge? Their visibility, quality, storage, archive and many similar aspects needs to be addressed.

### **WHY ACADEMIC PUBLISHING ?**

Academic publishing is simple, with many standardized formats (e.g. for research paper, students project reporting, theses and dissertations etc, there are guidelines and formats available). Academic publishing is for most reasons, a mandatory practice. The students and faculties are required to conduct research and write reports as either a part of fulfillment of the course or career enhancement. Academic Performance Indicators (API) proposes credits points for books and many of these academic publications categorically.

Huges, C. A. 1998, mentions the core activity of academic profession as 'advancement of knowledge' and credits the 'professional publications' and 'scholarly reputation' to be deciding factor as to who belongs to this profession.

Other factors includes the information need of self and peers, satisfaction of creating, adding to existing body of knowledge. Intense competition amongst scientist and researchers is also one of the factors for publications being made. Correia, A.M.R. and Teixeira, J. C.2002 have presented that 'researchers and academics, seeks to free scientific information and provide unrestricted access to it for all scientist, students and interested public'. They have also cited Guedon, 2001, that 'scholarly journals have assumed functions' of, 'registering ownership', 'establishing priority of discovery', and 'public registry of scientific innovation'. They have also mentioned 'author recognition, author evaluation, Validation of knowledge and quality control'.

A publication helps gain various intangible benefits like , time- stamp that gives them priority (Rao, M.K. 2009), with respect to others working in a similar area of interest. It helps to build a brand for researcher with respect to his area of expertise. He also

mentioned 'ownership of ideas' and 'social recognition'. Publication is required for professional development as well as development of profession. Monetary considerations may also be there for certain publishing.

### **E-PUBLISHING**

The paper print has its bag of problems, from increasing paper cost, cost of printing delays in process of submission, peer review process, etc.. With so many journals being printed the libraries are finding the selection of journals for subscription a major problem. Library budgets are shrinking, storage space problems and limited search, access (as journals are locked in wealthy university libraries- Wikipedia)to end users of the print journals restricts its visibility.

Almquist 1992 as quoted by Huges, C. A. 1998, has mentioned use of Information Technology (IT) for subject identification and proposal development. IT was also used to acquire familiarity with literature. These represent earlier stages of research and publications.

Rao, M.K 2009, has attributed the existence of electronic journals since 1976, and full- fledged e- journals came to limelight in 1990s.

Highlighting the visibility and impact of E-Publishing Sahu, D.K(2006), cited the case of Journal of Post Graduate Medicine (JPGM, www.jpgmonline.com) as this particular journal was having print circulation of less than 400 and received less than 180 articles till 2001. Today the online version attracts close to 100,000 virtual visitors with more than 110,000 articles downloads per month. He has further mentioned the problems and delays in peer review system of print journals and how online submission and processing has eliminated the postal, delays and resulted in considerable decrease in the submission to decision (turnaround) time. He however highlighted the need of trained editorial staff, in the process of electronic peer review system.

Libraries are forming Consortia and subscribing to e- journals at concessional rates Rao M.K , 2009, eg UGC- INFONET digital library consortium.

Third party aggregators are being used by various publishers' in order to make available databases, for access to users. Open Access Initiatives (OAI) are now providing a new method of scholarly communication. Dispelling various myths and bringing the facts to light about Open Access Journals Sahu, D. K has stated Indian journals as mostly having low impact. Going online is not costly, Open Access(OA) are peer reviewed, not all OA charge for publication, free access may not result in loss of revenue and finally OA journals do have good Impact Factor.

### **JOURNAL EVALUATIONS AND RANKINGS**

Journals need to be evaluated primarily because, there is need know the progress, status, of what others have done in similar area of study or research. The researcher would turn to the reliable and authentic source of research findings which he/she may get from a highly rated journal.

The question of journal becoming obsolescence, or change in name of a journal is also an reason why ranking and ratings are looked upon as they usually list only journals in the current year, for considered of evaluation.

Citations, Impact factor (IF) are popular, current and widely used metrics, Satyanarayana. K. 2010. Citation rates are used to measures the visibility of a journal. 'Journals with larger circulations tend to receive more citations' Starbuck and Mezas (1997) as quoted by Vincent, A. and Ross, D. (2000). Further one of the reasons why Citation analysis is gaining important in evaluation of faculty research, according to Vincent, A. and Ross, D. (2000) is 'the availability of databases that provide citation information'.

Eugene Garfield in 1955 came out with Impact Factor (IF) which is indicator of the success of journals contents. The IF is used by researchers, authors, publishers' librarians etc for making their decisions about a journal. Nagaraja, A. and Vasanthakumar, M. have done comparison of Web of science and Scopus impact factors of Indian journals. According to them the 'best tools available to select the quality journals are Journal Citation Report (JCR) and Scimago journal ranks (SJR) from Scopus data'. Similarly Lu An and

Junping Qui, 2004, has researched on the Journal impact factors (JIFs) as determined by the Institute for Scientific and Technological Information of China (ISTIC).

Timeliness is an important criterion in evaluation process, as mentioned on the Thomson Reuters site. 'The evaluation process' and 'How to submit a journal for evaluation' are detailed on the website along with address for submission. However there are limitations to use of IF factors as inferred from following,

'....impact factor calculated for individual journals should not be used as a basis for evaluating the significance of an individual scientist's past performance or scientific potential. There are several reasons not to equate the impact factor of a journal in which the scientist publishes with the quality of the scientist's research.....'

'....Impact factor measures only the frequency of citations which cannot be assumed to always equate with quality....', (Russell R. and Singh Dave 2009), forms the parts of the statement adopted at an editors roundtable.

Satyanarayana, K. (2010) has listed many known limitations and deficiencies with citation based evaluation systems.

Satyanarayana, K. 2010, listed and discussed alternative methods of evaluation as compared to Impact factor. These include Google scholar, Page Rank, Weighted page rank, h-index, y-factor, Euro factor, Faculty of 1000, Eigenfactor etc.

Touzani, M. and Moussa, S. 2010 have researched on Google Scholar for Marketing discipline and highlighted the benefits and limitations of same. Google website describes 'About Google Scholar', for search of scholarly literature in various disciplines and sources like books, theses, articles, abstract and opinions, from academic publishers and professional societies, online repositories, Universities and other websites, and has documents ranked.

### **MANIPULATIVE TENDENCIES**

Russell R. and Singh Dave 2009, 'A journals impact

factor can be inflated by certain journal practices such as publication of many review articles'.

Self citing is a practice which although necessary in certain cases to an extent, overuse of self citation can be construed as a manipulative attempt and can result in journal rejection from evaluation process. According to Satyanarayana, K. 2010, longer articles, controversial papers to negate the contents, are used to boost citations. He has also talked of citation cartels. A 'recommender system', for peer review system is quoted in the same paper.

Nordling Linda, 2008, stated that focusing on numbers from impact factor encourages both researcher and journals to play games to raise their impact factor. The research suffers and it becomes a popularity contest, instead of truth contests. For online publishing also there are focus on search engine optimization, rather than on research contents and quality.

Romano, N. C. 2009, has discussed the editorial coercive self citation and concluded that it violates the very spirit of scientific integrity.

### **VALUE ADDITION**

Value in respect to education has many dimensions. Educational institutes rarely have agenda of developing any single skill or capability in its student, many of the skills and knowledge inputs are for lifelong, skill enhancement. 'The term value sometimes has a very remote connection with money' Henry C. Lucas, Jr, (2001). Bennett, (2001) as 'By value addition we mean what is improved about student's capabilities or knowledge as a consequence of their education at a particular college or university.'

An important component to optimize, improve, any business, process is technology. Value in this context refers to the effect of services enhancement of the educational process that has been or could be brought about by using IT based solutions. Reduction in cost of acquiring and providing educational service is a good indicator of value addition.

Vincent, A. and Ross, D. (2000) have mentioned that a 'way of determining the value of work in a discipline is

by studying the impact of that discipline on other fields'. They have stated with reference to 'Journal Citation Reports and others like them', to 'provide valuable information to faculties who are evaluated on their publishing record, to administrators who must do the evaluating, and to the journals that are listed in the databases'.

Value addition of e-publishing can be inferred from the fact that publishing on internet movement is 'because of a key assumption that scholars and scientists publish in peer reviewed journals not for monetary reward but in having their work read, used built-upon and cited' (Harnd and Hemus 1998) as cited by Correia, A.M.R. and Teixeira, J. C. 2002.

Highlighting the benefits of digital libraries with respect to theses and dissertations, Correia, A.M.R. and Teixeira, J.C. 2002, have stated that it 'empowers universities to unlock their information resources. Improving graduate education as they inspire and instigate faculty and graduate to experiment new mentoring models, empowering students to convey richer message, lowering cost of submitting and handling, etc, were listed which signify the value addition to education.

Huffine Richard, 2010, cited 'value of grey literature', as 'a mixed bag', with reference to digital age publishing. 'Non publishers can produce valid research and publishers can release invalid research just as easily'. He adds 'in some domains the best source of information may be grey'.

Digital grey literature according to him includes pre-prints, blogs, project websites, institutional repositories, data archives etc.

A research publication helps authors to understand themselves, their competence and boost confidence self image.

Open Access helps give visibility to unknown authors and enhances educational and accelerates research. The Universities benefit due to researchers' increased impact and in turn the increase in return on investment in research. Rao, M.K, 2009. Further it facilitates sharing of learning's between rich and poor nations. He concludes that authors will have no

choice but to accept the new means of publishing over internet.

Nordling Linda, 2008, has stated the value of Open Access movement as the one that will tear down the walls between academic publishing and rest of the internet. However the editors, authors have limited exposures with the tools and technologies that are available and can be used judiciously for the process of online, open access publication, archiving etc.

Wikis and the online repository system add value by, allowing engaging community participation and free dissemination- Wikipedia.

### **SUGGESTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

To enhance the value addition by academic publications the researcher deduces following suggestions from the above study.

1. Information Technologies (IT) that are being used in creation, submission, review of journals, uploading, archiving and other aspect of journal communications needs to be made available to academic researchers, editors, evaluators etc.
2. Proper training needs to be imparted to the stakeholders of education and research with respect to the Information Technology solutions being used at various stages of research, e-journals publication, storage, retrieval, licensing usage and relevant aspects.
3. There is a need to educate the educational stakeholders about the prevalent journal ranking and evaluation systems, their methodology, and ethics in research publishing. This is to eradicate the temptation of malpractices for gaining high citation or impact.
4. Authors, editors and others needs to focus towards the e-publishing options as much as possible and may follow a hybrid system (e-publishing and minimum copies in paper form for archiving purpose only) to begin with.

5. Open Access Initiatives should be promoted at all levels of research and publications.
6. The findings of Theses and dissertations should be encouraged to be published in public domains as they are capable of great value addition.
7. Regulatory bodies at University and higher level need to set guidelines for print journals from individual institutes, so as to control the rampant printing of journals especially those which neither gets subscribed nor have any worthwhile readership.. They may make provisions of clubbing certain journal types unless an institute can prove the quality and standard to bring out unique and substantially significant research work. Settings minimum criteria and standards for journal printing before registration may be framed without hampering the freedom of research and expression.

### **CONCLUSIONS**

Research and publications are the backbone of academia. They provide tremendous value to various stakeholder of education specially, the researcher who may be a faculty or a research scholar. A research publication also benefits the educational administrators, evaluators and the society. An academic journal helps the academia to communicate, identify scope of research, trends and practices. It also assists, for hiring, promotions and merit based pay decisions. It helps in ranking of the faculty, departments and the institutes.

There must be encouragement and motivation for research in academics either through funded projects or for expansion of theory. The existing system of journal evaluation has merits but needs to be used judiciously to avoid abuse of the ranking system and output. E-publishing is gaining grounds, evolving and maturing in many aspects of journal communication. It offers visible advantages over paper or print journals. Proper awareness and technical expertise needs to be provided to researchers, editors, and evaluators in the use of Information Technology solutions for the same. The following paragraph

appropriates conclusion of this research study.

Huges, C. A. 1998, cites the notion of “accumulated averages” or the Matthew effect”, i.e. “the tendency for people who have early recognition to receive increasingly more resources & opportunities for further recognition and publication, can mediate many other effects”.

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