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A self-reflexive analysis of *Communicare*: Inter-paradigmatic repositioning

ABSTRACT

This partly autoethnographical account of my experiences as an author, editor and researcher offers an experiential framework with which to make sense of publishing in the contemporary era, governed as it is by neoliberal managerialist principles that tend to reduce activities to measureable units so as to render academic disciplines comparable. This is the context within which *Communicare* is repositioning itself in communication and media studies, situated as it is between positivist communication science and interpretivist critical theory. Historical elements of the journal are examined via the author's long-term association with it. The article ends with an examination of the problems that scholarly work faces when universities measure finite products at the expense of processes.

INTRODUCTION

The conditions, pressures and responsibilities under which contemporary academics work stand in stark contrast to the analogue, paper-driven age prior to 2000 when South African academics worked in less research-demanding environments. Research was then largely a by-product of teaching, with some heads of departments at times dissuading and even punishing their staff for engaging in what they termed "frivolous" distractions interrupting the core business of teaching, administration and service. In my own case, in 1985, I had to contend with a perplexed registrar who considered it unseemly to advertise and actively recruit graduate students to the University of Natal's newly established Centre for Communication, Media and Society.

The narrative below relates my own experience in highlighting one of *Communicare's* achievements as an exemplar of relevant research and inter-paradigmatic analysis. Auto-ethnography is a self-reflexive method focusing on context, placing events, encounters and understandings into full and meaningful context. It "combines research design, fieldwork and various methods of inquiry to produce historically, politically, and personally situated accounts, descriptions, interpretations and representations of human lives" (Tedlock, 2000:455). Reflexive writing requires researchers to interrogate their responsibilities and motivations, and to be transparent about research processes. Thus, in autoethnography, knowledge is sought less in texts than in lived experience: "*How* we know is intimately bound up with *what* we know, where we learned it and what we have experienced" (Lincoln & Denzin, 2000:1059).

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1.   *MY SELF-REFLEXIVE NARRATIVE*

When I was a student in the 1970s, publication was generally a novelty, though my strongly research-led Department of Geography drew on both qualitative and quantitative methods and set the institutional publishing benchmark. Communication between author and editor occurred through what now seems slow and expensive snail mail (i.e., hard copy via the Post Office). An article accepted by an international journal could stack for up to five years before publication due to lower frequencies and higher costs. Only the top scholars achieved success in this regime. Most of the rest taught, did committee work, and read the field. Articles were intensely scrutinised by reviewers and readers, with authors being taken to task if errors were found in their calculations, arguments or references. Though article retractions were not then a feature, careers were negatively impacted when readers (usually students reworking the numbers) found mistakes in the books and articles they were studying.

As my colleague Tom O'Regan recently wrote to me,

> In those analogue days, publication was undoubtedly less fraught although gate-keeping functions created significant barriers to entry of new journals, and they often actively impeded interdisciplinary work: … boundaries were vigorously policed and defended. They were hostile, naturally, to interdisciplinary work and their reliance on strong interpersonal networks and known colleagues made for various kinds of informal, *sotto voce* hierarchies and personal fiefdoms. It was difficult for new journals to emerge and indeed this created a situation where those associated with new journals saw themselves as setting themselves up in opposition to the staid, top down, tightly controlled and potentially sclerotic university networks. Journals like *Critical Arts* were to my mind exemplars of this movement against the prevailing regime. (Tom O'Regan, email, 8 October 2018).

The rules of thumb were that an author:

- submitted articles to the limited number of journals to which one's university subscribed, which one read and in which one's colleagues published,
- considered journals published by, or known to, one's disciplinary associations, in which everyone in the field participated, making the disciplinary associations and their leadership important to scholarly practice and research direction, and
- checked the editors and editorial boards, and authors, and asked if these were known to one's colleagues, thesis supervisors, etc.

Also, in those days, trusted *bona fide* publishers were known to librarians and the scholarly communities to which one belonged. Such journals did not panhandle for submissions as predatory journals do now, but sometimes issued calls for papers through disciplinary networks.

2.   SPOT THE PREDATORS

By contrast, since their explosive emergence circa 2012, many hundreds of predatory journals now leverage the post-millennial "publish or perish" priority. They milk the insecurities of emergent, undiscerning and impatient academics pushed as they are by institutional "targets". Inexperienced authors might fall prey to quick and easy publishing offering what is too good to be true. Identified by forensic librarian Jeff Beall[1] as "predatory" on account of their aggressive recruitment of authors, theft of intellectual copyright, and lack of peer review, this sector eliminates assessment barriers to learned publishing. Where legitimate publishers have street addresses and named editors (including surnames), all that these predatory digital addresses need is a computer, a website, a bank account and gullible authors. Warned in 2017 and 2018 by the National Research Foundation (NRF), the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET) and the Academy of Science for South Africa (ASSAf), universities are now responding (as are the legitimate publishers) with spot-the-predators check lists and training seminars.

The predators' work has become pervasive: the University of KwaZulu-Natal (UKZN), for example, observed in early February 2018 that the DHET had referred 95 articles back to the University as suspect. Resultantly, post-doctoral contracts were not being renewed; and investigations were instituted into staff who had listed articles in predatory publications for promotion or productivity purposes, to mention just a few transgressions. This reveals how management is now primarily geared to meeting performance assessments, auditing requirements and bottom lines while keeping an eye on the grey area separating the legitimate from the illegitimate. This UKZN case points to the need for universities and scholarly associations to take greater responsibility for the monitoring and promulgation of best practice research. In this context it is important to clearly identify and distinguish between the legitimate and the predatory publication sectors.

3.   THE LEGITIMATE PUBLICATION SECTOR

International journals are published by international companies, university presses and/or disciplinary associations and are indexed on Web of Science (now Clarivate Analytics) and Scopus, amongst others. Such journals may be owned by these publishers[2], but many are published in collaborative arrangements with independently owned titles. *African Journalism Studies, Critical Arts* and *Communicatio* fall into this category.

Regional journals are published by disciplinary associations or other entities, often in partnership with local and/or international publishers. One example is the *African Journal of Communication*, an annual produced by the East African Communication Association. *African Communication Research* is a hybrid, sponsored by St Augustin's University, Tanzania. This journal substituted

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[1] See the Beall List: http://beallslist.weebly.com

[2] In the Humanities the biggest journal publishers are Sage, Taylor & Francis, Blackwells, and in South Africa, UNISA Press, AOSIS and Nexus.

for the very influential pan-African distributed *Africa Media Review* when it ceased publication in the late 1990s, following the demise of the African Council for Communication Education, then based in Nairobi.

National journals are published by associations, university presses, university departments and individual collectives. *Communicare* and *Communitas* fall into this category.

House journals are so characterised where the majority of papers emanate from a single institution which produces the journal.

All of the above now can be open or closed access, electronic and/or published in hard copy.

The business models vary (page charges, article processing charges, submission fees, self-supporting, subvented, subscription, voluntary, etc.).

4. THE ILLEGITIMATE PUBLICATION SECTOR

Scientific misconduct has been occurring for centuries and became a public policy issue in the 1970s and 1980s when fabricated research was discovered in prestigious institutions, journals and reported in the press (LaFollette, 2000). Nowadays, the contemporary illegitimate sector is characterised by the following poor practices:

- poorly constructed websites with error-ridden grammar, promising incredibly fast peer-review turn-around, with limited information on assessment procedures, and suspect editorial boards
- authors are encouraged to choose their referees or they can pay the publisher for a favourable report, to assure research auditors of "proof" of peer review
- issuing of over-familiar, personally addressed, multi-coloured invitations sent to one's email inbox, prominently displaying fake ISSN numbers, fake metrics and company logos
- appealing to the recipient's vanity and ego with invitations, even citing a recent publication of the addressee as good reason to submit the same or modified article to the predator title
- faking location, using non-institutional yahoo, google or generic addresses
- concealing editorial structure, and "editors" signing with first name only, or not at all, or using fake names
- including names of scholars on editorial boards that are either non-existent or deceased, or real people who do not know that their names have been appropriated
- addressing an over-broad range of topics, and generic and often misspelled and incomprehensible titles like *International Journal of Latest Research In Science Technology* (IJLRST), *Degenerative Intellectual & Developmental Disabilities* (DDID) and the *Journal of Technolodge*. The use of motivational terms is common, e.g., Merit, Nextgen, Advanced, Platinum; and the prominent branding of bizarrely-named publishers like Wudpecker Press, Purple Journals, etc.

In addition, the following are further indicators of these illegitimate operations:

- no added value: no peer review, no proof reading, no author contracts, no libel checks, no marketing and promotion, no copyright protection, no archival back-up, etc.
- authors are stripped of the legal rights that would normally pertain with regard to entering into a contract with a legitimate publisher
- hidden publishing fees and surcharges, usually invoiced after submission, followed by harassing letters demanding payment
- payment is via PayPal or similar to conceal destination of funds
- retraction requiring further payment
- operating like retailers, offering freebees, discounts, payment plans, free memberships of phantom associations, invitations onto editorial boards, and bulk buying of publication space
- article brokers who offer to place articles on behalf of authors.
- Some predatory journals have been listed on WoS and IBSS due to lax assessment procedures. This is what the DHET picked up from the 2017 submissions and is the reason why it initially retracted those journals' accreditation. Now, predators buy legitimate journals indexed by these sites, or clone them, and then expand frequency and numbers of articles from 8 to 80.
- In a sting operation conducted by Science, John Bohannon (2013) compiled a spoof biology study and submitted it to 304 journals. Of these, 157 accepted the paper, 98 rejected it and 49 titles could not be found. Only 36 of the submissions generated comment that identified the paper's deliberate flaws.
- Academics are now examining the predatory sector much more rigorously than did the pioneering Beall. Mouton and Valentine (2017), for example, have taken Beall's (sometimes flawed and dirty) primary data, stratified the descriptive data and stripped his judgemental observations into "weak" and "strong" cases. They then generated the statistical methodology that was lacking in Beall's own impressionist approach to analyse the cleaned data (see also De Jager et al., 2016, Petroşor, 2016). Beall's List was in 2017 removed from the Web, presumably due to publisher threats against him and his university. But the momentum that he generated now continues through official institutions like ASSAf and second generation researchers, though his list is not being updated.

5. COMMUNICARE'S MISSION

Communicare, for 14 years the official periodical of the South African Communication Association (SACOMM, 1980–2004) opened the methodological door somewhat by encouraging diversity from its early years. However, it remained epistemologically schizophrenic, trying as it did to balance a diverse paradigmatic national map consisting of a dominant communication science and other approaches, such as media studies, and from the mid-1990s incorporating critical theory and post-structuralism. Communication science during this period tended to be realist and survey based, often relying on tabulations of numerical data. Critical theory, as an interpretivist approach, questions its own assumptions in conducting research which is inevitably qualitative in

nature. *Communicare's* epistemological schizophrenia between form (presentation) and process ("how to") was indicative of the broader community, as represented by SACOMM (Tomaselli, 2018a: 109–120). Dryly written scientistic articles offered an aura of third person fly-on-the-wall objectivity. From my standpoint in the critical tradition, such approaches were usually unaware of the limits of their own procedures, assumptions and frameworks. Such writing exhibited a high degree of sameness between articles published, whereas writing that was critical, self-reflexive and theoretical enabled an awareness of the researcher's own position in the relations (the subject or object of study) being analysed.

It is rare but not unusual for journals (or even research centres and departments) to periodically critically assess themselves in order to reflect on their histories, impacts and disciplinary relations (see Smith & Raper, 2000; Tomaselli & Shepperson, 2000; Boschoff & Garman, 2016). In similar vein, this article and this issue of *Communicare* offers a self-reflexive review of shifting epistemological positioning. This does not mean that conventionally scientific articles will be discouraged, but that the overall framework of the new editorial board will be looking for greater inter-paradigmatic dialogue, epistemological interactivity and engagements of the theoretical self – as is for example strategically offered by Tom O'Regan (2019) in this issue. This approach was introduced by Mariekie Burger in the 2016 special issue on "Self Representation".

O'Regan's paper, revised from his 2016 SACOMM Conference Keynote address at the University of Free State, was specifically geared to addressing the commonalities between strategic communication, critical theory and new media studies in the global context of which South Africa is now part. He studied my article on differences in communication studies (Tomaselli, 2005), the research panel interventions from the 2004 conference (SACOMM Panel, 2004) organised by Arrie de Beer, and read Michael Morgan's (2006) keynote address from the 2005 conference, who himself had been primed on the need for epistemological interaction in SACOMM fora. These two keynote speakers, though located in different trajectories of media studies, were primarily, though implicitly, addressing SACOMM strategic communication and marketing interest groups, who may or may not have been aware of their being hailed in these addresses.

This deliberate orientating of message from the respective perspectives of the two keynote speakers is similar to the repositioning that *Communicare* has in mind. If research is a set of structured conversations negotiated between and within different paradigms, then a holistic approach would generate a sense of a unified community (like SACOMM) debating different perspectives of the same and similar topics. This point was made metaphorically by Johannes Froneman at the 2004 conference, when he observed that the Association was a "house of many rooms but that many of those rooms' doors remained shut. The doors to all the rooms needed to be opened and scholars encouraged to move between them, interacting with each other *en route*." *Communicare* now aims to open the doors to better enable inter-paradigmatic intermingling. It seeks to replace the current closed silo behaviour that separates out communication science from critical media theory.

For me, the most extraordinary and topical study ever published in *Communicare* was Boet Kotzé's (1990) riveting and chilling analysis of how a necklacing mob coalesced, mutated, hailed

membership, identified targets, gaining and losing members and momentum along the way. Against a boring – almost sanitised title and abstract – Kotzé compellingly and chillingly examined in extraordinary and textured detail and process what communication factors had contributed to the final deed of assassination usually conducted by perpetrators who had replaced those who had formed the mob in the first place. This article offered rigour and the nuance of anthropological method, the flexibility of lived cultural studies, the earthiness of ethnography, the systematisation of diffusion analysis, starkly vivid literary expression, read through philosophy of language, hailing the immediate relevance of investigative reporting, written in the genre of a thriller; and the article even sported one mathematical equation. This is what we mean by "repositioning". The seeds of such a change are already contained within the earlier pages of *Communicare*.

6.   THREATS: THE RESEARCH TREADMILL

Nowadays, everyone is expected to publish: professors, lecturers, even managers and graduate students. Although many journals do insist on compelling writing and nuanced research, much publishing is repetition with difference, a condition that previously characterised many pages of *Communicare*. Further contributing to this perception that legitimate journals exist primarily as product display vehicles for articles is the fact that there can be depressingly little inclination to, and institutional reward for, engaging in debate by writing book reviews and commentaries. The *South African Journal of Science* is a notable exception. Its punchy and shorter letters, commentaries, interventions and statements are the magnets that draw readers into a journal and that keep it topical and relevant. *Communicare's* short "Last Word" column – now discontinued – had deliberately invited (mild) controversy. This column was usually my first read of a new number because authors were freed from the scientistic restrictions that so often limited innovative thinking.

The institutional push to publish facilitated by the DHET incentive, which rewards universities on accredited publication by one of their staff or students of articles or books, can result in guest editors wanting their skimpy editorials be accorded full research article status. At the same time authors expect their submissions to be published immediately irrespective of peer review lead times, production and release schedules. In this quest for immediacy and being absolutely current something is lost. Such publication leads to a failure of scholarship (Ioannidis, 2005), plagiarism (Thomas and de Bruin, 2015) and the increasing incidence of retraction of articles by their authors following publication (especially in the sciences). It is tempting to see in this a debased professionalism intent on meeting performance management objectives.

As an editor of two international journals, when prospective authors write to me, they often ask whether the journal is "accredited", but they never inquire about its impact or readership. These kinds of questions emanate from particular authors who are grazing for publication venues. Such authors inquire if their articles can appear in the "next" number, and feign astonishment when told that the review process can take up to six months plus, and publication release another two years as the accepted article needs to be placed into the production queue.

This experience suggests an inadequate socialisation and a sometimes endemic lack of appreciation for the nuts and bolts of scholarly practice with its own reciprocal obligations. The unpaid editors, voluntary editorial board members and peer reviewers are often the world's leading scholars. Scholarly communities develop and thrive around journal publications.

It would be tempting to follow Gray (2017), who sees universities becoming like factories with academics complicit in the publication conveyer belt. Certainly, universities are ranked, researchers are rated and even good performers are roughed up from time to time by managerialism. Academics are now counselled by line managers who may be lower ranked, with fewer publications and fewer degrees, and maybe not even be NRF rated (see Callaghan, 2018). Managerialism encourages a misplaced time and motion on their part. It undervalues the learning that is to be derived from commenting on, refereeing and assisting the realisation of other researchers' ideas and writing.

7. A POSITIVE, FRACTIOUS RELATIONSHIP

My own relationship with *Communicare* has been fractious but productive. On my first submission in 1980 the editor asked me to mention someone notable whom I had not cited. I tactically consented though I had not thought of the scholar so named as a specialist in the topic, but he was head of the largest communication department in the country. The implication: I needed to have situated my own work within the broader field.

Some years later I was approached to serve on *Communicare's* editorial board. The editors, communication scientists, were inviting from me a media studies presence. After much negotiation I assented, only to resign later over the publication of what I considered to be a flawed "media studies" paper. What *Communicare's* editors at that time took for granted, I constantly questioned. Some correspondence occurred over my rights as an editorial board member to question the acceptance of the paper in question. I pointed out that board members are not just cogs in a machine – and after my suggestion that I would take up the matter with the Department of Education – the reports were released to me.

My assessment was that the peer review process had failed in this instance. The peers selected were not the author's peers, had little expertise in the topic, had assumed that in "media studies" sloganeering and analysis were coincident, and that evidence to support speculative conclusions was not characteristic of this discipline. This interaction occurred during the early 1990s during the heady post-apartheid transition. My guess was that the reviewers – anticipating the growing legitimacy of "media studies" – had accommodatingly made way for a shoddily researched article in support of its liberationist predilections. Neither of the reviewers had actually engaged the submission in even a minimally substantive way. They just ticked some boxes. My point relayed to the editors of *Communicare* was that peer review is not axiomatically accurately scientific, it is not infallible and it is not always useful. Peer reports themselves need to be subjected to editor scrutiny.

8.   *CITATIONS AS THE NEW CURRENCY*

Citations have become the new currency of performance management. Quantitative measures include impact factors, eigen factors, *h*-indexes, cited half-life and altmetrics. Owing to patterns of citations in these disciplines, mainly medicine and science dominate. Yet these citations are known to be imperfect proxies for "who reads" as well as the read-worthiness of publications, and whether or not such articles are useful in the classroom. As Tom O'Regan observes,

> an effect of citations is the clustering of research activity within narrow bandwidths. Topics relevant for a South African context, for example, particular policy issues or assessments of governmental programmes, are unlikely to generate the volume of citations than might more general work. Such publications might exert higher impact and engagement than the more cited article, as do journals that are highly read by practitioners. Citations and securing citations are not the same as securing a publication (O'Regan, email, 8 October 2019).

The citation metric needs to be calibrated to disciplines. Some disciplines are high citation but Humanities tend to be low citation. My point is that some disciplines – like science and medicine – score highly due to the nature of their methodologies. Humanities score gradually, because the publications accrue more slowly.

In such circumstances there is little currency for authors to cite an emergent or unknown scholar no matter how innovative their work. Once-off papers written by MA students lack academic value because they are written by unknowns. Top notch work might not thus get read or cited. *Communicare* does not operate according to these elitist principles and considers every submission on its own merits.

Sometimes established authors fail to cite another's key works on the same topics. This occurs because of paradigm differences, competition, or some perceived personal slight. Or it may be due to disciplinary amnesia (Gans, 1992). Even normal science is not cumulative, as new cohorts of empirical scientists regularly replicate prior findings, presenting it as "new". Gans (1992:701) concludes: "Only social theory seems to be exempt from this rule, for theoretical writings often build on the ideas of past major theorists."

Metrics can exert a flattening effect and compound the lack of historical sourcing. The normal bibliographic attention span is about 20 years (Gans, 1992:704). The impact factor's two years as a measure of immediacy flattens the citation curve even more. By operating as the neoliberal equivalent of measuring imagined value that discriminates on the basis of immediacy, metrics rarely recognise the latent longevity of intrinsic value such as occurs in social theory. Metrics are indicative of highly competitive environments where information and knowledge have an increasingly rapid half-life, and where time-consuming and due historical reflection can be seen as an impediment to productivity.

Articles like Kotzé's might languish for decades un-valorised before their intrinsic value is recognised by subsequent generations of historically alert epistemological archaeologists looking to explain contemporary behaviour. His paper could have fundamentally shifted the mechanistic,

modelling-based, empirical communication paradigm into something else, as did his work in the jettisoning of *volkekunde* for anthropology (Van Der Waal, 1992), while he simultaneously informed studies on crowd psychology (Coleman, 1991). However, the Kotzé study of crowd psychology as manifested in the necklacing incident lacked traction in communication science though it was masterful in its application of communication theories in the 1980s.

In countering the presentism of current research practice, the discipline needs to find ways of returning to, and acknowledging, the significance of older work. *Communicare* could dent such historical amnesia by commissioning disciplinary and journal self-assessment studies that evaluate the role and impact of the journal since 1980. For historians of any discipline, intrinsic value never decays, but actually increases over time. Metrics, which are simply marketing and currency devices, are causing academics to engage in short-term thinking, with two rather than 20, 40-year or longer windows.

Editors and reviewers also might lack a sufficiently historically deep attention span. This is a real problem with communication and media studies to where many lecturers have migrated from other disciplines. Then there is the evolutionary myth that "old" research is characterised by more primitive methodologies and theories (Merton, 1984), or that "old data" is out-of-date, and cumulation is discouraged as academics must prepare their students for the vocational future, which is thought to have little relevance with the "past". Pressures for productivity turn universities into "piecework" industries (Gans, 1992:707) and discourage laborious archival work (see McCracken, 2018). Thus is the utility of the past forgotten as are the authors associated with it. The echo of past research, however, is always present in contemporary work, even if contemporary authors are unaware of it.

9. SOME CONSEQUENCES OF PRESSURES TO PUBLISH AND CITATIONS AS VALUE

9.1 Lack of indexing

A study done by the Centre for Research on Evaluation on Science and Technology (CREST) for ASSAf is very revealing, as some journals have an over 60% home authorship, and some have secured few, if any, citations. Of the 318 registered South African journals, very few are listed on either the Web of Science (WoS), IBSS or Scopus, or indeed, any index. Very context-specific fields like law generate few references to scholarly articles, as most refer to case law. Regional planning and architectural journals, as other examples, exhibit low citations but exert high impact because they are read by practitioners. Many low-volume national journals – i.e., less than 30 articles published annually – are nationally oriented, having "thicker" readerships straddling the various scholarly and non-scholarly cultural fields. *Communicare* is one such example. As O'Regan observes, "Having this conversation with national policy and industry can be important but generates low citations" (email, 8 October 2019).

9.2 Rent seeking

In 2015, the DoHET introduced a new criterion to discourage small journals that were in the habit of publishing the majority of authors from the journal's home base. The previous 50:50 split was recast as 25:75 between home and external authors publishing in any single issue. While issued with the best of intentions in discouraging rent-seeking (Tomaselli, 2018b), this ruling has implications for large multi-campus universities and also for collaborative projects. In South Africa, particular departments offering communication and media studies tend towards particular specialisms, points of focus and specific kinds of projects. This coalescence is indicative of the way in which the field is applied in terms of dynamic institutional specialisations rather than a default to the middle. The DHET's rule-making does, however, shape outcomes by pushing towards the middle.

9.3 Predatory behaviour

Predatory behaviour involves practices that the measurement culture could be seen to be encouraging. Rent-seeking practices embolden authors to directly lobby editors to secure favourable results. While not all journals are "predatory", sometimes their authors are. They undermine good scientific practice, and editors who knowingly publish sub-standard work will depress the academic value of their journals.

9.4 Publish to graduate

Many South African universities now require their MA and PhD students to publish, or at least submit, from their theses, to secure graduation. This practice was instituted to secure public benefit from research undertakings. As I have argued elsewhere (2018b), this requirement has turned journals into unwitting aides for institutional assessment processes and implicates these journals in any legal issues that may result. There is also an element of rent-seeking here.

9.5 Complicit behaviour

Complicit behavior of universities was present in the case of one such open access predatory journal. The *Mediterranean Journal of Social Sciences* was the first to be deleted from the DHET qualifying list. This journal was being actively promoted by some South African scholars as a legitimate outlet and opportunity to meet DHET requirements. Whistle blowers had been ignored by their institutions, so the allegation was leaked to *The Times*, which ran with the story (Smillie, 2014; see also Thomas, 2015). Universities should be doing this monitoring and forensic work and it should be a collective undertaking.

9.6 Plagiarism encouraged

A "Research Letter" published in the *SA Journal of Science* revealed that 68% of articles published in 19 South African titles on management evidenced indications of plagiarism, defrauding the taxpayer of R7 million in research incentive payments (Thomas & de Bruin, 2015). These kinds of practices suggest that universities and disciplinary associations need

to devise indices to measure quality rather than demanding just quantity. There also needs to be an understanding of patterns in different disciplines.

10. SOME FINAL THOUGHTS ON THE WAY AHEAD

One thematic of this article offers an overview of the present problem that has emerged from rent-seeking behaviour: the encouraging of self-interested research in both individual and institutional senses. The second underlying theme is actually outlining how the incentive scheme is supposed to facilitate scholarly publishing.

The DHET incentive was intended to build capacity, to enhance productivity and to educate new researchers. Yet when the concern is with the product (the publication itself) and with appearing in an "accredited" journal (to unlock state incentives paid to the university where the author is affiliated), then authors and their employers have lost sight of the academic enterprise (production of knowledge). Competing ends are being served at any one time and the task of reconciling them is sometimes difficult but not impossible to achieve. That some administrators and academics have lost sight of the research mission that references social and not merely private good, does not mean that all do.

Second, the "cure" – to emphasise citations, for instance – itself leads to further difficulties. Citations work in some disciplines better than others and, for journals but not books, though books are often more important in the Humanities. The publication incentive was never intended to serve such limited objectives. The Humanities are at a disadvantage, as comparatively few such journals are listed on Clarivate, Scopus or IBSS. A bureaucratic procedure that enables measurement thus discourages authors from publishing in unlisted journals that scholarly peers including extra-scholarly actors may rank highly.

Greater flexibility can be achieved by using the incentive creatively, involving a selective recalibration of measurement: The DHET incentive allows for a futures market, in that it is possible to plan one's upcoming research budgets based on the probabilities of publication in accredited journals. That is,

- The funds generated can be used for the employment of research assistants, conference participation, funding of post-doctorates, bursaries, research and travel expenses and page charges or article processing fees
- The incentive, if used strategically, can be invested to build institutional research capacity
- NRF ratings committees are concerned that applicants have published in top, high-impact, and prestigious international journals, whether accredited or not. Choosing to regularly publish in low impact accredited journals may brake one's eligibility to high impact positions, not to mention higher ranked ratings.

The DHET publication incentive is intended for universities, not individuals. Editors, university presses, state bureaucrats, librarians, archivists, and science communication scholars, at a conference organised by CREST at Stellenbosch University in September 2017 all agreed: the rent-seeking behaviour that underpins much South African institutional policy needs to be critically addressed at both national policy level and in terms of internal institutional rewards.

How does a community of writers grow with a journal? How does a journal grow a field? *Communicare* is now systematically facing up to this inter-paradigmatic and interdisciplinary endeavour. To conclude, it seems fitting to cite (at some length) Kotzé's view of social science as his study – published in 1990 – returns the journal to one of its few experiential roots:

> If social science is to achieve any relevance at all, the members of society should be given the opportunity to identify intuitively, i.e., subjectively with the context of scientific discourse. It has to evoke dialogue, rather than alienate it. At least it should be such as to be subjectively recognizable by the average member of society, given his/her particular experience and subjectively meaningful frame of reference. If the content of the discourse is to be recognized, the scientist has to be a recognizable social member of society, in as much as s/he succeeds in revealing the subjective experience of the people s/he studied – rather than explaining them in terms of universally applicable, objective theory … in matters pertaining to social situations of society per se, scientific discourse needs to be freed from its alienating, exclusivist monologue, and to invite dialogue with society at large within specific social contexts (1981:41).

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