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Implementation of the Quality Central Ideas in Scholarly Publishing: The Current Situation

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ABSTRACT

Although there is no consensus on the meaning of the word quality, it is still considered crucial in any human activity. This article discusses the implementation of the four central ideas of quality in the scholarly publishing industry. This article sheds light on the position of scientific research and publishing in the international ranking systems and the current situation of quality concepts in scholarly publishing. It measures the standards stated by the big publishing houses and leading scholarly associations and the submission and manuscript processing activities on the basis of the quality of central ideas.

KEYWORDS

Scholarly communication, ethics, quality peer-review, promotion, best practices

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INTRODUCTION

Quality, this mysterious word has a lot of meanings as per the purpose of the quality function in a situation. The word quality comes from the Latin name "quails" which means "what kind of", but generally, it is used as a synonymous of or equivalent to the words excellence, perfection, prestige, or sometimes superiority. The search for a universal definition of quality has yielded inconsistent results. Such a global definition does not exist; rather, different definitions of quality are appropriate under different circumstance[1]. Harvey and Green[2] defined quality as follows: First, quality means different things to different people, second, quality is relative to 'processes' or 'outcomes'. The most widely accepted criterion of quality in any kind of industry is "fitness for purpose". Accordingly, quality in scholarly publishing could be maintained through the kind of activities and standards the publisher and/or journal adopt and maintain. Therefore, quality in scholarly publishing is measured or evaluated in terms of whether or not a publisher meets the standards stated by the big publishing houses and leading scholarly associations for integrity, trust and academic community ethics. It also means whether or not a manuscript meets the scope of the journal, the instructions stated for authors to be followed, the standardized themes of scientific writing and the kind of processes from manuscript submission through a review process to publication. Consequently, the publisher and the journal prestige that enable them to be ranked as top-tier bodies depends on the kind of standards, the activities and the processes they adopt and maintain. Away from the debate on the definition of quality, this article will discuss scholarly publishing under the concept of quality central ideas[3].

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Table 1: Objective indicators of the Academic Ranking of World Universities (ARWU)

Number	Objective indicators	Percentage
1	Number of alumni and staff winning Nobel Prizes	10
2	Number of alumni and staff winning Field Medals	20
3	Number of Thomson Reuters highly cited researchers	20
4	Number of articles published in journals of Nature and Science	20
5	Number of articles indexed in Science Citation Index-Expanded and Social Sciences Index	20
6	Per capita performance of a university	10

Table 2: Performance indicators of the Times Higher Education World Rankings

Number	Performance indicators	Percentage
1	Teaching (the learning environment)	30
2	Research (volume, income and reputation)	30
	The University`s reputation for research excellence among its peers	18
	Research income	06
	Research productivity	06
3	Citation (research influence)	30
4	International outlook (staff, students, research)	7.5
5	Industry income (knowledge transfer)	2.5

Position of scientific research and publishing in the international ranking systems: To get an international prestigious position, higher education institutes skew heavily towards research and publication[4-6]; that is because ranking bodies measure institutional quality by the faculty members` publications and grants awarded[7]. Moreover, the prestige of the journal in which the faculty members publish their articles has an impact on the points assigned to the institution[8].

Academic Ranking of World Universities (ARWU): The six objective indicators of the academic ranking of world universities include three indicators concerning scientific research and publishing (Table 1). These objective indicators weigh 60% of the six indicators. This ranking system gives 20% for the highly cited researchers as selected by Thomson Reuters and 20% for the number of articles published in Nature and Science journals. It also gives the same weight to the Science Citation Index-Expanded and Social Sciences Indexed articles. This means that the core quality of a higher education institute is scientific research and publishing according to this system.

Times Higher Education World Rankings (THES): The Times Higher Education World Rankings evaluate institutional research activities besides teaching, knowledge transfer and the international outlook of the institution as well (Table 2). This system of university ranking gives research 30% of the total performance indicators. This indicator deals with: The reputation survey which looks at the university`s reputation of research excellence among its peers, research income and research productivity. Citation (research influence) receives the same weight as research. This indicator looks at universities' role in spreading new knowledge and ideas.

Implementation of quality central ideas in scholarly publishing: Quality has four central ideas as stated by Mishra[3]. These are quality as culture, quality as absolute, quality as relative and quality as a process.

Quality as culture: Recognizes the importance of organizational view of quality as a process of transformation[3]. This is clear in the big publishing houses and leading scholarly associations' standards. The overall view of each person in the publishing industry—the publisher, the editorial board members and the reviewers—should be concerned and acknowledge the importance of quality. Creating a quality culture within the organization drives performance, improves results and creates a better working environment and thus high-quality scholarly publications.

Quality as absolute: It is considered as the highest possible standards[3]. Striving for the highest ranks and achieving the highest quality standards is characteristic of those in charge of scientific publishing. This idea

is clearly indicated in the principles stated by the Committee on Publication Ethics (COPE), the Directory of Open Access Journals (DOAJ) and the Open Access Scholarly Publishers Association (OASPA). The principles acknowledge that the website of the journal must demonstrate high ethical and professional standards and provide information about the ownership and/or management of the journal. It also encourages specifying a unique name for the journal and clear indication if the journal is peer-reviewed or not and mentioning the type, procedure and duration of the peer-review process.

Quality as relative: Quality suggests that the quality of a product or service can be described in relative terms[3]. It is clear in the different methods of the review process and references citation styles. Some journals adopt double-blind peer review while other journals prefer open peer review. The same is followed in the references citation.

Quality as a process: Certain processes must be followed and conformed to procedural, practical and technical requirements[3]. This is the ongoing activity of scholarly publishing. It is the four functions of any scientific journal which start with the submission of a manuscript, the review process, dissemination and finally archiving. The journal website is the first criterion for journal quality (good or not). Then comes the process of manuscript submission via the journal page, the editorial contact with the authors and the reviewers, the review process, the period from manuscript submission to online publication, the fee charge and the indexing of the journal.

CONCLUSION

Academic society had high values of honesty and trust that control the stages of scholarly publication from the first point of setting the ideas and the main objectives of research to publication. In scholarly publishing, the highest possible standards are trust in peer review and integrity in research, good publishing practices and ranking metrics. The four quality central ideas are clear in scholarly publishing from many points of view. Quality as a culture, as a process, as relative and as absolute are followed in all activities of big publishing houses and leading scholarly associations and journals, which means quality is currently implemented in the scholarly publishing industry.

SIGNIFICANCE STATEMENT

This article helps the researchers to focus on quality in scholarly publishing as an inevitable thing. It is highlighting the relationship between the four central ideas of quality and the four functions of any scientific journal. On top of that, this article provides a brief review on the position of these central ideas as currently adopted by the big publishing houses and leading scholarly associations.

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